



# LCT-586 IN ENGLAND

## BEFORE D-DAY INVASION

Howard D. Williams - MoMM 3/c

*Before we left England, we were issued impregnated uniforms to wear in case of a gas attack. We had to wear those stinking clothes with our life jackets on at all times--even sleep in them. . .*

I worked aboard our LCT all the way over to England getting it ready for sea duty for when it would be launched. We pulled into the harbor at Falmouth on the south coast of England. There was no entertainment for the service men there. We had to go inland about fifteen miles to a town called Truro. They had a nice hall there and had dances a few nights during the week. We had to go by taxi over and back. Going over wasn't bad, but coming back was something else. They had blackouts so the vehicles had only dim lights for headlights. It looked more like little parking lights. The cab driver would drive fifty-sixty miles an hour on the little two-lane road up and down hills and around curves. Us fellows would sit on the floor in the back seat so we couldn't see the road and thought we might have a little more protection if he wrecked. We had to give up going as it was too nerve-racking.

After a week in Falmouth, we left for Plymouth. We went up the River to Saltash, there were several LCTs there and the British Navy had twenty foot boats for ferrying services to the LCTs operated by three British WRENS, like the U.S. WAVES. Saltash had a population of about two thousand people. It was a suburb of Plymouth.

They had real nice roads there. I bought a motorbike there for two pounds (about \$20.00 U.S.) It sure was a noisy bike. We would ride up and down the hills on the main road until the townspeople called the constable who made us stop the noise after dark. The first couple of days that I had the bike, we kept it aboard the ship and hauled it back and forth in our little eight foot dingy. That was pretty dangerous as I had to stand up and hold it upright. It felt like I was going to fall over with it several times. This dingy was really just a row boat and when we had the bike in it, we had to paddle it like a canoe. When we left, I asked the blacksmith if I could leave it with him. He said to put it in a little side room in his shop.

While in Plymouth, I went dancing at the Place Ball room in one of the big hotels - very fancy. I was dancing with a young lady when the band started playing a fast number. A big guy came over to us and said, "No jitterbug dancing permitted here." I told him I didn't know how to jitterbug. A little time later, they played another fast number. The same guy came over again and said, "Next time you will have to leave." I again told him I didn't know how to jitterbug. Well, it wasn't long before they played another fast number and here he came and out I went. I never knew what happened to the young lady. That was the first time I ever had anyone tell me I could jitterbug. I never thought I could even impersonate a jitterbug dancer.

### Dartmouth

We left Saltash for Dartmouth. Dartmouth was a pretty little town with lots of little shops like you see in England pictures. Dartmouth was proud to be the only city in the world that had a railroad station and no railroad in the town. You had to cross the Dartmouth River to Kingston to catch the train. The Dartmouth River was very wide and deep. Some very large ships would come up the river. Dartmouth had the British Naval Academy there and all the royal men went to college there. The U.S. Navy had its headquarters there. It is where we went to church and also to some special training classes. The buildings were old but beautiful.

We anchored about a mile or so up this river. It had two very sharp bends in the river up by where we anchored. Whenever a tide was coming in or going out and the craft were coming in or going out, they would run into us. We had lots of liberty here. Someone would take us to shore then we would walk two miles to the railroad, pickup and ride the train in to Torquay. Torquay was larger than Dartmouth and also very beautiful. It was a summer resort and had a nice big spa, very lovely dance hall and a very large beautiful hotel that the Red Cross ran for the servicemen. The rooms had big beds