

141st Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps
Regimental Summary

[Unofficial title - 141st Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps (The Buffs)]



Raised From: 7th Bn, The Buffs, 8th November 1941

Commanding Officers:

Lt-Col T Roscoe Reid	06/40 - 18/07/43
Lt-Col Herbert Waddell	18/07/43 - 25/10/44
Lt-Col Denis J E O'Flynn	25/10/44 - 17/07/45
Lt-Col G Fitz R Talbot	17/07/45 - 10/45

Cap badge: 141RAC wore three variations of the Buffs dragon, represented above left to right:
the standard 'brass' badge throughout the war;
a 'silver' nickel-plated badge from mid-late 1943;
a 'light-bronze' coloured plastic badge from early 1944.

Stations in England: 141RAC was a war-raised regiment. Formed in November 1941 it was disbanded almost exactly four years later in November 1945. It was one of 33 converted infantry regiments. Due to the need for trained tank crews the War Office converted these regiments from November 1941 to July 1942, some existed for little more than six months, whilst others went on to fight in North West Europe, Italy and the Far East.

Formed at Kingsbridge, Devon whilst 7th Bn was assigned to protect a section of the Devon coast.

7th November 1941 moved to Eastbourne, East Sussex.

3rd June 1942 moved to Worthing, West Sussex.

30th September 1942 moved to Eastwell Park, Ashford, Kent - the regiment's 'spiritual home'.

The Crocodiles arrive...

17th February 1944 received first Crocodile.
Completed the conversion of the Churchill Mk VIIs to Crocodiles (45 in total) by 30th April 1944.

17th March 1944 the first Crocodile trailer arrived.

2nd June 1944 13 Tp and 15 Tp, C Sqn moved to Southampton in readiness to embark for D-Day.

12th June 1944 remainder of regiment moved to Southampton in readiness to embark for the crossing to France.

**Operations in
North West
Europe:**

141RAC was a unique regiment in France up until mid-November 1944 when a second Crocodile regiment entered service - 1st Fife & Forfar Yeomanry. (7th Bn, Royal Tank Regiment converted to Crocodiles but was not operationally ready until the end of March 1945.) As a result, 141RAC was allocated squadron by squadron to support operations, even troop by troop in the early days in Normandy leading to Harry Bailey, their Intelligence Officer, writing *'In our wildest optimism we had never dreamed of such popularity that commanders were prepared to divide us down to single tanks, even these it was popularly believed to be rent asunder with the turret to one section, the gun to another and the tracks to Platoon HQ.'*

In terms of operational distance, the most extreme example of this was in September 1944 when 141RAC took part in the 'Battle of the Channel Ports' - A and C Sqns were helping to liberate the ports of Boulogne, Le Havre and Calais in the Pas de Calais while B Sqn was moved 400 miles west to support the American attack on Brest.

D-Day - two troops 13 Tp and 15 Tp of C Sqn landed six Crocodiles on Gold Beach - 13 Tp on King Green/Red and 15 Tp on Jig Green. The first use of flame took place the next day, 7th June 1944.

22nd - 24th June 1944 remainder of regiment landed in France.

Almost without exception the three fighting squadrons operated in different areas of Normandy, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Due to its unique and effective role, 141RAC fought in most of the major battles across northern Europe.

September 1944 - Battle of the Channel Ports.

2nd January 1945 parade for the purpose of presenting decorations to personnel of 'B' Sqn awarded after the operations at Fort Montbarey, Brest.

26th May 1945 regiment stationed at Rotenburg for the bulk of its occupation duties.

August 1945 it moved to Friedrichstadt and ended the war at Tönning where it was disbanded 25th November 1945.

Disbanded:

25th November 1945

Tank Names:

All started with the letter S, no definitive answer but speculation is the inspiration comes from the letter 'S' from Seven - 7th Bn.

War Establishment**- Vehicles:**

(Note: from August 1944 a change to the regimental structure meant a Churchill gun tank was transferred from RHQ to each Sqn HQ giving 4 x Churchills. Similarly, each Sqn changed to have 3 x Troops ea of 4 x Crocodiles and 1 x Troop of 3 x Crocodiles. The change was intended to allow two half-squadrons to operate equally. From recollections and histories it appears that B Sqn delayed this change and went to Brest using the 3 x Crocodiles per Troop structure.)

RHQ:

2 x 75mm Churchill 'gun tanks'
 2 x 95mm Churchill Close Support 'gun tanks'
 (Recce Tp - 11 x Stuarts - used in 141RAC?)
 A Communications or Liaison Tp - Tp HQ with 3 x Humber S/C plus 2 x Sections ea 3 x Humber S/C

A Sqn:**SHQ:**

1 x 75mm Churchill 'gun tank'
 2 x 95mm Churchill Close Support 'gun tanks'
 1 x Churchill ARV
 1 x Humber Scout Car (S/C)

1 Tp; 2 Tp; 3 Tp; 4 Tp; 5 Tp - ea. With 3 x Churchill Crocodiles (Total 15 x Crocodiles)

B Sqn:**SHQ:**

1 x 75mm Churchill 'gun tank'
 2 x 95mm Churchill Close Support 'gun tanks'
 1 x Churchill ARV
 1 x Humber Scout Car (S/C)

6 Tp; 7 Tp; 8 Tp; 9 Tp; 10 Tp - ea. With 3 x Churchill Crocodiles (Total 15 x Crocodiles)

C Sqn:**SHQ:**

1 x 75mm Churchill 'gun tank'
 2 x 95mm Churchill Close Support 'gun tanks'
 1 x Churchill ARV
 1 x Humber Scout Car (S/C)

11 Tp; 12 Tp; 13 Tp; 14 Tp; 15 Tp - ea. With 3 x Churchill Crocodiles (Total 15 x Crocodiles)

Echelon:

Trucks, Jeeps, half-tracks, motor-cycles. Due to the weight of the trailers, the regiment would call upon the Royal Artillery to borrow their Matador heavy trucks when the need arose. Due to the understandable admin difficulties this could present, the regiment later acquired 4-ton HAR and 10-ton Foden trucks.

War Establishment**- Men:**

38 Officers:

12 in RHQ plus

each Sqn: Sqn Ldr; Sqn 2i/c; Recce Offr; 5 x Tp Ldrs
 c. 660 Other Ranks

Tank crew - 58 x 5 = 290 all ranks (another 5 ORs per Troop, i.e. trained tank crew, would travel with the Echelon as immediate crew replacements = 75 replacement tank crew + 290 = 365 tank crew)

Echelon - A Echelon and B Echelon (c. 295 Other Ranks)

Tank Crew:

Each Churchill and Churchill Crocodile crew comprised:
Tank Commander
Wireless Operator
Gunner
Driver
Co-driver/Flame Gunner

Crocodile equipment:

Crocodile weight:
38.8 tons
Trailer weight:
6.4 tons

Technically, Crocodile referred to the flame gun and associated equipment (pipework, trailer) and could theoretically be applied to any armoured vehicle with appropriate adaptations. Although formally a Churchill Crocodile, plain Crocodile was commonly used to refer to 141RAC's flame throwers. Amongst other adaptations were a handful of Sherman Crocodiles built for the US Army and proposals for a Centurion Crocodile.

Effective range - 80 yds (73m) (in ideal conditions up to 120yds)

No of flame shots: approx. 120 from the 400-gallon trailer.

Fuel used was FTF Heavy No. 1 - a ready-mixed thickened fuel made by thickening gasoline with aluminium stearate, xylenol (or cresol) added as a stabilizer. (Note: FTF not the same as napalm)

Could be fired 'wet' = unignited, or 'dry' = ignited.

One unique modification to the Crocodiles operating with the US forces at Brest was the provision of 'Rhinoceros' hedge-cutters fitted to the tanks by US engineers.

"Playboys" - the nickname



'The name "Playboys" was earned by "B" Squadron of the 141 R.A.C. (The Buffs) in September 1944 after they had been fighting alongside the American Army at Brest and being awarded several Decorations during this time. At the conclusion of the campaign, as there were no Tank Transporters available to take them back to Belgium, where the remainder of the Regiment were fighting, the Squadron and their Tanks were put on Landing Craft (L.S.T.) and ferried to Ostend via Southampton for a 48 hour stop where emergency repairs were carried out on the ship. This gave "B" Squadron 2 days leave and made its personnel the first troops to obtain leave from the B.L.A. in Europe. It was the envy of the rest of the Regiment who had not been home on leave, that gave birth to the epithet of "Playboys". This nickname was accepted with pride and incorporated in the name of the old comrades association formed by the Squadron a short while before the Regiment was disbanded in 1945.'

Taken from Old Playboys Association compliments slip.

A veteran's recollection: *'Some wag in another Squadron, envious no doubt, dubbed us "Playboys". We didn't argue, we adopted the tag whole-heartedly. Our guns suddenly sported 'toppers' in place of muzzle covers; and the Tophat motif as worn on our vests at sports meetings thereafter; and we have called ourselves The "OLD PLAYBOYS" ever since.'*

By late September 1945, the Old Playboys Association had been officially set up and would survive until finally wound down in 2012.

"1-4-1 and all for one"

JAS 01/26