FLOTILLA

NEWSLETTER OF THE LCT FLOTILLAS OF WORLD WAR II

HONORING THE MEN WHO SERVED ON THE LANDING CRAFT OF THE U.S. AMPHIBIOUS FORCES

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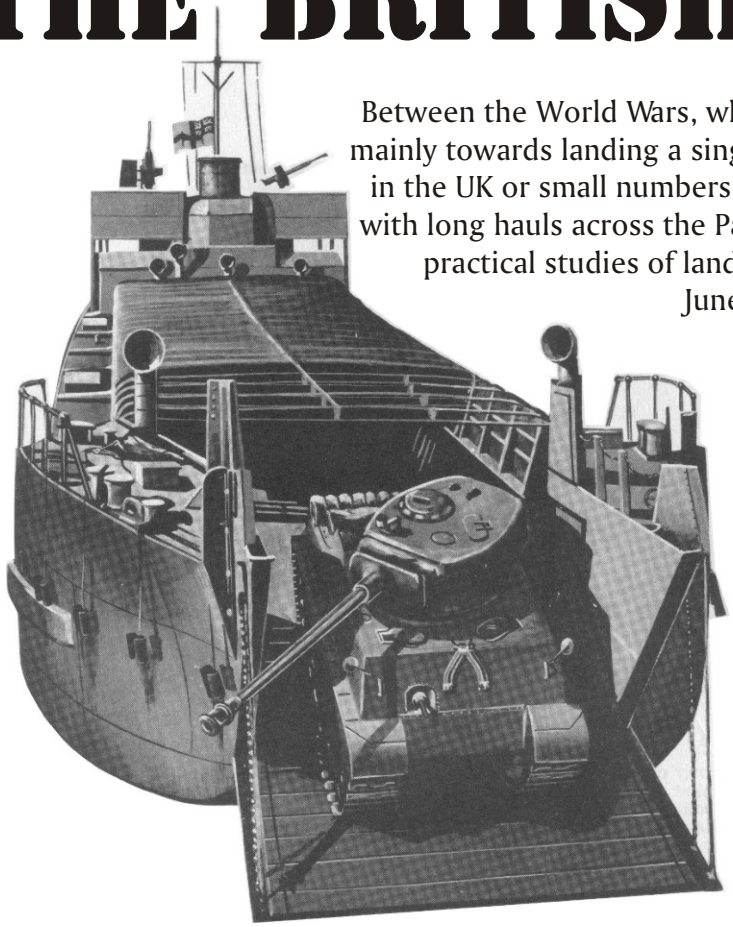
THE BRITISH MK-4 LCT



Between the World Wars, what work was done on landing tanks was directed mainly towards landing a single vehicle from specially built craft like the LCMs in the UK or small numbers from barges in the USA. Only the Japanese, faced with long hauls across the Pacific for their military ambitions, had made deep practical studies of landing vehicles and equipment in quantity. Not until June 1940 did the British begin to work out methods of landing tanks in the numbers required for a major raid. When Prime Minister Churchill asked what could be done, Admirals Baker and Maund set the parameters for a craft that could load up with tanks at home and carry them to the coasts of occupied Europe.

The first Mk-1s were skittish and almost totally unmanageable at sea. Late in 1940, orders were placed for thirty 152-foot Mk-1s while designers were already working on the Mk-2, a larger (159') version with bigger engines, more armor and greater range. In early 1941, a 32-foot section was added to a Mk-1 and the resulting 5-section LCT was faster than the original design--this became the Mk-3 which saw action during the disastrous raid on Dieppe in April 1942.

During the raid on Dieppe, a German strongpoint on the French coast between Normandy and Dunkirk, the first LCTs were late and failed to land their Churchill tanks on time, while others lost their tanks at sea. These problems, along with stiff enemy resistance, led to huge Canadian and British losses.

In September of 1942, the first of the new LCT Mk-4s were completed--lightly built and without armament, this design was to go through several modifications. The tank deck, unlike earlier marks, was above the water-line so vehicles moved down a slight incline to the ramp, the deep cross-sections of the double bottom being divided into watertight compartments approximately 15ft x 15ft x 15ft. The extra beam gave more space for crew accommodation and for tank crews who on earlier LCTs had to live on the tank deck while on passage.

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