



The Italian Campaign

The Normandy landings of 6 June 1944 overshadowed all other campaigns in the media for the remainder of the war. It is largely unrecognised that D-Day is the term applied to the first day of any operation and in fact there were other 'D-Days' before that in Normandy. The importance of the landings in N.W. Europe cannot be overstressed, but other D-Days should also be remembered, including the landings which initiated the Italian Campaign, which stemmed from Churchill's belief in attacking the 'soft underbelly of Europe'. These pages set out to demonstrate the rich holdings of the archive in respect of the Italian campaign, by quoting just some of the many memoirs, diaries and tape-recorded interviews in the care of the Centre.

The decision to invade Sicily was agreed by the Western Allies at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943. The campaign began with air attacks on Italy and Sicily and on 11 June, D-Day on the tiny Italian island of Pantelleria with the intention of capturing the airfield there, to be used by Allied aircraft for the invasion of Sicily just 65 miles away. [Corporal John Best](#), a Royal Marine, had some personal reservations about the chosen date:

Finally, came our first invasion. It was to be Pantelleria, off Sicily, on 11 June 1943, which was also my 19th birthday. It was the custom on our mess that on your birthday the lucky man got 'sippers' (rum) all round which of course meant that I would be 'three sheets to the wind' . . . I explained to the Captain of the ship the situation and asked if the invasion could be postponed for a day, he said quite definitely it could not.

Midshipman Bayley, aboard *HMS Eggesford* witnessed the invasion and wrote in his journal on 11 June, 1943:

Yesterday more bombs were dropped on Pantelleria than in the whole of April on all Mediterranean targets... Until 1515, when we left, wave after wave of bombers were still going in, causing huge explosions and one great mushroom of dust rose right above the island. Naval bombardment ceased however at 1515. . . We left when resistance had ceased and white flags could be seen flying.

The anticipated resistance never materialised as Captain Peter J de A Moore describes in his memoir, 'No Need to Worry':

Then we noticed the white flags. First it was one or two and then they appeared all over the island flying from every house. When the great dust cloud finally thinned and dispersed our



Invasion of Pantelleria on board an LCI, 10.6.43 from the papers of G. Wooler



Invasion of Pantelleria on board an LCI, 10.6.43 from the papers of G. Wooler



objective was once more fully exposed to us but this time it had surrendered. The land battle was over before it had begun. In spite of the easy victory we carried out the pre-arranged plan of attack and occupation. I had had to memorise a path from the harbour to the airfield, from the relief map. The LCIs unloaded us in the harbour and my platoon made straight for the airfield. When we arrived, without opposition, we found Italian soldiers and airforce men standing about ready to surrender.



LCI on trial for Normandy landing,
Pantelleria. G Wooler



Girl with GI kit bag as a
skirt, Pantelleria. G Wooler

A month later [Operation Husky](#), the invasion of Sicily, began with an ill-fated airborne assault designed to seize the Ponte Grande Bridge south of Syracuse. Paul Gale, a Navigator in the US Army Air Corps, had completed just two training missions with gliders before the invasion of Sicily and discussed his difficulties and subsequent sadness in a recorded interview for the Centre:

The instructions were to release our glider, I think, at 3,000 yards from the shore. How the devil do you know when you are 3,000 yards from shore at night without any instrumentation?

(I later heard that) there were 12 or 13 gliders that made it in to the landing zone and I had convinced myself that one of those was mine, the word was that it was just a total disaster. We knew that.

Bert Holt DFC served with the Glider Pilot Regiment. His log book is entrusted to the Centre and he recalled during interview:

We landed exactly where we were supposed to. On approaching the island we were met by fire from what appeared to be 88mm guns. They were the same type of shell, explosion etc that our 88s made. We got a few holes in the wings, but nothing else.

The H-Hour for the seaborne attack on Sicily was 0245 on 10 July. Three British Divisions were to attack the beaches in the east and two US divisions headed for western beaches, all supported by heavy fire from offshore warships. Green Howard Jim Brown landed on the beach at Avola and remembers seeing ferocious air attacks launched against the invaders:



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I was there on D-Day at Sicily. We saw three ships sunk. One of them had still got a lot of troops on it and they all jumped over the side. Well, the ones that weren't injured. There was a hospital ship as well, but they came in so low that they couldn't fire at them properly because they were firing onto the shore where our people were anyway. It was nasty, very nasty that.

Walter Bowring's memoir illustrates the weak coastal defences which greeted the invasion forces in some areas:

In front of us, already illuminated by searchlights and tracer bullets was EUROPE! It was an exciting moment and it seemed to take an age to cover the few miles to the shore. A heavy machine-gun opened up, raking the beach; although there was no other opposition we felt horribly exposed and it was a great relief to drop into four feet of water and wade ashore.

Corporal Ron Rhodes, RASC, describes landing south of Syracuse, where the defence was better prepared:

There was a Landing Craft next to us which had just grounded but as the first lorry ran off the ramp it dropped straight into about fifteen feet of water. There were 30 men on board and they all drowned. . . I told the CO to open the door slightly and turn down the windows for a quick getaway. We ran off the edge of the ramp, I took a deep breath then splash!, but we were only in three feet of sea, we were lucky. We ran up the beach, lorries in front of us, burning, shellfire, men dying like flies, saw a Yank burning to death in his lorry, saw men blown to pieces. It was a nightmare, we were lucky to survive.

As the campaign progressed, Alastair Warren, a Subaltern commanding 10 Platoon, B Coy 1st Black Watch 51st Highland Division recalls:

After about three weeks of continual machine gun and shell fire during which our CO had a leg shot away by an anti-tank gun while standing in the open surveying the scene, 10 Platoon was ordered to spearhead a night attack on a rocky hillock about 1,000 feet high called Sferro Ridge.

The Centre holds the typescript recollections of Gerald M Anderson of the US 1st Infantry Division. As they headed for Tronia, his battalion experienced the devastating effects of 'bouncing betty' mines:

My squad was selected to secure the area and remove the dead and wounded - a sight I will never forget. Some of the bodies were lying over unexploded mines and others so badly wounded they couldn't move.

Arthur Barraclough, an Observer with the YLR experienced tough German resistance and was taken prisoner during the battle for Catania airport:

We walked into this hail of machine-gun fire. We all dropped flat onto the ground. I remember the Adjutant firing with his revolver which immediately brought a death-dealing volley from the machine gun, and that is where he finished. . . The Regimental Sergeant-Major and myself, we were shoulder to shoulder. They got him too and I was



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laid there, and I thought, "this is where the end is going to be for me", when this German soldier came forward with his sub machine-gun and he looked at me. I really thought he was going to shoot me in the head. . . he looked at me and to my intense relief he said, "*Raus hier*" and I was taken back to their line which was down a banking where one could see they were quite safe.



Bailey Bridge, Catania. G Wooler



Drawings on the walls of the Luftwaffe.
G Wooler

Despite determined resistance, for example at Primosole Bridge, the Allied invasion overall ran smoothly, culminating in a race for Messina. On 17 August, Patton's US 3rd Division entered the city just 50 minutes before the British Army. The Germans had been evacuated leaving huge amounts of weapons, ammunition and fuel. The Mediterranean could now be used fully as a sea route.

The natural progression to the Italian mainland started with Operation Baytown, amphibious landings on the beaches between Reggio and Catona, intended to draw German defences away from Salerno, where a larger scale attack was planned.

JG French a Staff Sergeant in the RAMC recalls, in his memoir, the treacherous conditions on landing:

(On 2 September) we moved north into the Messina area and the next morning boarded the invasion barges, crossed the narrow strip of sea and put our feet down in Europe just north of Reggio meeting no resistance, in fact the Italian soldiers who were around were guiding us along the paths to miss the minefields.

E W Shaw, a 5th Sherwood Forester landed 'on the corn of the big toe of Italy' on 3 September 1943:

'From Reggio we slogged against a frustrating enemy who adopted similar tactics they'd used in Sicily, - retreating to prepared positions during the night and attempting to frustrate us through the daylight hours. Yet when the Salerno landings took place on 9 September, German resistance strengthened against us in an attempt to slow our progress towards the bridgehead, but they weren't well organised, our slog becoming a forced march, a mad hustle, bustle to help those on the bridgehead. At times we perched precariously on speeding tanks.



D-Day for Salerno was 9 September. Operation Avalanche was a large-scale amphibious landing to take Naples a major port, scheduled by US General Mark Clark to last three days. There was no quick victory, but gruelling fighting for three weeks. Captain Peter J de A Moore recalls the strong German resistance:

That night, in the Tyrrhenian Sea, the news came over the ship's radio that Italy had capitulated. This was not regarded as good news. In the past, whenever we had had to face the enemy, there was the chance that our opponents were Italians. Now we knew that our opponents were always going to be Germans, for whose fighting prowess we had a healthy respect. It was apparent that the landings were not going well. There was a tremendous din with battleships and cruisers shelling targets inland with their heavy guns, destroyers engaging enemy coastal guns from close inshore, the rush and explosions of incoming shells from German 88s, and the roar of low flying Messerschmitts and Focke-Wolfes. The attack had been expected and the Germans were putting up fierce resistance. Many of the landing craft had been hit and one LCT was burning where it had been grounded to discharge its cargo. Other LCTs had great holes in their sides from shelling. Our ships were laying down smokescreens to hide the targets of the German gunners.

T Jackson, a RDF Operator on *HMS Dido* kept a diary throughout the campaign:

- 18 September Salerno Bay - shelled by shore batteries as we bombard hills. Air raids during daylight hours. Spotters report targets on shore destroyed.
- 19 September Continue with bombardment - replies becoming less. Troops ashore making progress north. More targets destroyed by our gunfire. Spotters reports relayed by loud speakers - thrilling!
- 20 September Tanks landed from invasion craft am.
- 22 September Move position 0615 back to where the action is. More air raids by 109s. We bombard again - prepare for big offensive. During lull Capt. Allows bathing over ship's side. OK until shore batteries open up towards us - some very fast swimmers make their way back to the rope ladders.

Lieutenant Michael Irwin RN experienced difficulties landing some soldiers of the 36th Texas Division on the beach:

I pleaded with the Americans to go in but they refused until it was daylight. They lost the advantage of darkness and they went in. We were the third wave, and we found off our beach, Yellow Beach, a lot of craft on fire and people swimming and we went in to rescue. I remember one craft, there were ten Americans, a lot of them dead, and we picked up survivors . . . there was one man who had his face almost blown up and he was sitting on the ramp and we were about to pick him up when we were machine gunned and given no mercy at all.



Dennis Tindall, an Officer in the RAOC remembered his abortive attempt to secure safer and more peaceful surroundings:

Naturally I and my party tried to put ourselves in the most sheltered spots as far away as possible from the most constantly shelled areas. On the first night shortly after we had settled down behind a hedge, a battery of 25 pounders arrived and started firing immediately over our heads.

KL Philips arrived off Salerno on the morning of 22 September, by which time the bridgehead was secure and there was only one gun firing random shells into the bay. The next stage of the campaign was very much in his mind:

(To pass the time we would) dig in and camouflage our guns, then get the tank crews to try and spot them, so that they could get some idea of what it was like in Europe instead of Africa. One bunch were more than horrified when I stepped out from behind my gun and said "Boo" when they were only about ten yards away. It made them think a bit.

We finally moved off at first light on 28 September, and promptly slid into the ditch and got stuck in the mud, and it was evening before we could catch up our own place in the column.

Clearly, as reflected in the recollections of Julian Wathen, 1 KRRC, many of the troops destined for Italy, had already seen action in North Africa and the news of their next posting was not warmly welcomed:

In due course news came through that we were to move to Italy and rejoin the 8th Army there. Our riflemen, many of whom had been abroad since the war began, thought that their war was over, so there was consternation at the thought of going back into action. Sailed on my 21st birthday to Naples, marched up through the town to make camp in vineyards. Paraded by the Brigadier Dawnay, who tactlessly said that we were now to get a chance of getting at the Hun, groans from the riflemen who had been up and down the desert doing plenty of hitting for several years.

This feeling was not shared by G R Tribe of the Hampshire Regiment who had considered his 'service in a tropical climate' would entail a posting to Burma:

No-one knew what was happening until the mist suddenly lifted and we found that we were anchored with half the original convoy in the Bay of Naples. The whole scene was perfectly beautiful. It was obviously not to be Burma after all. We felt, perhaps illogically, that we would rather be killed by Germans in this delightful part of Europe than by brutal Japanese in the swamps and jungles of the East.

The amphibious landings at Anzio, in January 1944, were planned in response to the difficulties over the winter of 1943/44 in attempting to force the Gustav Line. It soon became clear that the Allied intention of reaching Rome in 1943 had been overly optimistic. The new landings would take place behind German lines in an attempt to cut communications between Rome and Cassino. Unfortunately Field Marshal Kesselring had anticipated the Allied plan and retained reserves near Rome. Despite an initial, unopposed landing, stiff resistance soon



appeared after the Allies failed to capitalize on this success. Almost a month later the situation was at stalemate and it would take another three months before a significant breakthrough would occur. Again, the memoir of Cpl Ron Rhodes, attached to 158 Welsh Field Ambulance provides a graphic reminder of the shelling during the Anzio invasion:

... it was hell on earth, we were under constant attack. We started digging slit trenches right away with our bayonets and any other tools we could scrounge. Harry and I managed to get to some sand dunes near the sea. By then the Germans were being pushed back inland. We dug out the sand with our bayonets and an old piece of angle-iron, we dug down about four feet, the shells were bursting round us everywhere. We were digging like hell, we were soaking wet through, up to our knees in wet sand and mud. Roy Harris caught a packet in his left side, a piece of shrapnel sticking through his guts, we carried him to the Medics then we literally fell in the slit trench, soaked to the skin. We tried to put a ground sheet over us but it was useless, we couldn't sleep. The Artillery behind us were firing with their guns called Long Toms nearly all night.

The bombardment of the Anzio beachhead was continual, resulting in extra strain on those deprived of sleep. 'Anzio Annie' was the name given to the railway gun operated by the Germans from a tunnel in the Alban Hills. This shellfire is remembered particularly by Ron Rhodes:

I had just started to write to Joyce when we heard the usual thud, subconsciously I started to count but I got to about twelve seconds when there was a hell of a bang and a big bright flash, the next thing I remember was our dug-out fell in on us.

Ron was fortunately dug out of the trench safely, but his friend had been fatally wounded by shrapnel.

During the landings at Anzio, J S Herbert, on board *HMS Icarus*, witnessed the use of German radio-controlled bombs or 'Chase-me-Charlies':

The evenings were very lively then, for the anchorage was full of craft of all kinds - cruisers, destroyers, landing ships and hospital ships. Suddenly the alarm would be given and each one would open fire, and start to manoeuvre at high speed against the Chase-me-Charlies which were armed with a light in their tail.

The determined resistance at Salerno and Anzio had come as no surprise to J W Kingstone, whose diary entry for 20 March 1944 reads:

Everybody knows that the African campaign will seem like a glorified Boy Scouts outing compared to the battles that we shall fight in this country.

The landings, although important as stepping-stones in maintaining pressure on German forces and supplies, proved the beginning of a protracted campaign which finally finished in May 1945. In a country of rivers and mountains ideal for holding up the Allied forces, the



Tanks arrive off the LCTs. G Wooler



skilled German defence led to high casualties. Allied servicemen caught up in this theatre fought in frequently horrendous conditions over a long period, and in no way merited the nick-name 'D-Day Dodgers'.

The first major factor in the Italian Campaign is the topography of the country, which is ideally suited to the defender. The central 'spine' of mountains, rising to over 6,000 feet, proved an insurmountable barrier, forcing the attacking forces to remain either side of the feature and requiring the Allies to cross well-fortified rivers in frequently difficult weather conditions. The strong opposition was ordered to deny Allied forces access to the Balkans, the oilfields of Rumania and the south of France. The defence of each river and mountain produced conditions reminiscent of the Western Front in 1915-17. For the troops, morale was affected by the realisation that each mountain and river crossing was seemingly followed by yet another on the horizon.



2nd Indian CCS south of Cassino, G Wooler

The second major factor is that of strong Allied differences of opinion in both deciding whether the Campaign should be waged at all and how it should be conducted. The American view was that all resources should be directed towards a landing in France. The British regarded a campaign in N.W. Europe as not something for consideration in 1943, since manpower and resources would not be available in sufficient quantities. The landings in Sicily, Salerno and Anzio proved no walk-over; instead they marked the start of a long and arduous fight for the Italian Peninsula.

After finally breaking out of the Salerno bridgehead the Allies faced a lengthy slog up the west coast of Italy against stiff German resistance. The first important feature was the Gustav Line at the point of the rivers Garigliano and Rapido and river Sangro in the north. At the river Rapido the Benedictine monastery dominated the town of Cassino. Major J M Gibson-Horrocks of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, spoke of the monastery's strategic importance during his tape-recorded interview:

This was one of the great advantages for the Germans against our morale, because every single soldier who served in Cassino was conscious of being overlooked from this monastery at all times.

Any movement during the day would bring down an immediate 'stonking of mortars from the opposition' so that all essential operations including food and ammunition replenishment and repairing of the signal lines would have to be carried out at night. Major Gibson-Horrocks entrusted a copy of his hand-over document, dated 21 April 1944, which



A Cassino propaganda leaflet



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he received from the OC 3rd Battalion Welsh Guards, to the Centre, giving guidance as to the conditions in Cassino and the German troops they would be facing:

He seems to be good troops, rarely shows himself and is good with the mortar. He had the incredible cheek yesterday, on Hitler's birthday, to hang Nazi flags in the windows of some houses. His Rifle Grenade is extremely accurate, the b. . .

Nicholas Mosley MC of the London Irish Rifles, reiterated the difficulty troops faced in the Cassino area:

We took over from some French troops and that was hair raising because we were right at the top of this ridge and one couldn't dig a trench because it was rock, and you couldn't move in the daytime because you were under observation, so one made little stone shelters where one literally crouched and lay for hours and that was very nasty.

On Mosley's arrival, in the winter of 1943/44, his platoon had not yet received any winter clothing and were still in tropical kit, despite 'snow literally up to one's waist'. Mosley narrowly escaped capture after 'an attack on our position in the mountain by German Alpine troops, all dressed in white and they wore snow shoes or skis, and they came roaring down through the trees'.

S Macza's interview on behalf of the Centre makes the valid point that Polish forces played a very important role:

At Monte Cassino we had to prove that we were fighting for a free Poland and we really attacked ferociously and in spite of the great losses we took it.

His sister too, served in Italy in a transport company, delivering supplies by lorry from Taranto to just behind the lines. Capt Donald Kerr MC conducted an interview with Richard Campbell Begg in 1998, in which he recalled witnessing the American bomber raids on the monastery while serving in an Armoured Division of the New Zealand Army.

The diary of Jack Cassidy, a driver with the RASC, graphically illustrates the shelling, incidences of booby traps and casualties caused by mines. His diary entry for 1 June 1944 records his impressions after the Cassino battles:

Past through Cassino. Nothing left of it. It's gutted with shellholes. Not a wall standing and dead Germans under rubble but too risky to move them for mines and Booby traps. They'll be finding them next year at this time.



FSU examining German dugouts,
Gustav Line. G Wooler



German Blockhouses. G Wooler

The casualty rates for those fighting to push through the defensive lines and cross the rivers were very high. As G R Tribe recalled:

At the Infantry Reinforcements Training Depot there were six of us Hampshires sharing a tent, and we all went up at the same time for the battle of the Gothic Line. Of the six, only one walked out on his own feet.

Capt Peter J de A Moore MC of the 2/5th Leicestershire Regiment also fought at the Gothic Line, in a sector where 'we were soon to become depressingly accustomed to battling for one hill only to find that there was another one beyond that, and beyond that, almost, it seemed, ad infinitum.' Peter's vivid description of the assault on the small hill town of Mondaino, a strong defensive position, exemplifies the battles fought throughout the campaign:

As we were groping our way forward up the hill, we heard the rattle of Tommy guns, Brens and rifle fire just ahead and the shouts of our troops. Trotty and I came across Company Sergeant Major Unwin, of A company. He was in a state of fury. "They've shot Major Capron and Captain Rawson" he told us "We are going to sort those buggers out". . . The Germans had Panther tanks and self propelled guns in support of their defending troops and there was a deafening din of shellfire, mortars, hand grenades and small arms fire as the furious troops of A and C companies fought their way into Mondaino and engaged the Germans in savage hand to hand fighting. The deaths of the two company commanders had inspired their companies to an heroic performance and by dawn most of the town was in our hands.

News of Allied progress in N. W. Europe provided a boost to morale. L H Collier, a Doctor in the RAMC, wrote home in September 1944:

I had the great pleasure of being able to tell our latest prisoners that the Americans were in Germany, which, as you may imagine, shook them considerably. One young officer said "Well, I suppose it's nearly over now. After this war, Britain, America and



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Germany must ally themselves and fight against World Bolshevism". Planning the next war already! You'd have thought that they'd have had enough, by now.

In the course of Professor Collier's tape-recorded interview he gave an insight into the medical assistance required:

In the Battle of the Gothic Line we had quite large numbers of casualties coming in and the main job there was to triage them, that is to say, to split them into walking wounded, people who needed immediate resuscitation and people who needed immediate surgery. We had no facilities of course, for transfusions or anything like that, we just got them back as quickly as we possibly could. Some of the injuries were pretty horrendous and the ones that I really hated were those caused by land mines. . . Everybody got sorted out in order of their medical priority and that was the only fact that ever counted, and if a German needed treatment before a British person, he got it.

In September 1944, H Bretherick, a Grenadier Guardsman, was involved in the crossing of the River Setta:

The water would be almost up to our armpits, one held on for dear life to the man in front and behind. We were nearly across when we heard one of our company lads shout, he had lost his footing and was swept away downstream.

Lt General Sir David House, a captain in the 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, witnessed the first attempted crossing of the River Ronco in late October 1944. He recalled the hazardous nature of the crossing, which proved disastrous for the infantry. The lack of armoured support was due to the river being in spate:

Inevitably almost they were counter-attacked by enemy infantry and armour and most of them were taken prisoner.

The continual rain during the crossing took its toll:

We were there for two or three nights and that slit trench contained water over one's boots and it was very cold, very nasty, a very unpleasant experience.

Major N J Warry, of the same Regiment was seriously injured during the crossing and was one of those taken prisoner:

I luckily had some grenades and I crawled up and managed to lob two grenades into the German ditch. It was when I was crawling back that I got shot in the back.

The effects of the bombardments on towns and villages throughout Italy and the attendant civilian casualties must also be remembered. Professor Michele Bassi wrote of the suffering of the population of Cotignola and a translated version of the book was entrusted to the Centre by Mr A E Gladstone. Having lived under a virtual state of siege for more than four months, Bassi wrote:



CSM 661 REME in mud. G Wooler



The front line was static along the Senio River and not one ray of hope brightened the horizon, to give the imminent notice of a return to a life of peace and civilian rebirth . . . Every day that passed saw new houses destroyed, new families forced to become refugees. . . Water was running short and what was available was of dubious quality; clothes and linen could no longer be washed and dried outside; food was scarce and inadequate to nourish emaciated bodies and provide indispensable vitamins.

The plight of the civilian population did not go unnoticed among the Allied troops. In a tape-recorded interview, Lt Barclay Hankin, of 11 L of C Signals, recalled:

Always, if we stopped for a sandwich or a brew-up, little children would appear, rather sweet little children in rags, in the south of Italy, they would stand twenty feet away and very politely they used to say "Chocolate piece for me?" The villages were very poor.

Later, having travelled through Rome in convoy, Hankin took twenty servicemen to view the main attractions of the City; visits to the cultural sites of Italy being a common theme of memoirs and recollections.

By Spring 1945, the end of the campaign was in sight, as reflected in the diary entry for 14th April of Tom Roe, a Gunner and Signaller in the Royal Artillery:

Supported 10th Mountain Div in artillery barrage for the break-out. Things moved fast and we were the first troops across the River Po. Once across, the chase began and we liberated towns and villages too numerous to list. Flowers and vino in abundance from happy Italians.

John Waterfield, too, of 1st Battalion KRRC, recalled the difference in attitude towards the end of the war:

At this stage was our first encounter with jubilant Italian villagers and peasants who, I distinctly recollect, surrounded us as we drove, cheering and waving flags but not kissing us, or at least not me. On our long flog up the spine of Italy and the Ravenna plains, I do not remember seeing civilians except in our very occasional billets in farmhouses, and those we saw were cowed and unenthusiastic. After the Po I remember sunshine, flowers and especially the young girls! A great contrast to earlier winter frosts, mud, rains, snow and grey skies.

In the immediate post-war period, a number of servicemen were involved in reburial of Allied casualties, including Honorary Alderman Joe Kitchen who was attached to Number 5 Graves Registration Unit:

I was transferred to this unit where there was a Major, a Captain and a Corporal and myself, who was a Lance Sergeant, and approximately another eight soldiers. We were involved in going out, locating, removing and bringing back the bodies of troops who had lost their lives, to the cemetery for burial. . . Our job also was to clear the area for the people who had lived at Cassino to enable them to return home and at that time some houses were being erected to accommodate them. It was around this time that I met my wife who was Italian and a partisan.