

= Long Range Desert Group =

The Long Range Desert Group ( LRDG ) was a reconnaissance and raiding unit of the British Army during the Second World War .

Originally called the Long Range Patrol ( LRP ) , the unit was founded in Egypt in June 1940 by Major Ralph A. Bagnold , acting under the direction of General Archibald Wavell . Bagnold was assisted by Captain Patrick Clayton and Captain William Shaw . At first the majority of the men were from New Zealand , but they were soon joined by Southern Rhodesian and British volunteers , whereupon new sub @-@ units were formed and the name was changed to the better @-@ known Long Range Desert Group ( LRDG ) . The LRDG never numbered more than 350 men , all of whom were volunteers .

The LRDG was formed specifically to carry out deep penetration , covert reconnaissance patrols and intelligence missions from behind Italian lines , although they sometimes engaged in combat operations . Because the LRDG were experts in desert navigation they were sometimes assigned to guide other units , including the Special Air Service and secret agents across the desert . During the Desert Campaign between December 1940 and April 1943 , the vehicles of the LRDG operated constantly behind the Axis lines , missing a total of only 15 days during the entire period . Possibly their most notable offensive action was during Operation Caravan , an attack on the town of Barce and its associated airfield , on the night of 13 September 1942 . However , their most vital role was the ' Road Watch ' , during which they clandestinely monitored traffic on the main road from Tripoli to Benghazi , transmitting the intelligence to British Army Headquarters .

With the surrender of the Axis forces in Tunisia in May 1943 , the LRDG changed roles and moved operations to the eastern Mediterranean , carrying out missions in the Greek islands , Italy and the Balkans . After the end of the war in Europe , the leaders of the LRDG made a request to the War Office for the unit to be transferred to the Far East to conduct operations against the Japanese Empire . The request was declined and the LRDG was disbanded in August 1945 .

= = Formation = =

Before the war , Major Ralph Bagnold learned how to maintain and operate vehicles , how to navigate , and how to communicate in the desert . On 23 June 1940 he met General Archibald Wavell , the commander of the Middle East Command in Alexandria and explained his concept for a group of men intended to undertake long @-@ range reconnaissance patrols to gather intelligence behind the Italian lines in Libya . General Wavell was familiar with desert warfare , having been a liaison officer with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force during the First World War , and he understood and endorsed Bagnold 's suggested concept . Wavell assisted in equipping the force .

The unit , initially known as the No.1 Long Range Patrol Unit ( LRP ) , was founded on 3 July 1940 . Bagnold wanted men who were energetic , innovative , self @-@ reliant , physically and mentally tough , and able to live and fight in seclusion in the Libyan desert . Bagnold felt that New Zealand farmers would possess these attributes and was given permission to approach the 2nd New Zealand Division for volunteers ; over half the division volunteered . Two officers and 85 other ranks including 18 administrative and technical personnel were eventually selected , coming mostly from the Divisional Cavalry Regiment and the 27th Machine @-@ Gun Battalion . Once the men had been recruited , they started training in desert survival techniques and desert driving and navigation , with additional training in radio communications and demolitions .

The LRP could initially form only three units , known as patrols , but a doubling of strength allowed the addition of a new Heavy Section . In November 1940 , the name of the LRP was changed to the " Long Range Desert Group " ( LRDG ) , and the New Zealanders were joined by volunteers from British and Southern Rhodesian regiments . The British volunteers , who came mostly from the Brigade of Guards and Yeomanry regiments , were incorporated into their own patrols . The original patrol unit consisted of two officers and 28 other ranks , equipped with a Canadian Military Pattern ( CMP ) Ford 15 Imperial hundredweight ( cwt ) truck and 10 Chevrolet 30 cwt trucks . In March 1941 new types of trucks were issued and the patrol units were split into half @-@ patrols of one officer

and 15 ? 18 men in five or six vehicles . Each patrol incorporated a medical orderly , a navigator , a radio operator and a vehicle mechanic , each of whom manned a truck equipped for their role .

= = Patrols = =

The Long Range Patrol comprised a 15 @-@ man headquarters with Bagnold in command . There were three sub @-@ units : ' R ' Patrol commanded by Captain Donald Gavin Steele , ' T ' Patrol commanded by Captain Patrick Clayton and ' W ' Patrol commanded by Captain Edward ' Teddy ' Cecil Mitford . ' T ' and ' W ' Patrols were combat units while ' R ' Patrol was intended to be a support unit .

In November 1940 , the LRP was reorganised and re @-@ designated the Long Range Desert Group . It was expanded to six Patrols : ' T ' , ' W ' and ' R ' Patrols were joined by ' G ' , ' S ' and ' Y ' Patrols . Each patrol was expected to belong to the same regimental group , but only the Brigade of Guards and the Yeomanry regiments formed their own Patrols , ' G ' and ' Y ' respectively . The men of ' G ' Patrol were drawn from the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards and the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards under command of Captain Michael Crichton @-@ Stuart . The ' Y ' Patrol men were drawn from the Nottinghamshire Yeomanry under command Captain P. J. D. McCraith , with additional men from the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders . In December 1940 , ' W ' Patrol was disbanded and its personnel used to bring ' R ' and ' T ' Patrols up to strength , while ' G ' Patrol took over their vehicles . By June 1941 the LRDG was re @-@ organised into two squadrons : the New Zealand and Rhodesian ' A ' Squadron with ' S ' , ' T ' and ' R ' Patrols , and ' B ' Squadron with ' G ' , ' H ' and ' Y ' Patrols . There was also a Headquarters Section along with signals , survey and light repair sections . A Heavy section , initially equipped with four 6 @-@ ton Marmon @-@ Herrington trucks , was used to provide logistical support by transporting supplies to bases and setting up hidden replenishment points at pre @-@ arranged locations . In addition there was an Air Section , using Waco ZGC @-@ 7 and YKC biplanes which transported key personnel , evacuated wounded and performed other liaison tasks .

In August 1941 an artillery unit was formed to attack Italian forts more effectively . Initially it used a QF 4 @. @ 5 @-@ inch howitzer carried on a 10 @-@ ton Mack NR 4 truck , with an accompanying light tank as an armoured observation post . However , these were handed over to the Free French at Kufra . The unit was then issued a 25 pounder portee . After successfully attacking and capturing the El Gtafia fort , the truck had to be abandoned and the experiment ended .

= = = Squadrons = = =

In October 1941 the LRDG was expanded to 10 patrols by the simple method of splitting the existing patrols into two @-@ half patrols ; the New Zealanders formed A Squadron comprising ' R1 ' , ' R2 ' , ' T1 ' , and ' T2 ' Patrols and the British and Rhodesians formed B Squadron comprising ' G1 ' , ' G2 ' , ' S1 ' , ' S2 ' , ' Y1 ' , and ' Y2 ' Patrols . The ' H ' Patrol had been disbanded in September 1941 after three months service .

These two squadrons were joined in December 1941 by the Indian Long Range Squadron , which had been formed by volunteers from the 2nd Lancers , 11th Cavalry and the 18th Cavalry , all part of the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade . The Indian Squadron was organized along ethnic and religious lines with the first two patrols originally known as ' J ' ( Jats ) and ' R ' ( Rajput ) Patrols . Their designations were changed to ' I1 ' and ' I2 ' to avoid confusion . In October 1942 two further Indian patrols were formed : ' M ' ( Muslim ) and ' S ' ( Sikh ) Patrols , which became the ' I3 ' and ' I4 ' Patrols . No. 1 Demolition Squadron , commanded by Major Vladimir ' Popski ' Peniakoff , was briefly attached to the LRDG from December 1942 .

The vehicles of each patrol adopted their own markings . The New Zealand ' R ' Patrol used a green Hei @-@ tiki with a red tongue painted on the right side of the bonnet of the vehicle and on the left they put a M?ori place name beginning with the letter ' R ' ( for example , ' Rotowaro ' ) . The ' T ' Patrol vehicles had a black Kiwi over green ' grass ' and a M?ori name starting with ' Te ' ( for example , ' Te Anau ' ) in the corresponding places . The ' W ' Patrol vehicles had a M?ori name or

word starting with ' W ' painted on their vehicles .

The British ' G ' Patrol vehicles carried no distinctive markings , although some vehicles had the Guards insignia . They took over ' W ' Patrol 's vehicles when that unit was disbanded . The ' Y ' Patrol vehicles were slightly different ; ' Y1 ' half @-@ patrol vehicles all had names of famous drinking establishments ( such as ' Cock O ? The North ' ) and ' Y2 ' half @-@ patrol had names from the Three Musketeers books ( for example , ' Aramis ' ) on the left side of their vehicle bonnets . The Headquarters Section used a sequence of letters arranged in a square ( see photo of " Louise " ) . The Rhodesian ' S ' Patrol vehicles had names with a Rhodesian connection ( such as ' Salisbury ' ) painted on the left side of the vehicles ' bonnets . By 1943 the practice of naming replacement vehicles was dropped .

= = Equipment = =

= = Vehicles = =

The LRDG vehicles were mainly two wheel drive , chosen because they were lighter and used less fuel than four wheel drive . They were stripped of all non @-@ essentials , including doors , windscreens and roofs . They were fitted with a bigger radiator , a condenser system , built up leaf springs for the harsh terrain , wide , low pressure desert tyres , sand mats and channels , plus map containers and a sun compass devised by Bagnold . Wireless trucks had special compartments built into the bodywork to house wireless equipment . Initially the LRDG patrols were equipped with one Canadian Military Pattern ( CMP ) Ford 15 cwt F15 truck for the commander , while the rest of the patrol used up to 10 Chevrolet 30 cwt WB trucks . From March 1941 the 30 cwt Chevrolets were replaced by the CMP Ford 30 cwt F30 , although in some ways this was a retrograde step ; because they were four wheel drive and heavier than the Chevrolets , they used twice as much fuel , which in turn reduced the range of a patrol . From March 1942 the Fords were progressively replaced by 200 Canadian Chevrolet 1533 X2 30 cwts which had been specially ordered for the LRDG . From July 1942 Willys Jeeps began to be issued for the patrol commander and patrol sergeant .

= = Weapons = =

The patrol vehicles were initially armed with 11 Lewis machine guns , four Boys anti @-@ tank rifles and a Bofors 37 mm anti @-@ tank gun distributed amongst their vehicles . By December 1940 , the vehicle armaments had been improved and ' T ' Patrol , for example , had five .303 Vickers Medium Mk . I machine guns , five Lewis guns , four Boys anti @-@ tank guns and the Bofors 37 mm . Another Vickers gun used was the heavy Vickers .50 machine gun , which would be mounted at the rear of the vehicle . All of the unit 's vehicles were armed with at least one gun ; each vehicle was fitted with six to eight gun mountings , but normally only two or three of them would be in use .

Supplementing their army @-@ supplied weapons , the LRDG was equipped with surplus Royal Air Force ( RAF ) aircraft guns which were acquired for their high rate of fire . The most widely used of these was the Vickers K machine gun , which was sometimes used mounted in pairs . From mid @-@ 1941 the LRDG acquired .303 Browning Mk II 's from RAF stocks , also mounted in pairs , with a combined rate of fire of 2 @, @ 400 rounds per minute . When new vehicles were issued in March 1942 , several were converted to carry captured dual @-@ purpose 20 mm Breda Model 35s , which replaced the Bofors 37 mm , and each half @-@ patrol was equipped with one Breda " Gun truck " . In September 1942 the .50 Browning AN / M2 heavy machine gun began to replace both calibres of the Vickers machine guns and the Boys anti @-@ tank rifle .

The men of the LRDG carried the standard British Second World War small arms , the Short Magazine Lee ? Enfield ( SMLE ) No.1 Mk III \* being the primary rifle . Other small arms carried were Thompson submachine guns and .38 Enfield , Webley & Scott or .45 Colt 1911A1 pistols . Several types of hand grenade were used : the Mills bomb , No. 68 Anti @-@ tank and No. 69 's .

Each truck was outfitted with a Lee ? Enfield EY rifle attachment with a discharger cup able to fire the No. 36M Mills rifle grenade . The LRDG also laid land mines , the most common being the Mk 2 mine . Other explosives used are the Lewes bombs , a custom made weapon using Nobel 808 , were used to destroy aircraft and other targets , and sticky bombs used to destroy enemy vehicles .

Captured German and Italian small arms were utilised including the Beretta M 1934 , Luger P08 and Walther P38 pistols . The German MP40 submachine gun and MG34 , MG42 along with Italian Breda M37 and Breda M38 machine guns were all used .

= = = Communications = = =

In the LRP most of the radio operators were New Zealanders , but the LRDG radio operators were all from the Royal Corps of Signals . These men were skilled in communications and were able to maintain and repair their equipment without any outside help . On only three occasions did a broken radio prevent a patrol communicating with its headquarters . All LRDG patrols included one vehicle equipped with a Wireless Set No. 11 and a non @-@ military Philips model 635 receiver . The No. 11 Set had been designed for use in tanks , and had transmitter and receiver circuits ; the Royal Signals expected to use the No. 11 set to transmit and receive between 3 miles ( 4 @.@ 8 km ) and 20 miles ( 32 km ) with the use of 6 feet ( 1 @.@ 8 m ) or 9 feet ( 2 @.@ 7 m ) antennas . The LRDG used Morse code for all transmissions , and were able to transmit over great distances using either a dipole antenna system attached to a 6 @.@ 3 feet ( 1 @.@ 9 m ) rod antenna mounted on the truck which was adequate up to 500 miles ( 800 km ) , or for greater distances , a Windom dipole system slung between two 17 feet ( 5 @.@ 2 m ) tall poles . The disadvantage of using the Windom system was that it took time to erect and work out the correct antenna length , so it could only be used in a relatively safe area . To power the No. 11 set extra batteries had to be carried by the radio vehicles . The Philips receiver was used to monitor Greenwich Mean Time ( GMT ) time checks which was vital for desert navigation .

While on the move the lead vehicles of the patrol commanders and sergeants flew a small flag . Because the LRP was organised on divisional cavalry lines the leaders carried green flags for ' A ' ( HQ ) Troop , black for ' B ' Troop , yellow for ' C ' Troop and red for ' D ' . When the LRDG was organised into 11 vehicle patrols this was simplified to a green flag displaying the patrol letter in white ; the later half @-@ patrols used a plain green flag on occasion . When it became necessary to change course from an intended route , or in the event of enemy action , patrol movements were controlled by a simple semaphore flag system using blue and white signal flags , or hand signals , depending on how widely dispersed the trucks were .

= = = Navigation = = =

All trucks of the LRDG were equipped with the Bagnold sun compass and some trucks were also equipped with a P8 Tank Compass . Each patrol had a navigator who always rode in the second truck in the formation . He was equipped with a theodolite and astronomical position tables with which to plot star sightings , and maps . Watches were used and adjusted each evening using the GMT time check . One major problem faced early on by the LRDG was a lack of accurate maps for Libya in particular . Patrols had to do their own surveys and make their own maps of each route they took . In July 1941 the Survey Section was formed to carry out this task .

= = History = =

The LRDG area of operations between 1940 ? 1943 was the Libyan desert , which stretches about 930 miles ( 1 @.@ 500 km ) south from the Mediterranean to the Tibesti and the Jebel Uweinat mountains , and about 1 @.@ 200 miles ( 1 @.@ 900 km ) from the Nile valley in the east to the mountains of Tunisia and Algeria in the west . Paved roads were non @-@ existent and only small tracks and pathways crossed the area . The daytime temperatures could reach 60 ° C ( 140 ° F ) and at night drop below freezing . The only water in the area is found in a number of small oases ,

which is also where the only vegetation grows .

The first LRP patrol began during the Italian invasion of Egypt . ' W ' Patrol commanded by Captain Mitford set out on 15 September 1940 to carry out a reconnaissance of Kufra and Uweinat . Finding no trace of the Italians , they turned south and attacked fuel dumps , aircraft and an Italian convoy carrying supplies to Kufra . ' T ' Patrol , commanded by Captain Clayton , reconnoitred the main route between Kufra and Uweinat , then drove south to meet up with ' W ' Patrol ; both units returned to base , having captured two Italian trucks and official mail . The Italian response to these raids was to reduce their front line forces and increase the number of troops garrisoning the area from 2 @, @ 900 men in September to 5 @, @ 500 by November 1940 . On 27 December 1940 , ' G ' and ' T ' Patrols left Cairo and crossed the desert to northwest of Kufra . On arrival they met with representatives from the Free French forces in Chad , and on 11 January carried out a joint raid on the Italian fort at Murzuk . After two hours ' fighting the fort remained in Italian hands , but the adjoining airfield had been destroyed . The units then withdrew southwards towards the Free French post at Zouar .

On 31 January they were intercepted by the Compagnia Autosahariana di Cufra , an Italian unit similar to the LRDG , in the Gebel Sherif valley . The LRDG had one man killed and three men captured , including Major Clayton , and three trucks destroyed during the battle . The Italians losses were five killed and three wounded , and one truck was abandoned . Four members of the LRDG escaped by walking 200 miles ( 320 km ) to safety in ten days with no food and only a two gallon water can between them . The patrol arrived back in Egypt on 9 February ; it had covered about 4 @, @ 500 miles ( 7 @, @ 200 km ) , experiencing the loss of six trucks , four by enemy action and two by mechanical breakdowns . One vehicle with a broken rear axle had been towed about 900 miles ( 1 @, @ 400 km ) before it could be repaired . Total casualties were three dead and three captured . Major Clayton was awarded the Distinguished Service Order .

After Operation Compass ended with the Italians forced out of Cyrenaica it was decided to move the LRDG from Cairo to Kufra ( SE Libya ) . At the same time the LRDG was expanded with the addition of ' Y ' and ' S ' Patrols . When the German Afrika Korps under command of General Erwin Rommel counterattacked in April 1941 , the LRDG was ordered to reinforce the Kufra area . ' R ' Patrol were based at Taiserbo , ' S ' Patrol at Zighen , and the headquarters LRDG , ' T ' Patrol , and the Free French were at Kufra , under command of Bagnold . The detached ' G ' and ' Y ' Patrols were based at Siwa Oasis , under command of XIII Corps .

The LRDG air link was created during the occupation of Kufra by Major Guy Lenox Prendergast . Appreciating the value of aircraft for reconnaissance , liaison , evacuating wounded and flights to GHQ Cairo , he had two Waco aircraft fitted with long range fuel tanks . Prendergast flew one himself and Sergeant R. F. T. Barker flew the other . When Bagnold was appointed to the General Staff Cairo in August 1941 , Prendergast was given command of the LRDG .

The LRDG now began a series of patrols behind the Axis lines . Near the end of July ' T ' Patrol left for the desert to the south of the Gulf of Sirte . One ' T ' Patrol truck managed to observe the main coastal road , along which Axis traffic was passing . They were followed two or three weeks later by ' S ' Patrol , who carried out a similar reconnaissance between Jalo oasis and Agedabia . Both patrols returned safely to Kufra without being discovered . In August 1941 ' R ' Patrol relieved ' G ' and ' Y ' Patrols at Siwa and was joined by ' T ' Patrol in October .

= = = Eighth Army command = = =

In November 1941 the LRDG , now under command of the newly formed Eighth Army , moved from Kufra to Siwa ( central Libya ) . The patrols were given the task of watching the desert tracks south of Jebel Akhdar and report any signs of reinforcements and withdrawals . ' R1 ' Patrol was to pick up Captain David Stirling and 30 men who had parachuted behind the lines to raid airfields to the west of Tobruk . Only 21 men arrived at the rendezvous and were returned to the British lines , later becoming the nucleus of the Special Air Service ( SAS ) . One of the other roles assigned to the LRDG was to transport SAS units behind enemy lines ; this continued until the SAS were issued with their own transport in 1942 . In early November ' T2 ' Patrol took four British officers to the

Gebel and was to return and collect them three weeks later . The officers were the advance land party of Operation Flipper which had planned to kill General Rommel .

On 24 November , in support of Operation Crusader , the LRDG were ordered to attack Axis rear areas . Already on patrol , ' Y1 ' and ' Y2 ' Patrols attacked targets in the Mechili , Derna and Gazala area . ' Y1 ' damaged fifteen vehicles in a transport park and ' Y2 ' captured a small fort and about 20 Italians . ' S2 ' and ' R2 ' Patrols attacked targets in the Benghazi , Barce and Marawa area , where they ambushed nine vehicles . ' G1 ' and ' G2 ' Patrols were assigned the main road near Agedabia where ' G1 ' made two attacks on road traffic and shot up a few vehicles . After the Axis forces withdrew from Cyrenaica the LRDG moved to a base at Jalo oasis , about 140 miles ( 230 km ) to the south @-@ south @-@ east of Ajdabiya .

The last operations of 1941 were in December , when the LRDG twice ferried the SAS to and from raids on Axis airfields , attacking the airfields at Sirte ( twice ) , El Agheila , Ajdabiya , Nofaliya and Tamit , and destroying 151 aircraft and 30 vehicles . During the second raid at Sirte , the SAS devised a new method of attacking parked aircraft . They drove the LRDG trucks between the rows of aircraft , which were then engaged by machine guns and hand grenades . Prior to this the procedure had been to quietly infiltrate an airfield and place Lewes bombs on aircraft and vehicles , leaving before the bombs exploded , but this attack was so successful that it became the preferred method for attacking airfields .

== = Road watch == =

When the LRDG was based at Siwa , they took part in what has since become known as the ' Road Watch ' along the Via Balbia ( the Tripoli to Benghazi road ) . Three patrols were engaged on road watch duties at any one time , with one watching the road for a week to 10 days , another would be en route to relieve them and the third was returning to Siwa after having been relieved . The site of the road watch was about 5 miles ( 8 @. @ 0 km ) from the Marble Arch monument . The road watch patrol would park about 2 miles away from the road and the trucks would be camouflaged using camouflage nets , any local foliage and sand . Before dawn each day two men would move into a well camouflaged position about 350 yards ( 320 m ) from the road . By day they would record the details of all vehicles and troop movements , and at night they would move to about 30 yards ( 27 m ) from the road and guess what type of vehicles were passing by their sound and outline . At daylight they were relieved by another pair of men who took over that day 's road watch . If tanks or a large number of troops were seen passing they would radio the LRDG headquarters at Siwa immediately so that by the time the enemy reached the front line , GHQ at Cairo would know they were coming . Once a patrol was relieved they would transmit details of all they had seen back to Siwa . The LRDG did not lose any men or vehicles when on the road watch , but they did have some close encounters . On 21 March ' R1 ' Patrol was surrounded by a convoy of 27 vehicles and about 200 men who stopped for the night between the watchers and their vehicles . While the road watch was ongoing , other patrols would be attacking targets along other stretches of the Tripoli to Benghazi road , by planting mines or attacking vehicles with machine gun fire . The road was kept under constant observation around the clock from 2 March to 21 July 1942 .

After the Battle of Gazala and the fall of Tobruk the LRDG were forced to withdraw from Siwa on 28 June . ' A ' Squadron withdrew to Cairo to resupply and then moved back to Kufra , while ' B ' Squadron moved to Faiyum .

== = Barce == =

With the Eighth Army now holding the El Alamein line , plans were submitted to attack the Axis supply lines and the ports of Benghazi and Tobruk . In September 1942 , British Commandos would attack Tobruk by land and sea ( Operation Agreement ) . The SAS would attack Benghazi ( Operation Bigamy ) and the Sudan Defence Force would capture Jalo oasis ( Operation Nicety ) . The LRDG would be used to guide the attacking forces to their targets and at the same time , a LRDG force would attack Barce ( Operation Caravan ) . The Barce force consisted of 17 vehicles

and 47 men of ' G1 ' and ' T1 ' Patrols , which had to travel 1 @, @ 155 miles ( 1 @, @ 859 km ) to reach their target . On arrival ' T1 ' Patrol attacked the airfield and ' G1 ' the Barce barracks . The attack on the airfield destroyed 35 aircraft according to an Italian prisoner of war . Official Italian figures quote 16 aircraft destroyed and seven damaged .

On 30 September 1942 , the LRDG ceased to be under command of the Eighth Army and came under direct command of GHQ Middle East . The final LRDG operation in North Africa was in Tunisia during the Mareth Offensive when they guided the 2nd New Zealand Division around the Mareth Line in March 1943 .

= = = Post 1943 operations = = =

In May 1943 the LRDG was sent to Lebanon to retrain in mountain warfare . However , following the Italian armistice in 1943 , they were sent to Leros , one of the Dodecanese islands , to serve as normal infantry . They later took part in the Battle of Leros , where the commanding officer John Richard Easonsmith was killed and replaced by David Lloyd Owen . After the battle the last New Zealanders , two officers and approximately 46 men , were withdrawn from the LRDG and returned to their division .

In December 1943 , the LRDG re @-@ organised into two squadrons of eight patrols . Each patrol contained one officer and 10 other ranks . Major Moir Stormonth Darling was given command of the British Squadron and Major Kenneth Henry Lazarus the Rhodesian Squadron . Patrols were then parachuted north of Rome to obtain information about German troop movements , and also carried out raids on the Dalmatian Islands and Corfu .

In August 1944 , British Squadron patrols were parachuted into Yugoslavia . One patrol destroyed two 40 feet ( 12 m ) spans of a large railway bridge , which caused widespread disruption to the movement of German troops and supplies . The commanding officer Lieutenant @-@ Colonel Owen and a team of 36 men were parachuted into Albania in September 1944 . Their mission was to follow the German retreat and assist Albanian resistance groups in attacking them . In October 1944 , two British Squadron patrols were parachuted into the Florina area of Greece . Here they mined a road used by the retreating Germans , destroying three vehicles and blocking the road . Firing on the stranded convoy from an adjacent hillside , they directed RAF aircraft in to destroy the rest of the convoy .

After the end of the war in Europe , the leaders of the LRDG made a request to the War Office for the unit to be transferred to the Far East to conduct operations against the Japanese Empire . The request was declined and the LRDG was disbanded in August 1945 .

= = Legacy = =

The Long Range Desert Group was disbanded at the end of the Second World War . The only comparable British Army units today are the Mobility troops of the Special Air Service . Each of the regular army Special Air Service squadrons has a Mobility troop . Like the LRDG , they are specialists in using vehicles , trained in an advanced level of motor mechanics to fix any problem with their vehicles , and are experts in desert warfare .

The Long Range Desert Group are one of the Second World War units represented by the Special Air Service Association . Other wartime units represented include all the SAS regiments , the Special Raiding Squadron , the Special Boat Service ( Wartime ) , the Phantom Signal Squadron , the Raiding Support Regiment and the Greek Sacred Squadron .

The New Zealand Army erected a permanent memorial to the LRDG at the New Zealand Special Air Service barracks , in the Papakura Military Camp . On 7 August 2009 , two honour boards containing details of every New Zealand soldier who served in the LRDG were unveiled .

One of the LRDG 's Chevrolet WB trucks is displayed in the Imperial War Museum in London . It was presented to the museum by the LRDG Association , after being recovered from the Libyan desert in 1983 by David Lloyd Owen , by then a retired Major General and chairman of the Association . It is preserved in the condition in which it was discovered , rusted but largely intact .

= = Media appearances = =

Lost in Libya - In Search of the Long Range Desert Group ( 2009 )

In 2008 historians Brendan O 'Carroll ( New Zealand ) , Guno Goss ( Switzerland ) and Roberto Chiavetto ( Italy ) travelled to Libya to track down three LRDG trucks that had been abandoned in 1941 at Gebel Sherif , in Southern Libya , after the LRDG 's first encounter with their Italian equivalent , the Autosahariana . This 65 minute documentary traced their journey , and includes never before seen archival film of the LRDG in action . It was first aired on ANZAC day , 25 April 2009 on Television New Zealand .