

Canal Defence Light (CDL), Lowther Castle

In 1915, a British naval officer, Commander Oscar de Thoren, suggested to the War Office that the British Army might attack at night with the aid of searchlights carried forward on automobiles.

*The **Canal Defence Light** (CDL) was a British "secret weapon" of the Second World War. It was based upon the use of a powerful carbon-arc searchlight mounted on a tank. It was intended to be used during night-time attacks, when the light would allow enemy positions to be targeted. A secondary use of the light would be to dazzle and disorient enemy troops, making it harder for them to return fire accurately. The name Canal Defence Light was used to conceal the device's true purpose.*

In June 1941, the personnel of 11th battalion, Royal Tank Regiment (RTL), arrived for training at Lowther Castle, near Penrith, followed by 50 Matilda II and Churchill tank hulls.

Reference Internet

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canal_Defence_Light

"In 1942 adapted Matilda tanks arrived at Lowther Castle situated a few miles to the south of Penrith so that a possible night-time tank strategy might be developed. The turrets of the tanks were adapted to shine intense flickering lights of up to 18 M Candlelight power. It was called locally 'The Candle Defence Light'. (NB -The actual name is 'Canal Defence Light')

The intended strategy was for tanks to advance in formation and blind the enemy, at least temporarily. As a result, any supporting advance by the infantry would be a cakewalk and much ground would be gained. Among the Generals and VIPs who visited Lowther to see the manoeuvres were Winston Churchill and General Eisenhower, who apparently were suitably impressed.

One defect of the weapon was that the effects of the weapon were mitigated if the enemy wore Ultra-violet glasses. Apparently, it was also felt by some that a weapon that attempted to blind the enemy was 'not quite the done thing'. Also, by the time the weapon was ready for use towards the end of the war, there was less need for a tanks to have this kind of night-time fighting capacity."

Reference Internet:

<http://2ndww.blogspot.com/2006/08/canal-defence-light.html>

Use of 'Artificial Light' WW2

"The Moonlight Batteries were Searchlight units of Britain's Royal Artillery that specialised in providing 'artificial moonlight', otherwise known as 'movement light' or 'Monty's moonlight', for ground operations during the latter stages of World War II."

Reference Internet:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moonlight_Batteries,_Royal_Artillery

"It was late in the evening on Sunday 17th September 1944 that the "artificial moonlight" was demonstrated in an actual battle. This took place to the west of Coriano Ridge with the 4th British Div. attacking another ridge between us and Croce, both 46th and 56th Divs had been in action against Croce and Gemmano and were replaced with Maj.Gen. Dudley Wards 4th Div.

I was on top of a four stretcher ambulance jeep heading for Ancona Hospital when all of a sudden the whole area was illuminated by many searchlights hitting the overhead clouds and reflecting back down to the earth... not knowing what was going on we naturally stopped in case it was a ploy by the enemy. Almost immediately we saw British troops advancing over this field in line order. This didn't last as they were walking towards yet another regiment of the 1st Paratroops who had given us more than trouble all the way from Ortona in the south.



Searchlight beams create artificial moonlight
Searchlight beams create artificial moonlight

Within minutes they came alive and the Spandau's- Schmeisers and Nebewerfers soon broke up the tidy marching and casualties were mounting fast as they also could see the whole Battlefield.

This was the first time the "artificial moonlight" had been used in Italy and it was obviously the experimental unit.

It was perfected soon afterwards as it was used in the final battles above the Po valley and right to the end on April 29th. '45.

Reference Internet

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/WH2-2Epi-fig-WH2-2Epi-i020b.html>