

Naval Construction Battalion Detachment 1049

Historical Information



“Construimus, Batuimus”
“We Build, We Fight”



NCTC - Peary
 ABD - Davisville
 Ready Date - 31 Mar'44
 Left ABD - 5 Apr'44
 Location - ~~ComNavEu~~ Exeter

LOG

- 3-21-44 - Ens. Cape assigned from Peary (Budocks ltr to Bupers dated 14 Mar'44).
 3-21-44 - Carp. Oldham and Swanson assigned from Peary (Budocks ltr to Bupers dated 13 Mar'44).
 3-27-44 - Carp. Oldham's orders to Det. 1049 Cancelled (Budocks ltr to Bupers dated 23 Mar'44).
 4-6-44 - Carp. Shinalt assigned from Peary (Budocks ltr to Bupers dated 25 Mar'44).
 4-15-44 - CB Det. 1049 left ABD 5 April'44. (WRK)
 4-28-44 - Officer roster checked with embarkation orders and OK. - dated 1 Apr'44.
 8-15-44 - Det. 1049 operations at Exeter consists of truck driving and other maintenance (ComNavEu Secret Memo to Adm. H. R. Stark dtd 25 Jul'44).
 1-24-45 - Det. 1049 is presently assigned to ComPhibsUKay and will remain stationed at USNASB, Exeter for an indefinite period, after which the Detachment will be used in Continental activities. (ComNavEu conf ltr P16-5 over Ser 0359 dtd 10 Jan'45 to CNO)
 1-31-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of Det. 1049 - located at NavAmph Supply Base, Exeter.
 2-28-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of Det. 1049 - located at Exeter, England.
 5-15-45 - 1 May'45 report of Det. 1049 - located at Exeter, England.
 6-19-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of Det. 1049 - located at Exeter, England. The enl personnel of this detachment comprise 53% of the U.S. NavAmph Supply Base, Exeter, Devon.
 6-30-45 - CBD 1049 has 3 off. and 233 men on board as of 15 June. Decision has been reached to augment the CBD 1049 to total strength of 5 off. and approx 420 men to take

CBD 1049

- 6-30-45 - (Cont from prev cd) over the maint and operation of all vehicles and rolling stock at USNAASD Exeter. The personnel required to bring this detachment to its required strength is being obtained from the 97th CB (men who have been in the ETO less than 1 yr), from the 69th CB personnel, and CBMJs 627 and 629. Key men from these other organizations are being transferred to CBD 1049 as rapidly as practicable and full strength should be reached not later than 1 Jul'45. (Dirlantdocks conf memo ADYD-00431 dtd 23 June to Nav Insp Gen--Copy of Conf Memo for Adm Strark dtd 15 June "Distribution of CB personnel in the ETO as of 15 Jun'45")
 7-11-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of Det. 1049 - located at Exeter, Devon.
 7-13-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 97th CB - Approx 50 men transferred to CBD 1049 in June.
 8-17-45 - Upon departure of the 97th CB on or about 20 August, Heathfield will be disestablished as a CB depot and at that time the personnel will be reduced to approx 1 off. and 30 men who will report to the OinC of CBD 1049 at Exeter for adm purposes. (ComNavFor Europe ltr 8967 dtd 1 Aug to CO USNASB Exeter)
 8-21-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of Det 1049 - located at Exeter, Devon.
 9-24-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of CBD 1049 - no info as to location.
 10-26-45 - 1 Oct'45 report of CBD 1049. Located at Exeter. As of 30 Sept'45 CBD 1049 pers. is distributed as follows:-
 382 men at Exeter, 34 men at London, 23 men at Plymouth, 19 men at Heathfield, 14 men at Vicarage..23 men rec'd from 30(Sp). Sec. 1.
 11-20-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of CBD 1049 - location not stated. 58 men transferred to U.S. for discharge under the point system.
 12-19-45 - 1 Dec'45 report of CBD 1049 - location not stated. 142 men transferred to U.S. for discharge. 134 men transferred to U.S. for leave & reassignment.

Location - Exeter, Devon (formerly) CBD 1049
 England - London

- 1-30-46 - 1 Jan'46 report of CBD 1049 - location not stated. 16 men transferred to U.S. for discharge. 13 men rec'd from CBMU 636 for duty.
- 2-13-46 - 1 Feb 46 report of CBD 1049 - located at Exeter.
- 3-13-46 - 1 Mar 46 report of CBD 1049 - located at Exeter. Report via ComNavEu.
- 4-10-46 - 1 Apr 46 report of CBD 1049 - located at Exeter. Report via ComNavEu.
- 12-22-47 - CBD¹⁰⁴⁹ advised that now located- London, England
 Nov. 47 report of CBD 1049-located London, England. Rpt via BirLanCm.

<u>ON BOARD</u>			
<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Apr'44	3	250	Emb. Ords.
1 Jan'45	3	243	MoR
1 Feb'45	3	242	MoR
1 May'45	3	234	MoR
1 Jun'45	3	234	moR
1 Jul'45	6	282	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	6	364	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45	14	551	BNP625 & R
1 Oct'45	14	473	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	7	170	BNP625 & R
1 Dec'45	5	137	BNP625 & R
1 Jan'46	5	133	BNP625 & R
1 Feb 46	2	116	BNP 625 & R
1 Mar 46	2	82	BNP 625 & R
1 Sep 46	1	39	BNP 625 & R
1 Oct 46	1	39	BNP 625 & Roster
1 Nov 46	1	37	BNP 625 & Roster
1 Dec.46	1	37	BNP 625 & Roster
1 Jan.47	1	37	BNP 625 & Roster
1 Feb. 47	1	40	BNP 625 & Roster
1 Mar. 47	1	40	BNP 625 & Roster

C.B. Detachment #1049 (Truck Operators)

1049 det. (Truck operators)

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Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
9/20	-	United Kingdom	C. B. report 1 September	Departed April 1944
1/19	-	"	Ltr from Com. US Nav. forces Europe com) 1-0359.9 17 Jan.	Assid Comphiborskey and remain stationed USNARS. Expected for an indefinite period.

U.S. AMPHIBIOUS SUPPLY BASE :: EXETER :: ENGLAND

LIFELINE OF INVASION

THE story of Exeter is in four parts. Fitted together, these parts combine to make a naval epic of how a great amphibious supply base came to be the lifeline of history's greatest amphibious operation. In each of these parts there were moments of greatness and moments of disappointment. But, now that the invasion of Europe is successful history, it seems just to say that the moments of greatness were definitely ascendant. In brief, Exeter's story encompasses the Days of Planning, the Days of Mud, the Days of Growth, and the Days of Fruition.

From its beginning, it was planned that Exeter should be the supply depot for an amphibious fleet which would someday take to the narrow channel sea that leads to France in numbers and in strength which even a few years ago would have seemed fantastic. But it is doubtful if anyone, in the beginning, realized to what proportions Exeter must grow before she could do her job as she was ultimately called upon to do it.

Exeter really began in September of 1943, and her beginning was the assembly of eight officers and 121 men at Lido Beach, Long Island. Of these eight officers, five are still at Exeter, and they have seen their number added until, at its peak, Exeter carried on her rolls 200 officers and 2,600 men, whose efforts were spread throughout 32 departments.

Early in 1943 plans were laid for the establishment of a group of United States Naval amphibious bases in Southern England. Later it was decided that Exeter should be the central lifeline of supply for these bases, and a map of Southern England will show well her geographical location made her able to be that. To Falmouth, Fowey, Plymouth, and Dartmouth, and to all the other bases which ultimately comprised the operating backbone of the United States Naval Forces in Europe, Exeter's position made it possible for her to move materials in less than a day by road, overnight by rail. Her geographical position thereby gave her the first requisite of an amphibious supply base; an ability to move urgently needed materials.

To function and to grow, Exeter needed access to rail connections, and she needed room in which to rear her 85 warehouses and 198 huts and four auxiliary buildings. When finally completed, the base at Exeter covered 95 acres, with an additional 75 acres acquired as open storage areas in Hawkerland Valley and at Winslade Park.

The land upon which Exeter was built was partly farmland and partly nice holes of an 18-hole golf course. This land was acquired by the British Government for the United States Navy. Actual construction began on 12th October, 1943.

October, like most Octobers in England, was a period of rain. So were the winter months which followed it. Rain came down in endless sheets for endless days, and the soft farmland and the green turf of the golf course gave way and sprouted mud.

The mud became Exeter's greatest enemy. It mired down her trucks day after day, and held them fast until the tractors came to pull them out. It made walking across the areas of construction a painful and laborious task. It swallowed up the first attempts at roads until, finally, a total of 100,000 loads of rock and sand had to be poured into the area until the roads were sound. It made the building of Exeter's warehouses on schedule a task which sometimes seemed impossible of accomplishment. It gave every man who worked at Exeter in those days "mudphobia". He walked through it by day, and washed himself free of it at night; his clothes were caked with it, and its pungent odour was with him while he slept. It caught at his vehicles and his machines, clogged equipment, choked radiators, sunk foundations. It was his greatest enemy, and con-

tinued to be his greatest enemy all through the winter months when the construction fever was at its height. Neither he nor Exeter were free of the mud until the Spring of 1944.

By Spring, however, most of the headaches of construction were over. But during those long months of construction, the delivery of supplies from the States could not wait. Often at the rate of 200 freight cars per day the materials of war poured into Exeter, and there was no place for them except in the open, or under the cover of hastily erected tents. So with the coming of Spring, and the near-end of construction, there was the big job of moving these great piles of material into the new warehouses, of segregating it by classes, of inventorying it, of ordering still more and more material. And throughout this period of organization and growth into a functioning base—as the needs of the amphibious bases, which also had been growing, began to multiply—Exeter found it necessary to function as a source of supply even while she was still in need of time to put her own house into order. By late February, 300 trucks a day were moving out of Exeter to the amphibious bases around her, and long lines of freight wagons were being unloaded at the railway sidings for those same bases. Not yet in commission, Exeter was already the lifeline of invasion preparations, and her trucks thundered out that message to the bases she was supplying by night and by day.

Exeter went into commission on 3 February 1944. On that day, the task which lay before her was clear: invasion could not be many months away; on every side the need for urgent speed was evident; there was a tremendous supply job to be done, and not much time in which to do it. But there was no man at Exeter who did not feel that the job could be done with even greater success than the mud of the previous winter had been licked, and the problems of organization had been overcome. There was reason for such confidence. As Exeter went into commission, the departments under her command were marshalled for the tasks which lay ahead.

1049 UNITED STATES NAVAL CONSTRUCTION DETACHMENT

This Transportation Unit, the first of its kind, was formed in Camp Perry, Va. in March 1944. They were sent to Camp Thomas, Davisville, R.I. where their new Officers joined them.

They left the States in the early part of April and landed at Gurrock, Scotland, the middle of April. They had a short view of Scotland on their trip up the River Clyde to Glasgow. They were disembarked late at night and boarded a train and headed for Exeter, Devonshire, the largest United States Naval Amphibious Supply Base in England. Their work started the day after they arrived when an emergency arose that required seventy-five men to go to a Depot over two hundred miles away and pick up seventy-five badly needed vehicles and return by convoy to Exeter. These men had never driven a vehicle on English roads, and left-side-of-the-road driving was new to them. Through perseverance and concentration on the job in hand these vehicles were brought back to the base undamaged and on time. They were congratulated by the Executive Officer on a job well done.

1049 is composed of all Machinists' Mates except two men. The average age is thirty-two, the youngest is 19 years of age, the oldest fifty-six. Ninety-five per cent are married and have families in the States.

TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

It is acknowledgedly true that a modern army is effective only within the limits of the transportation system which keeps it supplied with weapons of war. And, although a Navy moves and fights upon the sea, it is equally true that it can move across the sea to fight only after the land-based Navy has accomplished its job of readying those ships for battle.

For the land-based United States Navy in Great Britain, the Transportation Department at Exeter was the lifeline of supply, and for more than a year the trucks of that department have

rolled across the hills of Southern England, the meadows of the Midland, and the jagged shorelines of Scotland and Wales. Exeter's Transportation Department is big business. Look at these figures :

It operated before and after D-day 388 cargo trucks, varying from 1½-ton capacity to giant trailers carrying 25 tons in stride. Hauling an average of 3½ tons, these trucks moved for many weeks an average of 225,000 ton-miles of freight per day, 6,750,000 ton-miles per month.

Its services, on regular weekly schedules, approximately 1,000 vehicles. Through its fully equipped garage feed 2,000 repair jobs per month.

Into the greedy tanks of its vehicles it poured, at invasion peak, more than 8,000 gallons of gasoline per day.

In addition to its hundreds of special runs per day, it operates regular freight runs from and to the following points :

Exeter-Launceston-Appledore-Tiverton-Exeter

Exeter-Launceston-Plymouth-Salcombe-Dartmouth-Teignmouth-Exeter

Plymouth-Launceston-Falmouth-Fowey-Plymouth

Exeter-Tidworth

Milford Haven-Penarth

Penarth-Tidworth

Exeter-Weymouth-Portland-Poole-Exeter

Southampton-Tidworth-Southampton

London-Nore-Richborough.

In addition to the trucks which it operates under its own cognizance, this department is responsible for the welfare and maintenance of the 81 vehicles operated by the Supply Department at Exeter, and the 65 vehicles operated by the Tenth Special Construction Battalion.

Five officers and 608 men shouldered the terrific burdens of this department. Their number was adequate, in most instances, simply because each of these officers and men was willing to do more than his share of work. A full day on the road was often just a prelude to an evening of working in the heavy equipment shop. And under the cumulative pressure of the days before and after invasion, it was not an unusual sight to see a line of volunteers standing in the rain outside the dispatcher's unit, waiting for assignment to some extra job that might make the difference between supplies reaching a ship on time or too late.

Extraordinary measures had to be taken on occasion to make certain that no bottlenecks appeared. Three typical examples will prove the point : one is a story of initiative, another of perseverance, and the third is a story of the kind of co-operation and willingness to serve which break bottlenecks before they leave the glassblower's strangling pipe.

A few hours before D-day, an MTB Squadron telephoned Plymouth with an urgent request for highly specialized 37—, cannon and armor-piercing shells. This material was to be obtained from a secret Army Ordnance Depot, the location of which was not known accurately and could not be determined quickly because of the secrecy with which it was surrounded. A transportation driver was presented with the problem of finding this depot and of securing the required material for delivery several hundred miles away.

With knowledge only of the general location of this depot, the driver left Exeter at 10.00 in the morning. Driving without rest or sleep in a frantic and urgent search, he finally found the depot at 0400 the next morning. Still without rest, this driver secured the required material and fought his truck through to make delivery before noon of the same day.

And on another frantic pre-invasion day, a hurry-up order was received from Milford Haven, Wales, at 1630 in the afternoon, for delivery of 65 propulsion engines by 0900 the next morning.

By 1800 these engines had been loaded into 65 trucks, and a call for volunteer drivers had been issued and answered. How was it answered? By ship's cooks, by barbers, by men from every department who were willing to do their extra share.

Walking into the barber shop, a transportation officer barked, "Are there any men here who can drive a truck—and do it *right now*?"

"Yup," said one among the many barbers who volunteered, "I can!" The barber laid down his scissors and took to the wheel, and a Lieutenant Commander departed with half his hair cut and half of it uncut. Is there any need to say that the 65 engines were in Milford Haven in time?

Such is the story of Exeter's Transportation Department. This department made sure that its trucks could roll across the roads of England, and roll night and day. In the days of Exeter's mud, it put tractors to work to pull its trucks out. In the pressing days of invasion necessity, the lights blazed all night in its blacked-out workshops, and its repair machines droned round the clock, and motors were pulled and axles replaced, and the transportation lifeline was kept vigorous and effective, and today when there is much work left to be done, its trucks are rolling still, and the men who man them are busy with the job they have proved that they can do.

1049 U. S. Navy Construction Detachment did the lion's share of moving the material to and from Exeter. Whenever a job had to be done they broke all existing records of tonnage moved by a complement of their own size and sometimes larger. Its men worked day and night to deliver the necessities of invasion and its officers have received numerous commendations from other commands. In the last part of April 1944, twelve of its men were detached to Portland-Weymouth to help in that organization and worked day and night until relieved of their duties.

The men of this Detachment are versatile; this has been proven by the number of its men in other departments at Exeter. There never was a job too big or small that they didn't tackle and complete in record time.

The spirit of 1049 has been felt at all bases in England. Their eagerness to work under any conditions and at any time has been the determining factor of its record.

Some of its men have been on special assignment in France, off and on, since shortly after D-day.

Such is the story of another record-breaking Seabee outfit.



PLAIN

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ITINERARY OF CONSTRUCTION BATTALION DETACHMENT 1049 (TRUCK OPER.)

March, 1944	Formed at MCIC, Camp Peary.
20 March 1944	Transferred to ABD, Davisville, R.I.
5 April 1944	Departed Davisville for overseas destination; assigned to truck operations, Naval Amphibious Supply Base, Exeter, England.
1 June 1945	Located at Exeter and Devon; 6 officers and 282 men.

NOTE: The above itinerary is based on the records available in the
CE Operations Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Date: 15 September 1945

1049TH

Seabees





**NO
PHOTOS
AVAILABLE**