



John Lowman, RN Fleet Air Arm, the Army, and No.1 (Army) Commando.

Available at Amazon.

Extracts from The Commando Poet, An Irreverent Memoir

.....On one occasion, as evening fell, instead of going back to our bivouac area our Troop Commander said, "Right, we stay here for the night." We had no cover, no grub and not a clue as to what was going on. Trying to get comfortable is difficult when it's pitch black. One tries not to think of snakes, centipedes, scorpions, leeches and the ever present mosquitoes. The cicadas kick up a racket which lasts the whole night long. I vowed that night that, when back in 'Civvy Street', if ever I thought I was hard done by, I would think of that night.....

Another night I woke up and realised I had a touch of dysentery.
Sanitary arrangements, it seems, are hard to make provision for. I thought they were primitive in our camp in France but they were non-existent in this part of the world and blokes had been living in the field here for months on end.

The [jungle] training was endless. We started doing exercises with other army units. It was strange really; usually there's a lot of shi-ikeing between Regiments but, when we went by, there was hardly a sound, just friendly waves. I think the main reason for these schemes was to get everyone used to large-scale troop movements. One day, on one of these exercises, we were all sitting on a hillside when an Officer with red tabs informed us we were all dead. The cheer that went up would have rivalled the winning goal at a Wembley Cup Final and before the echo had died away, we were all brewing up.

By now some of the older soldiers were due for demob and we were sorry to see them go, their experience was invaluable but they had had nearly six years of war. Bill Ling, Rueben Salter and Bill Munday, all Sergeants and all in from the start.
One time Bill was climbing down a precipitous place with the aid of a liana and it gave way. His yell was one of pure fear, not so much because he was frightened but because, having survived so much, he didn't want to go out on a stupid exercise. Happily the liana held but Bill was shaken up. Reuben had a chin like Jimmy Hill, the footballer. His mate Len said one day, "Reuben, if ever you get shot there's only one place they can hit you." They were all smashing blokes.....

Hong Kong – after the Japanese had left
The powers that be finally made up their minds, and we went to Hong Kong. The RAF were there by the time we arrived but they hadn't disarmed the Japanese troops, who had obeyed their Emperor and packed up and left. Although it was an unopposed landing we still kitted up. We went on to Hong Kong Island and Number 5 Commando went to the New Territories on the mainland, along with the Marine Commandos. Martial law was the only law of course.....

**Poems and Memories of John Lowman who served in the RN Fleet Air Arm,
the Army, and No.1 (Army) Commando.**

Edited and published by his daughter Jackie Keefe.

Available at Amazon.

The Longest Night

© J V Lowman

From “Being Famous” 2004

I can't recall the vessel's name
But Oh! I thanked its sturdy frame
Outward bound for Normandy
My first trip ever out to sea
A birthday present in some way
I'd reached nineteen that very day
And I'll remember evermore
That June night, nineteen forty four.

Anchor we weighed at eventide
Determinedly, I stayed topside
Dressed up in army uniform
We had no duties to perform
Why we changed from Navy Blue
To khaki, we had not a clue
But ours was not to reason why
High-ups don't like it if we pry.

The wind got up and I declare
It started getting rough out there
The reading was a force nine gale
According to the Beaufort scale.
The waves stood higher than the ship
The elements had sure let rip
I'm telling you, that ship my friend
Did everything but stand on end.

It was a rollercoaster ride
And I stood watching goggle-eyed
It was for me a wondrous thrill
Until I started feeling ill.
I somehow stumbled down below
In abject misery and woe
My stomach fed the fish somewhere
'Twixt Devonport and Bernieres.

I felt and looked a sorry sight
It was for me the longest night
Rocked in the cradle of the deep
I snatched about an hour's sleep.
By morning, somewhat bleary-eyed
Shell-fire told me we'd arrived.
The thought that we'd soon disembark
Made me as happy as a lark.

The beaches had long been secured
Good news, for I was not insured
Then N.P. Sixteen Ninety Three
Went shoreward in an L.C.T.
Unarmed and on a hostile shore
Without a clue as to what for
But looking forward to the treat
Of solid ground beneath my feet!

The Commando Poet - An Irreverant Memoir

**Poems and Memories of John Lowman who served in the RN Fleet Air Arm,
the Army, and No.1 (Army) Commando.**

Edited and published by his daughter Jackie Keefe.

Available at Amazon.