



TRANSFORMED BY WAR 1939 - 1945

Coastal areas provide essential training for D Day

From autumn 1943, training needs took over large areas of coast from Sussex to Devon, involving the armies of USA, Canada and Britain, (a total of 160,000 men by June 1944).

HMS Appledore was established in 1942 on the North Devon coast, for developing experimental vehicles and weapons and - as the Landing Craft Obstruction Clearance Unit (LCOCU) - training the frogmen who would be some of the first troops ashore on D Day to clear mines and obstructions.

Working out how to waterproof vehicles, was another essential requirement for a successful seaborne landing. Once techniques were proven over 3,500 servicemen came to Bideford for training in the seven months up to July 1944.

The North Devon beaches were used as training grounds. The similarity of the landscape to Normandy meant this became a perfect practice ground for the D Day invasion in June 1944.

The strong currents and large tidal range in the Torridge Estuary were ideal for landing craft to practice the navigation skills needed for successful beach landings.

Braunton Burrows was turned into an Assault Training Centre and live firing range. Concrete landing craft used to train troops and beach defences are still visible.

A D Day History Trail has been prepared by **Bideford and Torridge Heritage Harbour**. This is helping to preserve and guide visitors around the maritime history of the area.



Frogmen changing into shallow water diving suits, HMS Appledore
Image: IWM 28996.



Sherman DD tank - flotation canvas lowered.
Image: IWM MH3660