



WOOLVERSTONE WORLD WAR TWO - TIMELINE



- War with Germany was declared on Sunday 3rd September 1939. Woolverstone Park, including the Hall, was requisitioned by the War Office.
- In late 1942 Landing Craft began to train in the rivers Orwell and Stour.
- Woolverstone Park a Combined Operations base.
- 1st January 1943 HMS Woolverstone commissioned by Admiralty.
- March 1943, plans debated to expand the base.
- 9th July 1943, HMS Woolverstone downgraded to a maintenance, repair and loading base
- 15th October 1943, HMS Woolverstone recommissioned
- Harwich Landing Ship Tank (LST) base comes under HMS Woolverstone command (early 1944, 17 LSTs on the Stour
- Landing Craft Assault (LCA) manned by Royal Marines



- Operation Neptune – Invasion of Normandy. “Force L” – to carry 7th Armoured Division “Desert Rats (based at Orwell Park)”, part of 51st Highland Division and HQs of 1st and 30th Corps to the invasion beachheads as immediate follow up to D-Day landings. D+1.
- Force L’s HQ at St Felix school, Southwold. Planned ship-loading, convoy mustering and routing, timetabling and security.



- Landing Craft divided into 3 fleets: L1 at Harwich, L2 at Lowestoft L3 on the Thames
- April 1 1944, whole East Coast for 1 mile inland was closed to all outside civilians, save someone on official business. All servicemen’s mail read by censors
- May 1944, L2 moved from Lowestoft to the Orwell. HMS Woolverstone temporarily took charge.
- L1 and L2 sheltered underneath Harwich/Ipswich AA barrage. One part of this was located at Freston, another at Erwarton
- 31st May 21,000 troops and 3,600 vehicles moved in convoys to the outskirts of loading ports. 22nd Armoured Brigade with 200 tanks and 1,600 men commenced loading at Ipswich docks. Now called Sailing Group 2
- 2nd June, Desert Rats embark at Felixstowe

Desert Rats on the Orwell

- Morning of June 5th all craft ready to leave for France. Bad weather meant a 24- hour postponement. Troops and their armour sat in boats on the Orwell, rocking on the swell, Troops got edgy and weary.
- Night of 5th June 1944, planes from RAF Bomber Command headed to France to bomb Normandy in advance of the invasion. First wave on invasion forces closing in on the beaches.
- Same night, Force L left Stour and Orwell and Harwich harbour. 65 major landing craft and ships, escorted by destroyers and corvettes.
- Simultaneously, more dummy landing craft assembled at Woolverstone and set afloat to maintain deception that the Normandy invasion was a feint.
- All sections of force L unite on morning of 6th June at Knock John Fort – 9 nmi off the coast of Essex. Some 280 vessels headed for France later that night .
- Morning of 7th June 1944, troops and vehicles discharged onto the beach heads. D+1
- At HMS Woolverstone, dummy LCT continue to be built until 12th June. Total 63.
- Dummy fleet maintained for a further three weeks until the beginning of July, then recovered and dismantled.
- HMS Woolverstone continued as a depot and repair base, as well as a training base. It absorbed HMS Bunting (Ipswich) Many LCTs laid up there.
- Tuesday 8th May, 1945, German forces unconditionally surrendered. Victory in Europe was declared.
- HMS Woolverstone decommissioned on 20th Feb 1946.

