



**Steve Pooley**  
**Royal Navy**

Steve Pooley born 17<sup>th</sup> November 1923 at Terrington St Clement, A/B Seaman, Royal Navy No. C/JX 353071 Mentioned in Dispatches by Lt Cdr Alan Villiers RNVR who wrote of his “unflagging zeal, setting an outstanding example. He trod between beach mines while barefoot but did not let them deter him.”



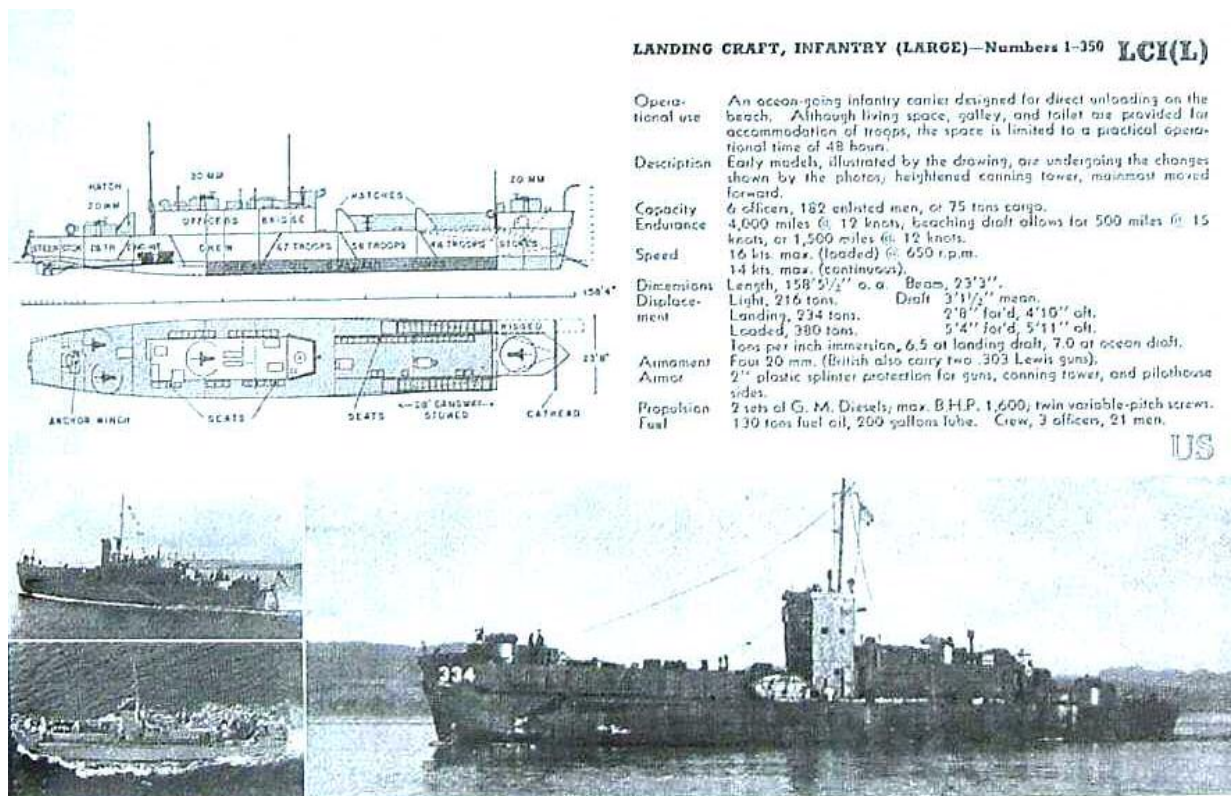
Daily Mirror centre spread for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day in 1994  
Steve is second from left on right-hand page

I signed up for the Royal Navy on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1941 and I was called up in March 1942 for the medical. They tried to persuade me to go into the Army but I refused. I had volunteered, so I had my way - it was the Navy. When I went to get on the train, I looked, and there were two of my schoolmates – one of them was with me all through the war on the same ship. We were only parted once, after the war when he went to Scotland to go back to Burma; but they changed their minds and we were back together again.

From the train we went to *HMS Ganges* at Shotley near Ipswich for six weeks training. Then Chatham, had a tattoo put on my arm – young and silly – then Troon in Scotland for LCT training, that’s Landing Craft for Tanks. After about a month we went back to Scotland and on the *Queen Mary* to New York. They treated us

marvellous! They took us to Brooklyn and put on a big show for us with the Andrews Sisters. From there we went to Astbury Park in New Jersey, straight into hotels. Everything was left for us, the beds made and everything, marvellous! Then Norfolk, Virginia, to pick up the LCI's (Landing Craft for Infantry). We had Christmas on them. I've never felt so cold in my life. It was thirty degrees below freezing.

The LCI's were called Lice and were metal sheets welded together in straight lines, with flat bottoms and bus engines from Detroit. There were twenty-one seaman and stokers, two officers on board. They reckoned 40% of the total Lice would survive the trip across the Atlantic. But it was 100%. There were 24 in our group under Commander Villiers. It wasn't easy. When you were down in a trough you couldn't see any of the others. The most you could see at one time was about four or five.



There were four spaces below for about two hundred troops, a tight squeeze with the numbers doubled up for invasion. There were a few benches to sit on, but mostly bunks. As crew, we were amidships with a bit more space. We had lockers as well as bunks and hammocks. We didn't use the hammocks much. The bunks were canvas, no mattress, and a couple of blankets. You had to eat and sleep in the same place. We all got on alright, being in such a small space. Commander Villiers and the other officers were always friendly and would talk to you. He'd been on tall ships in Australia before going on the Lice, a bit of a difference! He wrote about the LCI's in an American magazine: *Ships and the Sea* in 1952. It was a very good description.

Into March we made our way to the Mediterranean; it was getting warmer all the time. We went to Bermuda, then Gibraltar, Oran, Algiers. In Algiers an Arab hit me on the head with a long pole and took my wallet and paybook. Then Djidgelli, Libya, Tunisia, practising for the invasions, along the North African beaches. It was like a holiday, lovely warm water, catching our own fish and so on, very nice.





By the KING'S Order the name of  
*Able Seaman John Stephen Pooley,*

was published in the London Gazette on  
*14 November 1944,*  
as mentioned in a Despatch for distinguished service.  
I am charged to record  
His Majesty's high appreciation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. H. ...', written over a horizontal line.

First Lord of the Admiralty