



# Colorado Military Historians

Newsletter

XLVIII, No. 5

May 2022



40 years ago during the Falklands War, SAS raid on Darwin during San Carlos landings.  
Painting by Daniel Bechenec.

# News and Views

*Message from CMH Secretary  
Eric Elder*

This month we have two article submissions. Matt Vigil shares how to spot a wargamer. Jim Raridon's Part Two article is on the 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade involvement on D-Day.



May 14/15 is our West Wars convention. Almost all the game slots have been filled. The current game listing is found in this newsletter and any changes can be found on our web site: [West Wars Page](#).



# **Catalytic Converter Theft at Baker Community Center**

*News from CMH Treasurer*

*Larry Irons*

At the April Monthly Meeting while we were fighting our little wars, a thief stole the catalytic converter from Greg Cornell's Honda Element. This crime was committed in broad daylight while there were people in the building.

The Denver Metro area is experiencing the most automobile and catalytic converter theft in the United States. Generally, the cars are taken to chop shops to be parted out. The catalytic converters are sold to metal recyclers.

For security reasons the officers of CMH will organize security teams and procedures to discourage thievery in the parking lot. We encourage all of you to volunteer to help with this. Simple procedures that will help:

- Periodically surveying the parking lot to look for unusual activity
- Keeping the windows open to listen to sawing
- Keeping alert in general to unusual activity

If you are interested in helping, please contact an officer. This does not mean you have to refrain from gaming. Take a break for a few minutes every hour or so and scan the parking lot and the building surroundings. There will be designated persons for you to contact if you see something unusual.



# April

## Unit of the Month

### Temporarily no sponsor

Each month, at the monthly meeting, CMH members bring their latest painted figures and models to the meeting to display their latest efforts.

CMH Member	Scale	Manufacturer	Era	Unit
Eric Elder	1:1800	Shapeways	WWI	P-Class Zeppelin
Eric Elder	1:2400	Shapeways	WWI	Zeppelin Hanger
Greg Skelly	28mm	Rubicon	Pulp	Open Market
Dave Manley	28mm	Foot Sore	F&IW	Winter Indians & French Marines
Jim Rairdon	6mm		Ancients	New Kingdom Egypt Stronghold
Larry Irons	25mm	Navigator	Ancients	Seleucid Phalangites
Brad Thorton	15mm	Blue Moon	SYW	Prussian Infantry (Regt #1)
Bill Daniel	15/28mm	Homemade	ACW	Devil's Den



# **Engineers on D-Day**

## **The 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade on Omaha Beach.**

### **Part Two: Training the 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade**

*Article by CMH Member  
James L. Rairdon, DM, FLMI*



Prior to the landing on the Normandy beaches specialized training was needed for the specialized engineer units that were to support the landings. The complexity of amphibious landings required that the units be trained in the United States and then further trained once they arrived in the United Kingdom. This article will cover the training in the United States, the training, and exercises in the United Kingdom, and will give the organization of the three Battalion Beach Groups that landed on Omaha Beach.

In July 1942 the Amphibious Training Center was established at Fort Edwards in Cape Cod. They quickly realized that to load thousands of troops and their combat equipment into landing craft and have them proceed in darkness through choppy seas to land on a strange beach required a high degree of training of these engineer units. The Engineer Amphibian Command designed the training to allow engineer units to conduct combined training with infantry divisions so that they were ready for their overseas assignments. The Combat Engineer and Infantry units could not be trained in ten or twelve days of extra training. They also demonstrated the need for highly trained specialized Amphibian Engineers. Much was learned during the initial phases of training for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Special Brigades (Heavey, 2010).

#### **Training in the United States**

To prepare for Operation OVERLORD, the units that became the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigades were organized for Omaha Beach landings, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Special Brigade was designated for Utah Beach. The 336<sup>th</sup> Engineer General Services Regiment, was activated 25 July 1942 at Fort Rucker, AL. The 336<sup>th</sup> was re-designated the 1119<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Group 7 April 1943. The 1119<sup>th</sup> consisted of the 336<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion, the 234<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion and the 234<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion. The 1119<sup>th</sup> became the 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade 12 November 1943 in South Wales, United Kingdom (Heavey, 2010; DeAeman, 1944).

The 336<sup>th</sup> Basic MTP and Unit Training was conducted between September 1942 and January 1943. In February 1943 the regiment was given the MTP tests with a second Army examination team and received a rating of excellent for the entire unit. Unit training began 18 January 1943 and nine weeks of the training was completed. Physical fitness tests were given 22 March 1943 and the rating of 90% was earned (DeAeman, 1944).

During all their Basic and Unit Training the regiment conducted construction activities on roads and bridges at Fort Rucker, AL. During November and December 1942 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was sent to the Tennessee Maneuver Area where it executed construction work repairing roads and bridges. While these delays extended the training time, it was necessary to provide living quarters and facilities for the newly activated infantry division. Also, it later proved valuable during the amphibious maneuvers in the United States and in the United Kingdom. It was especially helpful during actual combat operations in France. It provided essential training for establishing the beachhead and operating in the Northern coast of Normandy, France when the Allied Expeditionary Forces invaded Western Europe (DeAeman, 1944).

On 15 April 1943 the 1119<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Group moved from Fort Rucker, AL to Fort Pierce, FL. It was at Fort Pierce where the basic amphibious training was given to the assigned units. The techniques that had been studied by the Amphibious Forces, Atlantic Fleet were used to refine the training with the LCVPs and the LCMs ; hand labor was also stressed. One R4 tractor and three sleds were added to the table of equipment for each company in the Engineer Combat Battalions. The training included loading dummy supplies on the landing craft, moving them down the coast and unloading them onto the sand sleds and bringing them behind the dune where they were loaded onto trucks. The trucks took the supplies back to the depot, where the cycle could start again. Other units participating in this training included the 294<sup>th</sup> Signal Company, Company A, 203<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Naval Beach Battalion. The instructors for this training were combat veterans from North Africa, which was very beneficial for the training (Heavey, 2010; DeAeman, 1944).

On 15 August 1943 the 234<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion was sent to Italy for combat operations, and it was replaced 37<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion. On 16 June 1943 after completing two months of continuous Amphibious Training the 1119<sup>th</sup> and the assigned units were sent from Fort Pierce, FL to Fort Pickett, VA. There followed three months of more advanced training conducted with the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in joint Army and Navy amphibious operations in the Chesapeake Bay. Each Engineer Combat Battalion was supported by quartermaster, signal, ordinance, and Naval Beach Battalion personnel, and was assigned to a Regimental Combat Team of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. On 21 October 1943 the Group sailed from Boston to the United Kingdom (DeAeman, 1944).

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade Training in the UK**

To continue the training for the Normandy invasion, it was necessary to train troops in building and using temporary improvised ports, and to handle massive amounts of supplies. The initial framework for the organization was formed with the activation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade, and its organization was later fully developed through training and careful planning. The Brigade was reinforced with additional units as required. As soon as their quarters were completed the Engineer Combat Battalions began intensive training in laying and removing mines, demolitions, laying the Bailey Bridge, and road maintenance. The techniques for the successful beachhead operations under combat conditions were expanded with the additional training conducted in the United Kingdom. Much of the additional training was conducted with the various units that made up the three Battalion Beach Groups, so that they could learn to work together. The training exercises were held on Gower Peninsula, South Wales. The Gower beaches closely resembled the terrain of the Normandy coast where they were to land (DeAeman, 1944).

Training was conducted almost continuously from February to 24 April 1944. The “landing beaches” were prepared with beach obstacles and booby traps, and the dunes were “mined” for realism. The field exercises consisted of practicing assault landings followed by unloading thousands of tons actual supplies. The supplies were loaded on coasters and then transferred by sea to the beaches where they were then unloaded. Quartermaster personnel perform duties of the Port Battalion troops and were trained as substitute truck and DUWK drivers. The medical personnel trained to deal with minor wounds and major

casualties. The MPs practiced processing POWs and who were then taken to the stockades (DeAeman, 1944).

The training in the UK reinforced the training conducted in the United States. The lessons from the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Special Brigades landings in North Africa, Sicily and Italy were very useful to preparing the Brigade for the Normandy landings (DeAeman, 1944). According to DeAeman (1944):

During training in South Wales, methods of operation were evolved and developed; operations and techniques that were fostered, later proved highly successful. For example, for the first time in amphibious operations heavy equipment, obtained by special request of Brigade Headquarters, was utilized to the fullest extent possible. Each Engineer Combat Company was provided with three D-7 or D-8 bulldozers, two ½ or ¾ yard crawler cranes, and one 5-ton truck crane, as well as with many other similar items in addition to these provided by the Table of Equipment of a regular Engineer Combat Company (p. 28).

In March through May 1944 exercises were conducted in southern England where the 37<sup>th</sup> and the 348<sup>th</sup> Battalion Beach groups exercised with Regimental Combat Teams (“RCT”) from the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry divisions who were to make the initial assault landings. They practiced landing the troops of the RCT. The exercise included loading and unloading the infantry troops of the RCTs so that they became very familiar working together. The work of clearing and opening the beach could be undertaken by the Engineer Special Brigade troops, which subsequently helped to organize and operate the actual beachhead (DeAeman, 1944).

On 5 May 1944 the entire 5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade (less one Battalion Beach Group) participated in a large-scale operation with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions, the operation was known as Exercise FABIUS I. Maneuvers were thoroughly planned and executed in every detail. This amounted to a “full dress rehearsal” for the landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944.

### Organization of the Battalion Beach Groups



SHAEP SSI



1st Army SSI



V Corps SSI



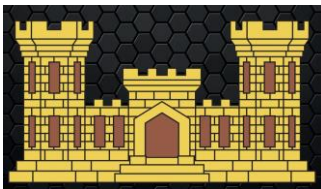
1st Inf. Div. SSI

The 5th Engineer Special Brigade was assigned to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (“SHAEP”) in the US First Army under GEN Omar Bradley, and subsequently V Corps in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division for the Normandy landings (See figure 2). Unlike the engineer special brigades in the Pacific Theater of Operations, the brigades organized for the European Theater of Operation (“ETO”) did not operate their own landing craft. The Navy was assigned to this function (Heavey, 2010). The Brigade was divided into three Battalion Beach Groups. According to DeAeman (1944), they were as follows:

37th Battalion Beach Group (supporting the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division)  
37th Engineer Combat Battalion  
4141st Quartermaster Service Company



97th Quartermaster Railhead Company  
 Company A, 61st Medical Battalion (Separate)  
 Company C, 6th Naval Beach Battalion  
 1st Platoon, Company A, 203rd Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion  
 1st Section, Magazine Platoon and 1st Section Depot Office, 616th Ordnance Ammunition Company  
 1st Platoon, 30th Chemical Decontamination Company  
 2nd Platoon, 294th Joint Assault Signal Company  
 1st Platoon, 210th Military Police Company  
 1st Section, Shop Platoon, 3466th Ordnance Medium Automotive Maintenance Company  
 459th Amphibian Truck Company  
 348th Beach Battalion Group (supported the 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division)  
 348th Engineer Combat Battalion  
 4143rd Quartermaster Company  
 559th Quartermaster Railhead Company  
 Company C, 61st Medical Battalion (Separate)  
 Company B, 6th Naval Beach Battalion  
 2nd Platoon, Company A, 203rd Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion  
 2nd Section, Magazine Platoon and 2nd Section Depot Office, 616th Ordnance Ammunition Company  
 3rd Platoon, 30th Chemical Decontamination Company  
 3rd Platoon, 294th Joint Assault Signal Company  
 3rd Platoon, 210th Military Police Company  
 2nd Section, Shop Platoon, 3466th Ordnance Medium Automotive Maintenance Company  
 453rd Amphibian Truck Company  
 336th Beach Battalion Group (supported the 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division)  
 336th Engineer Combat Battalion  
 4142nd Quartermaster Company  
 Company B, 61st Medical Battalion (Separate)  
 Company A, 6th Naval Beach Battalion  
 Platoon, Company A, 203rd Quartermaster Gas Supply Battalion  
 Section, Magazine Platoon and 2nd Section Depot Office, 616th Ordnance Ammunition Company  
 2nd Platoon, 30th Chemical Decontamination Company  
 2nd Platoon, 294th Joint Assault Signal Company  
 2nd Platoon, 210th Military Police Company  
 3rd Section, Shop Platoon, 3466th Ordnance Medium Automotive Maintenance Company  
 458th Amphibian Truck Company



Essayons (Let us try)

**Next Month:**  
**Operation OVERLORD on Omaha Beach**



## References

DeAeman, C. R. (1944). *History of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade*. US Army (Declassified 1945).  
Heavey, W. F. (2010). *Down ramp! The story of the army amphibian engineers*. Coachwhip Publications.



5<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade monument on Omaha Beach

# Historic Location of the Month

## Gower Peninsula, South Wales



Horton beach near Swansea was one of the beaches on the Gower Peninsula used for D-Day training.





# Signs You're a Historical Wargamer

*Top 12 List by CMH Member*

*Matt Vigil*

1. When you go to the pet store, first you go to the aquarium section even though you have a dog.
2. You know where Lancaster is located.
3. You own over 50 Ospreys, maybe closer to 100.
4. You know what a flinch point is.
5. You watch a war movie and one of your first thoughts is how can this be done on a tabletop.
6. You have a favorite paint brush.
7. You have a Dremel, but don't use it as much as you thought you would.
8. You have X-Acto knife scars.
9. You need more storage space.
10. You know what a soak off is.
11. Of the six people at the fabric department in JoAnn's, you are the only guy.
12. You look forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month.





# April

## Game of the Month

Sponsored by Total Escape Games

Each month CMH members host games at the monthly meeting. This award is for the effort put out by the host.

CMH Member	Scale	Rules	Description
Larry Irons	25mm	ADLG	Battle of Magnesia 189BC
<b>LARRY ARMIN</b>	28mm	FFoL: Horse & Musket	Attack on Br. Trading Post
Matt Vigil	20mm	Epic Battle Cry	Antietam ACW
David Newport	15mm	Metal Men with Musket Balls	Napoleonics

Winner in **RED**



## 2022 Conventions

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
<b>May</b>		
14-15	<a href="#">West Wars</a>	Denver, CO
20-22	<a href="#">Borderwars</a>	Kansas City, MO
27-29	<a href="#">Enfilade</a>	Olympia, WA
<b>June</b>		
8-12	<a href="#">Origins Game Fair</a>	Columbus, OH
<b>July</b>		
20-24	<a href="#">Historicon</a>	Lancaster, PA
22-24	<a href="#">Twisted Lords</a>	Oklahoma City, OK
<b>August</b>		
4-7	<a href="#">Gen-Con</a>	Indianapolis, IN
19-21	<a href="#">Histori-KC Fest</a>	Overland Park, KS
19-21	<a href="#">Nashcon</a>	Nashville, TN
<b>September</b>		
1-4	Hurricon	Orlando, FL
<b>October</b>		
7-8	Advance the Colors	Springfield, OH
<b>November</b>		
4-6	<a href="#">Rock-Con</a>	Rockford, IL
4-6	Fall-In	Lancaster, PA
?	<a href="#">Midwest GameFest</a>	Kansas City, MO
10-13	<a href="#">MillenniumCon</a>	Rolling Rock, TX

# West Wars 2022

## Current Agenda

### May 14

9am – 1pm

#### Defense of Algiers

The French Foreign Legion must hold the fort against a determined Native attack.

rules: The Men Who Would Be Kings

scale: 28mm

players: 6

GM: Doug Wildfong

#### Zeppelin Raider

Command Zeppelins 1915 to 1917, scouting the North Sea and bombing Great Britain.

rules: Zeppelin Raider

scale: 1:1800

players: 4

GM: Eric Elder

#### Teugen-Hausen, 4/19/1809

A Column Line and Square (Rules) battle from the 1809 Campaign. Austrians vs French. Bring troops for the side you wish to play. Austrian – 6 Bn Line (60 fig ea), 2 Bn Jager (36 ea), 1 Rgt Hussar (54), 1 Horse gun, 1 Foot gun. French – 3 Rgt Line (111 ea), 1 Rgt Light (111), 1 Foot gun.

rules: Column Line and Square

scale: 28mm

players: 6

GM: Rich Kasten

#### Tanks! The Modern Age

Roll through the desert of Kuwait in an M1A1 looking for Iraqi T-72's or a Chieftan in West German stalking Russian T-64's.

rules: Tanks!

scale:

players: 4

GM: Jeff Hunt

#### D-Day 0630 June 6th 1944, Omaha Beach

The game covers the opening hours of the invasion in the 29th infantry zone as a reinforced battalion attempts to take the beach and start attacking into France.

rules: Tactical Combat

scale: 15mm

players: 5

GM: Dave Newport



## **2pm – 6pm**

### **Wild West Shoot Out**

Wild West action. Five characters to a group.

rules: Fist Full of Lead

scale: 28mm

players: 6

GM: Larry Armin

### **Battle of Nancy**

US 35th Infantry Division supported by the 4th Armor Division are attempting to dislodge two German divisions Southeast of Nancy.

rules: Panzer Korps

scale: 15mm

players: 8

GM: Alex Johnson

### **Battle of Midway**

Classic Avalon hill game in a double blind format.

rules: Avalon Hill boardgame

players: 4

GM: Bill Daniel

### **Abenshers/Bachi, 4/20/1809**

A Column Line and Square (Rules) battle from the 1809 Campaign. Austrians vs French. Bring troops for the side you wish to play. Austrian – 6 Bn Line (60 ea), 2 Bn Gren, 1 Rgt Hussar, 2 Foot guns. French – 3 Rgt Line (111 ea), 2 Sqd Dragoons (10 ea), 2 Foot guns.

rules: Column Line and Square

scale: 28mm

players: 6

GM: Rich Kasten

## **May 15**

**9am – 11:30am**

Swap and Sell Meet

**12pm – 1:00pm**

Club meeting

**1:00pm – 5:00pm**

ADLG Ancients Tournament

Armies from the classical ancient period will fight. 200 points. Bring your own Army or contact Larry Irons for assistance.

rules: L'Art De La Guerre (ADLG )

scale: 15mm

players: 8

GM: Larry Irons

French and Indian War

French and Indian War winter battle

rules: Sharp's Practice or Fist full of lead, Horse and Musket rules

scale: 28mm

players: 6

GM: Dave Manley

Napoleonic Battle

rules: Etat Sans Resultant

scale: 15mm

players: 6

GM: Hugh Thompson

Battle of Malacca Strait

In 1945 a naval action pitting British DD flotilla vs. IJN Haguro & escorts.

rules: Homegrown

scale: 1:2400

players: 4

GM: John Owen

# Colorado Military Historians, Inc.

Colorado Military Historians (CMH) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote historical wargaming and the study of military history. Founded in 1965, CMH meets monthly on the second Sunday of the month, except in May when the meeting is deferred to the third Sunday. The meeting starts at noon at the Baker Recreation Center, 6751 Irving Street (just a few blocks west of Federal Blvd), Denver, Colorado. The club also hosts gaming at least one Friday night a month, called “Friday Night Fights” (FNF) at 7:00 p.m. Friday meetings will be held at a future determined location. See website for latest information.



CMH maintains ties with numerous local, regional, and national groups to help promote the hobby. CMH is governed by member-elected officers serving on the Board of Directors (executive board). Terms of office are one year, with elections held at the May meeting. New members are accepted after attending three CMH functions and a vote of the membership. Dues are \$60.00 per year, payable in January. Members wishing to receive a snail-mailed newsletter subscription must pay an additional fee of \$15.00 per year. Authors retain ownership of articles and graphics published. CMH reserves the right to edit or reject submissions to the newsletter.

One year Adult Membership: \$60.00

Half year Adult Membership: \$30.00

(For NEW members who join after June 30)

Family Membership: \$60.00 (one Adult and any number of offspring)

Student Membership: \$30.00 (16 to 22 years old)

Children: free (younger than 16 accompanied by member)

## Club Links:

Web Site: <https://cmhweb.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cmhgamers/>

Groups.io Group: <https://groups.io/g/cmhweb>

Discord: <https://discord.gg/DAP2Gn>

## CMH Newsletter

The CMH Newsletter is a monthly newsletter published by the Colorado Military Historians. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of all CMH members.

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