

**NOTE: we have a new Email address:
desertraidersassociation@yahoo.co.uk**



“Desert Raiders”

**Keeping the Legend Alive
British Special Forces in North Africa, 1940-1943**

Newsletter Number 8 June 2004



The Newsletter of the Desert Raiders Group

Editors – Paul Lincoln & Peter Sanders

Summer has arrived, the show season looms and it's time for the *Desert Raiders* to dig out our shorts, dust off our kit, start up our vehicles and head for the sun. After the winter, we look more like ghosts than desert raiders, but things can only get better from now on.

A lot has been going on since our last newsletter, so here is a pre-season round up of our activities and plans. We are writing this newsletter in June, before the first big event of the year, but Paul and Clinton did their first outing with the Ford F30, to support the Norfolk County Royal British Legion parade in Watton, 23rd May. Scott and Tom (*Desert Raiders* regulars) represented the Army Cadets.

Shows and Events.

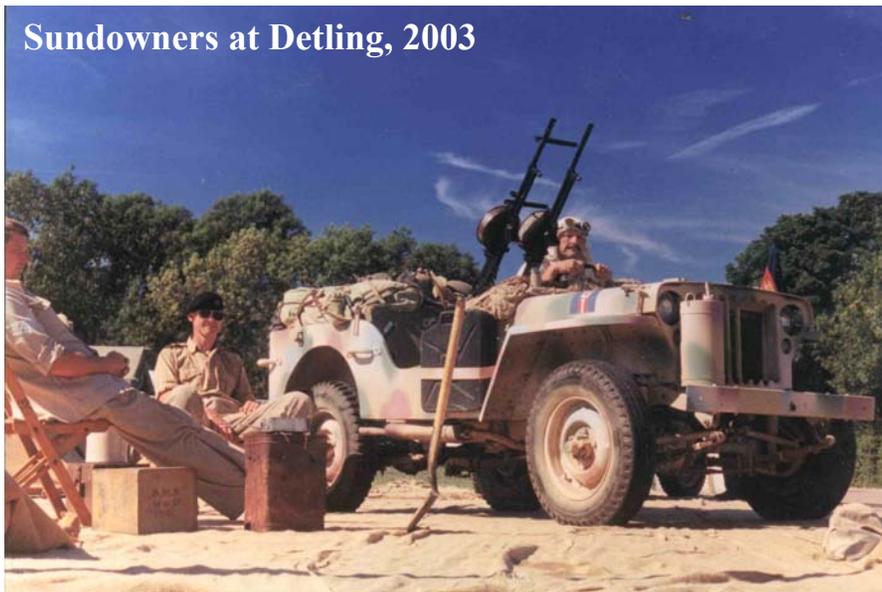
We had hoped to make the D-Day commemorations this year, but for various reasons, it was not practicable and we had to call it off. It's a pity as we were looking forward to it, but the vehicles we wanted to take are not quite ready. One local event that we will be attending is the 7th Armoured Division memorial in Thetford Forest on 27th June. You may recall that we failed in the attempt last year due to mechanical problems – better luck this time, we hope.

We have booked into four major shows for 2004 and, as usual, anyone is welcome to come and participate, or just drop in for a chat. Any help in manning the display, collecting kit and ferrying people will be much appreciated and you can get up to date details on our plans from Paul Lincoln by Email at desertraiders@msn.com or Peter Sanders at peter_f_sanders@yahoo.co.uk. Here's what we have planned so far:

- Muckleburgh Collection (Weybourne, Norfolk) – 19th-20th June.
- Campaign 2004, Twinwood Airfield, Bedford – 10th-11th July.
- War & Peace, Beltring – 21st-25th July.
- Military Odyssey, Detling, Kent – 27th-30th August.

Muckleburgh. Our first full outing will be at the Muckleburgh Collection on the North Norfolk coast. We are trying to get as many of our vehicles together as we can, and put on a great display. This is a big Military Vehicle weekend event and it should produce some great photographs as the site is so similar to the North African coast. We are making a concerted effort to get some really good photos of the vehicles in realistic settings for another project in 2006 – for details, read on!! In addition, we will be leaving two of our vehicles for the summer at Muckleburgh as part of our Museum plans – this is also described in more detail later in the newsletter.

Campaign 2004. This show is a World War II only event, held at Twinwood Airfield, Clapham (just North of Bedford). It replaces the Special Forces show (Chutes & Daggers) previously held at Bletchley Park, but is on a much bigger scale. Only the best groups are invited to participate, so it is a privilege to be asked to attend. We hope to have at least 6 vehicles on show and have been promised a prime site on the showground. We did not attend last year, but, by all accounts, this was a really great show, with a terrific atmosphere. So, do come and visit us, or join us to crew a vehicle.



Beltring. Unfortunately, Beltring is to be held at a very bad time for Paul and Scott this year – Paul is on annual camp at the time, and Scott is on an Army Cadet Instructor's Cadre the whole week. However, there is some good news as Paul has gained permission to leave camp for the five days of the show and Scott can come to the show on Saturday and Sunday, so the Lincoln family will be well represented. We hope to have at least 6 vehicles on show, maybe with one new offering as we have 5 projects nearing completion. One big disappointment is that Jack and Donna Valenti from the LRDG Preservation Society in California cannot be with us this year; however, they send all the *Desert Raiders* their very best wishes for a successful and enjoyable season. We will have our 20 man Swedish Bell tent for accommodation, so there is no excuse not to stay for at least one night with us!



Detling. We will be back in Kent again for Military Odyssey, which takes place over the August Bank Holiday this year, so it is a 3 day show. Those of you who went last year will know that the extra day is needed as it is such a big multi period show, and very, very good. Look out for another new vehicle on our display, if all goes well with the restoration.

Our final outing this year is likely to be to the North Norfolk Railway at Holt/Sheringham in late September. Paul and Clinton went last year and it was an excellent local show.

Vehicles.

We have made progress on all our on-going vehicle projects, bought some more vehicles and stated planning for even more. Some might even be finished soon. Here is a round up of work in progress on our new projects; rest assured that all our “old faithful” vehicles are safe and sound, raring to get out on the road.

8cwt Canadian Ford. Paul and Clinton finally got hold of their long sought after 8 cwt CMP Ford. They travelled to Holland to see it, but, due to the time difference, rough seas and dubious directions, they only had an hour to make up their minds. The Ford stood in a very gloomy shed with poor lighting, making it difficult to inspect, but it seemed to be nearly complete and sound, although the back body had been enlarged. It was a little too early (1940, not 1941), but such is the rarity that a deal was quickly done. It turned up in a cold and snowy Norfolk just after Christmas in a big box lorry. Peter arrived from the heat of Saudi Arabia at exactly the same time and rushed straight off to meet the lorry in a lay-by: not even time for a celebratory glass of fizzy apple juice. The Ford rolled straight out of the lorry onto a big trailer Clinton had borrowed, before Peter towed it to Clinton’s garage. Unfortunately, no-one took any photographs of the comic efforts to offload it up the drive, sliding around on the snow and ice. Clinton knew that it was not a good idea to start work on the F8 when the 3 tonner still had so much to do, but within a week, the temptation became too much and he started dismantling it in his spare time. It is a big job, with the vehicle not being in such a good condition as hoped, but at least Paul and Clinton will have something to do when the 3 tonner is finished.



**F8 in Holland,
before
delivery to
Norfolk**

CMP 3 Tonner. This is proving the most drastic job Paul & Clinton have attempted; having completed 18 vehicles in the past, that is saying a lot. Many parts and panels are missing or too rotten to re-use, so countless hours had to be spent on fabrication. Progress is, however, good and it now looks like a lorry again! Some of the wiring is back in place and the front of the cab and wings have been bolted back in place. A new floor has been made and five cab backs are soon to arrive. That leaves a few spare cab backs for future projects..... Bob (the V8 engine man) found the right exhaust manifold, so they can fabricate the rest of the exhaust system, and run the engine without ear plugs. The final cab and engine panels are ready, after grit blasting, and being put back in place. The radiator is off for re-building and there is finally light visible at the end of the tunnel.

Chevrolet WA. This is just one of David’s current projects – it looks like being completed in June. He has had the final stowage bins fabricated and the whole vehicle can then be sprayed and the markings added, before rolling out onto the show season. David has even managed to get hold of a Boyes anti-tank rifle and a Lewis gun for it. This will give us an example of the first LRDG patrol vehicle, giving us the chance to field all three types of patrol vehicle used by the LRDG.

Ford V8 01. The sorry tale of Peter’s Ford ’01 V8 pickup continues..... It is being restored near Gloucester, but it is very much a part time effort. Progress is very slow and not much of substance has been done. It is back to being a rolling chassis and the front panels finished, but that is about it. It’s all very disappointing and as soon as the C11ADF is done, the Norfolk team can have the V8 Pickup to work on.

Another **Ford V8 01.** David went on holiday to Devon for a weekend with Dianne, and came back with a pretty rare vehicle known as a WOC 1. The front end is almost identical to the ’01 V8 Ford pick-ups used by the LRDG, so David plans to restore it as a patrol commander’s car, to go along with his Chevrolet WA. It is right hand drive, so it will be fitted with a wooden body, and probably in Rhodesian markings.

C11ADF. This project is getting close to being finished and you will most likely see it later this summer. The company in Norfolk doing the conversion is really good and they are doing a first class job. It will be a full “nuts and bolts” strip down and re-build, with everything being done to museum quality. Peter did hope to have it ready for June, but August is more likely (Beltring in July is still possible, so look out for it then). David donated a set of 900x13 sand tyres (now impossible to find) and Peter has four Vickers Ks, some 2 gallon can racks and a spotlight ready to fit. All the mechanicals are done: engine, brakes, suspension, rear axle, exhaust, transmission, engine and so forth. It’s been changed from Left Hand Drive to Right Hand Drive (the biggest problem was having to change the gearbox to accommodate this) and all the metal and wooden panels have been prepared. All that remains is to put the Meccano set together, fit the accessories and paint it.



**C11ADF
“Blitz
Buggy”**

SAS European Jeep. Considering that David had bought a 3 ton Ford last year and Adrian’s Chevrolet 1533 and the WOC 1 even more recently, you would have thought that he had enough on this plate. Not a bit of it!! You may recall that we were joined at the last Bletchley Park show by Bill in his armoured SAS European Jeep. Bill, unfortunately, hasn’t been too well recently and decided to part with his beloved Jeep. Guess who did a deal with Bill? – got in one: David. This Jeep is complete, with all the correct fittings, and in fine condition, so it does not need a great deal of work done on it.

Transport.

One of our biggest problems for many years has been transport – how do we get a large number of vehicles to a show in a short period, and get them home again afterwards? Up to now, we have done the best we can individually, with small trailers, pickup trucks and the Volvo Beavertail. It has never been really satisfactory and we now have a solution that will keep the Volvo in the group, plus the use of an articulated flat-bed when we need it. The artic will take two trucks and two Jeeps, greatly increasing our ability to get vehicles to shows. This arrangement means that Paul or David can drive the Volvo, Clinton (who’s HGV qualified) can drive the artic and Peter can take his Bedford plus Jeep or one of his Ford V8s. With a bit of planning, that would mean we could get 8 vehicles plus all our kit shipped in one lift. That would make life a lot easier and give us a great display – watch out for the new arrangements to take effect.

Filming.

Gerry, the Irish film producer who produced the one hour documentary on Paddy Mayne last year, says that his project is now close to successful completion, after experiencing a few technical problems. So, look out for the show on the small screen soon – we will let you all know as soon as it is released. Gerry was quite excited about the prospect of this being the first in a series, so we are likely to be roped in again.

We have also been approached (through a friend of Peter who hires out vehicles for film work) by a film company working on a documentary on deception in World War II. One part relates to the North African campaign – the use of dummy tank tracks, vehicles, pipelines, ammunition dumps etc. – so it looks like we will be called in. We are trying to convince them to include a scene where the SAS posed as Germans to operate in Benghazi and North African coastal areas. Filming is planned for July this year in Norfolk and, as usual, we will be looking for extras. Perhaps it will be the first starring role for the Blitz Buggy!

Museum.

Things have progressed very well on the Museum front over the last 6 months. We are still keeping our “Watton at War” and Home Guard displays at the Bressingham Steam Museum, but the *Desert Raiders* hall is a long way off, due to financial constraints. However, we have re-established contact with Michael Savory at the Muckleburgh Collection and he has given us space for a display in the Tank Hall for the summer. Current plans are for Peter to provide the Bedford and David to loan one of his Jeeps, with Paul putting together the “Night Camp” scenery and equipment (camp fire, complete with flickering light effects, black backdrop and the usual LRDG pile of kit. We aim to set up the display during the weekend show at Muckleburgh (June 19/20th) and it will be left there until September at least. Muckleburgh will lay on the publicity, including local press and radio pieces, so that people get to know about the new display.

This is an exciting new venture for the group and we are hoping that it is the first step on the way to getting our own permanent display to record the activities of the British special forces in 1940-43. Naturally, we will keep you fully updated in the next Newsletter, but if you get a chance, please visit Muckleburgh during the summer and check out the display.

Stop Press. Just as this Newsletter was about to be printed, we were contacted by the Royal Artillery Museum, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich. They are organising an event called Firepower during the summer, from 27th July to 5th September. They saw the *Desert Raiders* at Detling, were very impressed and have asked us if we would like to put on a display for them. They have plenty of space and we could do a weekend with lots of vehicles and people, or keep a small display for the season. They open the day after Beltring, so one idea is that Peter could drop off his SAS Jeep after War & Peace and collect it for Military Odyssey at Detling. Anyway, Peter will visit them early in July to see what sort of thing will be possible – he will also take the opportunity to visit the Imperial War Museum to check out the photographs for the 2006 calendar and to examine their Wasp flamethrower for his PPA Italy project.



We Need YOU to Read and Comment on a Home Office Consultation Paper.

In May 2004, the Home Office produced a consultation paper “Controls on Firearms”. This is a very important document, with a lot of useful information and statistics. It deals with a range of issues related to plans for updating UK firearms legislation and it can be obtained at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>. There are two areas of concern to the *Desert Raiders* and we URGENTLY seek YOUR input, feedback and comments as we intend to make representations to the Home Office – the deadline for submitting comments is 31 August 2004.

Part of the Consultation Paper deals with Imitation and Deactivated Firearms – obviously, these items are essential components of our vehicles and feature in all our displays, so any changes in the legislation will affect us significantly.

Imitation Firearms. The paper discusses the possibility of licensing all imitation firearms, but it notes that:

- it is difficult to set out a workable legal definition of “imitation firearm”;
- there will be significant numbers of imitation firearms owned for wholly legitimate reasons;
- other European countries (with the exception of the Netherlands) have no licensing or prohibition legislation;
- current UK legislation is sufficient as the same offenses and penalties apply to misuse of imitation and actual firearms.

In summary, the consultation paper proposes that imitations should NOT be licensed or their sales restricted, but seeks input and comment from the public. It is our opinion that this is a sensible approach and the *Desert Raiders* should make formal representation to the Home Office, making the case that changes to the law are unnecessary and unworkable, and that the additional administrative cost is unlikely to be offset by any increase in public safety.

Deactivated Firearms. The paper discusses possession and sale of deactivated firearms. It states that there is NO evidence that guns deactivated to the current (1995) standard have been re-activated, but they are concerned that the standards are not retrospective. They seek comments on the following:

- what is the value and practicality of making the 1995 deactivation standards mandatory for all deactivated guns? (i.e. old specification deactivations must be upgraded to the 1995 standard);
- can/should the 1995 deactivation standards be improved? (they note that these are tough compared to other countries);
- should all deactivated firearms be licensed? (they estimate that 100,000 deactivated guns are in private hands: we think this is a gross underestimate).

The Consultation Paper expresses no definite view on how to deal with deactivated firearms, but it is somewhat re-assuring that there is no hint of a ban being discussed. Nevertheless, the *Desert Raiders* MUST express an opinion and stress that groups such as ourselves possess deactivated firearms for perfectly legitimate and harmless reasons. We propose to submit that:

- we do not see that there is any public benefit from imposing any further regulations on the sale/possession of deactivated firearms;
- the cost and complexity of licensing is unwarranted as it will produce no increase in public safety (will criminals bother to get any deactivated firearms licensed?);
- enforcing retrospective deactivation to 1995 standards and tightening of these standards are unworkable and will give no increased protection to the public (criminals will ignore any such legislation and legitimate owners will be unfairly targetted).

We very much value your input and response. The more feedback we get from individuals in the Group, the more strongly we can make our case to the Home Office. Please send your reply by Email to Paul Lincoln at desertraiders@msn.com and Peter Sanders at peter_f_sanders@yahoo.co.uk, or by post to Paul. We will discuss all the responses and draft a submission to the Home Office.

Desert Raiders Association.

Another major development that we have been discussing amongst ourselves is putting the *Desert Raiders* group on a more formal footing. We have considered various options, including becoming a charity, but our view is that the formation of a properly constituted Association is the best way forward. This would allow us to apply for Lottery Funding if we ultimately decide to set up a museum to display and interpret our vehicles and equipment (see page 9 of this Newsletter). We could also register as a Charity at a later date if we thought that was appropriate. Being a formally constituted association would also give us more credibility in any submission we might make to the Home Office on the issue of deactivated and imitation firearms (see pages 12 and 13 of this Newsletter).

The objective of this Association (the Desert Raiders Association) is to be a focus for all UK activities relating to the wartime British Special Forces Units which were set up in North Africa at the start of the second world war, in particular The **Long Range Desert Group** (initially Long Range Patrols), the **Special Air Service** (initially L Detachment) and **Popski's Private Army** (initially No 1 Demolition Squadron). The period forming the objective of the Association is from 1940 to 1945, when the LRDG and SAS were disbanded. It shall not be part of the objectives to study the post war SAS.

Specifically, the Association sets out to operate in two areas, with the following objects:

(1) Research and Scholarship.

- Research the role and operations of British Special Forces units, from their establishment in North Africa in 1940 to their disbandment at the end of the Second World War.
- Compile a comprehensive technical library of published work, archive of manuscripts, personal diaries, letters and documents from ex-servicemen for scholarly study.
- Publish research findings in appropriate Journals, disseminate information by means of a website on the internet and contribute to related publications by other organizations or individuals.

(2) Education.

- Participate in documentary and educational films relating to British Special Forces units of WWII to provide accurate background information and visual material.
- Contribute to the Second World War modules of the National Curriculum by providing display material, teaching aids and talks to local schools and educational institutions.
- Develop a comprehensive collection of (inter alia) vehicles, equipment, paperwork and de-activated weapons from these units to form a permanent record of the important role they played at critical periods of the Second World War.
- Recover, restore and maintain vehicles and equipment used by British Special Forces units of the period.
- Establish a permanent museum, open to the general public, to display and interpret life of these unique units and to educate the general public about their organizations, operations and personnel.
- Construct a permanent public memorial to the Long Range Desert Group with the support of veterans associations and individuals.
- Provide themed displays of vehicles, de-activated weapons, period equipment, tools and memorabilia at relevant local, national and international events, interacting with the general public to disseminate information and educational literature on the period.
- Issue regular newsletters to Members, describing the activities of the Association.

The Association will be administered by an Executive Committee, consisting of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and two other officers, who will be elected every year from the membership. We also intend to elect a Patron, who will normally be a retired serviceman linked to the wartime special forces.

Packing up after the show...



We hope that you have enjoyed this issue of our Newsletter. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues. In particular, we will be pleased to receive any contributions, so don't hesitate to drop Paul or Peter a line – we both access our new Email on desertraidersassociation@yahoo.co.uk.

Wishing everyone a safe and enjoyable season, and hoping to see you at the shows.

The Desert Raiders Newsletter Team, June 2004.

