

SECOND WORLD WAR

60TH

ANNIVERSARY

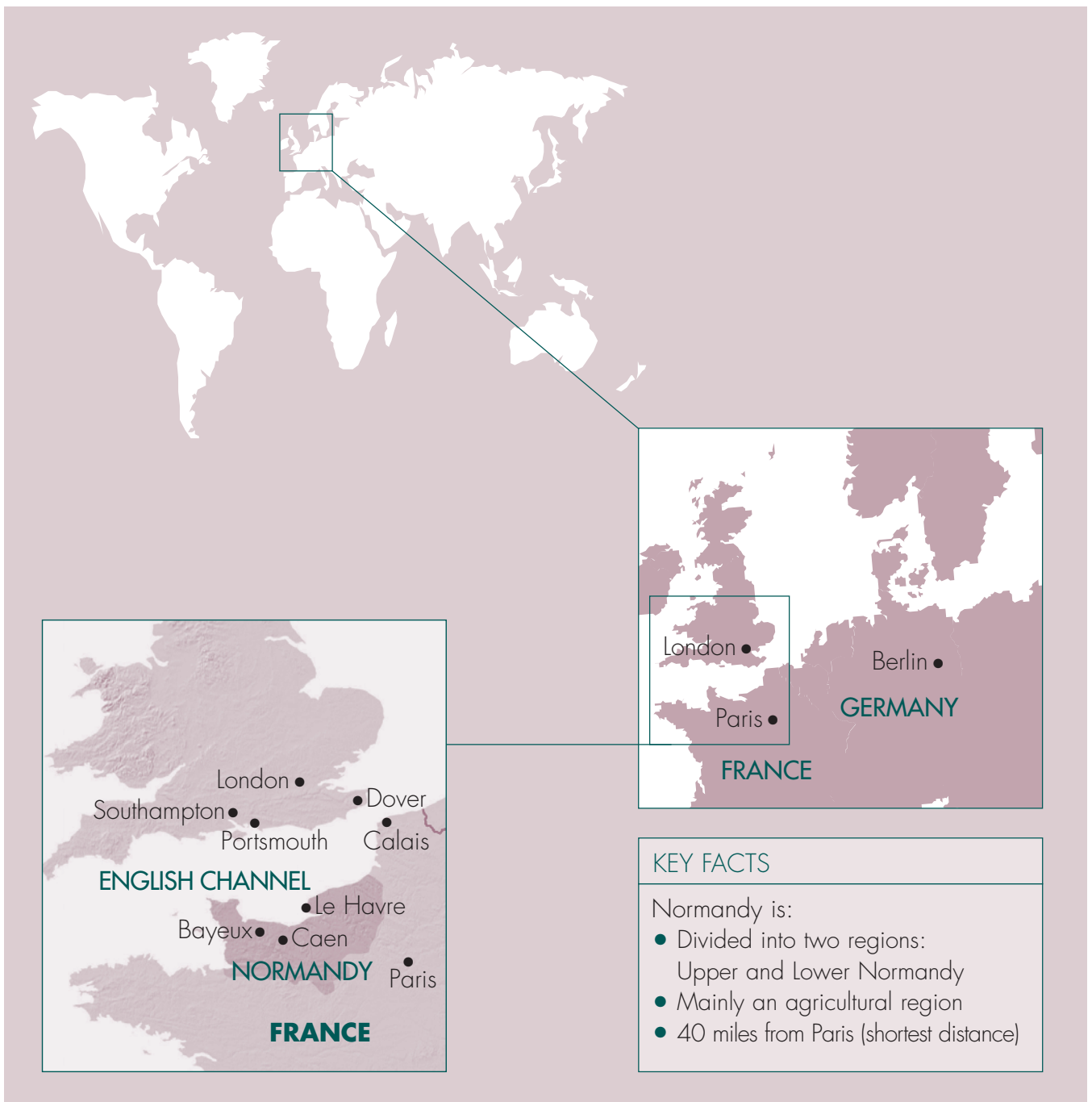
The D-Day Landings
Northern France
6 June 1944



'The amphibious invasion that established the Second Front'

D-Day

NORMANDY, NORTHERN FRANCE



Cover image: British troops landing on "Sword" beach.

IWM B 5714



Foreword by the Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans, Ivor Caplin MP

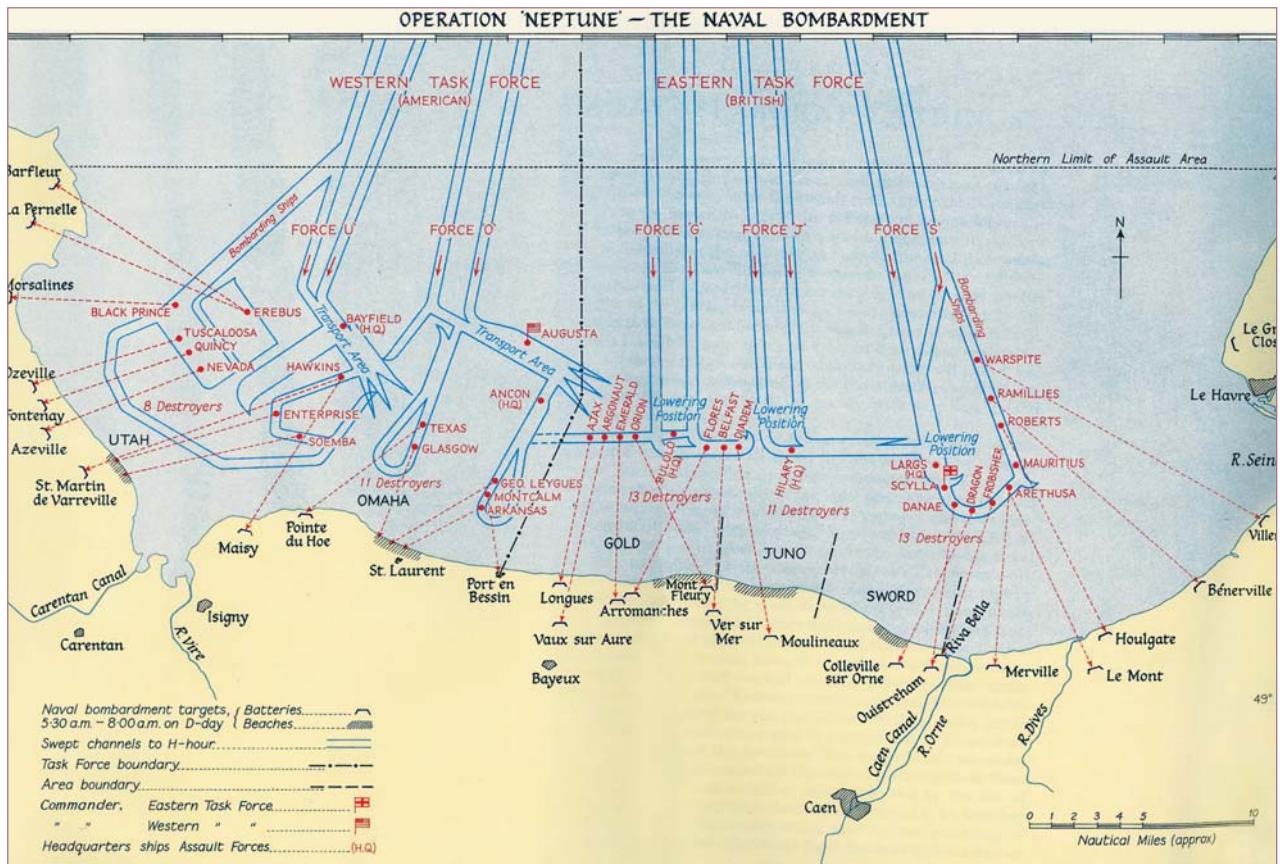
‘A nation that forgets its past has no future.’ These words by Winston Churchill could not be more apt to describe the purpose of this series of booklets, of which this is the third. As Minister for Veterans I believe that we should continue to remember the bravery of our Armed Forces during the Second World War; without their efforts and sacrifices, our lives today would be very different. These booklets will commemorate various Second World War actions, and aim not only to remember and commemorate those who fought and died, but also to inform future generations of the sacrifices made by those who fought. The inspiration that can be derived from their stories will be invaluable for their future. I want to help those growing up now to be aware of the veterans’ sacrifices, and of the important contributions they made to our security and to the way of life we enjoy today. I hope that this series will have relevance beyond these events as well as serving as a memento of the 60th anniversary commemorations. By our own actions today, we are aiming to pass on the baton of remembrance to future generations.

This booklet, the third in the series, commemorates the Allied landings on the Normandy coast of German-occupied France on 6 June 1944, one of the most important British operations of the Second World War. On that momentous day, the Allies launched the most ambitious opposed invasion of all time. By the end of the day American, British, Canadian and French forces had established a significant beachhead in France. The numbers of Allied forces committed, the preparatory staff work undertaken, and the bravery of thousands of ordinary people transformed the monumental challenge that was D-Day into one of the most successful military operations the world has ever seen. The initial success in establishing the “Second Front” locked Hitler’s Nazi Reich into wars of attrition in France, Italy and Russia that would eventually lead to the Allies’ total victory.

On 6 June 2004 it will be my honour to stand alongside nearly 10,000 British veterans and the many supporters who will be attending the various commemorative events in Normandy. Like these veterans I am delighted that on this important day the events will be held in the presence of HM the Queen, other members of the Royal Family, and the Prime Minister.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ivor Caplin'.

The Background to the D-Day Landings



Operation "Neptune" – The Naval Bombardment, 6 June 1944.

Operation "Neptune/Overlord" were the code names for the 6 June 1944 D-Day Landings on the Normandy coast of German-occupied France. This was the most important Allied operation of the Second World War. On that momentous day, the Allies launched the most ambitious opposed invasion ("amphibious assault") seen up to that time. "Neptune" was the codename given to the naval operation to transport and land the forces ashore, and "Overlord" referred to the subsequent campaign on the ground. By the end of this day, American, British, Canadian and some French forces had established a significant beachhead in France. The numbers of Allied forces committed, the preparatory work undertaken by all staff, and the bravery of thousands of ordinary service personnel transformed the monumental challenge of D-Day into one of the most successful military operations of all time.

The initial success in establishing the "Second Front" locked Germany into a three-front war of attrition – in France, Italy and Russia (the Eastern Front) – that would eventually overwhelm Hitler's Nazi Reich.

The Initial Joint Plan produced by the Allies in February 1944 stated that they would assault the Normandy coast to secure "as a base for future operations a Lodgement Area", which within three months would extend to the Rivers Loire and Seine. To achieve this, on D-Day a vast naval armada laden with troops would cross the Channel under the cover of darkness and then, before dawn, drop anchor opposite the five designated invasion beaches: from east to west, "Sword", "Juno", "Gold", "Omaha" and "Utah". By then, three Allied airborne divisions would have landed to secure the flanks of the invasion.

"Overlord" Commanders, Back row, left to right:
 Lieutenant General Bradley, Admiral Ramsay, Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, General Bedell Smith.
Front row, left to right: Air Chief Marshal Tedder, General Eisenhower, General Montgomery.



Finally, after heavy aerial and naval bombardments, British and Canadian assault forces would land on "Sword", "Juno" and "Gold", while American forces assaulted "Omaha" and "Utah". After these initial assaults had established five small beachheads, follow-up forces would land and advance inland. By the end of D-Day, the Allies hoped, their forces would have captured the towns of Caen and Bayeux, and have consolidated the four eastern beachheads and the British airborne zone into a single salient.

To execute this plan successfully, the Allies had to undertake extensive preparations. They had to train and then assemble in southern England many dozens of divisions while deceiving the enemy into believing that their main attack would come in the Pas de Calais, not Normandy. They had to bomb the French railways to undermine German supply and reinforcement capabilities. Finally, on 12 February 1944, they established in south-west London the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) with General Eisenhower as its Supreme Commander.

KEY FACTS

SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER

General Dwight ("Ike") Eisenhower

DEPUTY SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER

Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder

NAVAL Commander-in-Chief

Admiral Bertram Ramsay

AIR Commander-in-Chief

Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory

(TEMPORARY) LAND C-IN-C

(21st ARMY GROUP)

General Bernard Montgomery

CHIEF OF STAFF (SHAEF)

General Walter Bedell Smith

EASTERN TASK FORCE

Rear Admiral Philip Vian

WESTERN TASK FORCE

Rear Admiral Alan Kirk

SECOND TACTICAL AIR FORCE

Air Chief Marshal Arthur Coningham

NINTH US AIR FORCE

Lieutenant General Lewis Brereton

SECOND (BRITISH) ARMY

Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey

FIRST US ARMY

Lieutenant General Omar Bradley

Invasion!

By initiating D-Day on 6 June amid poor weather, the Allies surprised the German forces, whose slow reactions then let slip their best chance to drive the invaders back into the sea. Back on 8 May, the Allies had scheduled the landings for 5 June, when there existed the required combination of good moonlight (for the airborne drops), half-way rising tides (for avoiding beach obstacles) and plenty of daylight: the unpredictable factor remained the weather. During 2–3 June, the naval bombardment groups headed south from the Scottish ports, but unfortunately on 4 June deteriorating weather forced the Allies to postpone the attack planned for 5 June by 24 hours. This decision condemned those soldiers already embarked to an unpleasant night aboard swaying transport vessels. If continuing bad weather postponed the invasion beyond 7 June, the Allies would have to wait two weeks until satisfactory conditions reoccurred – a dangerous delay given that German troops were then rapidly strengthening their defences along the French coast. During the night 4–5 June, the

storm worsened, but by then the meteorologists had predicted somewhat better weather on 6 June. Consequently, at 0400 hours British Double Summer Time (GMT plus two hours) on the 5th, the Allies bravely decided to initiate the invasion on 6 June despite the marginal weather conditions.

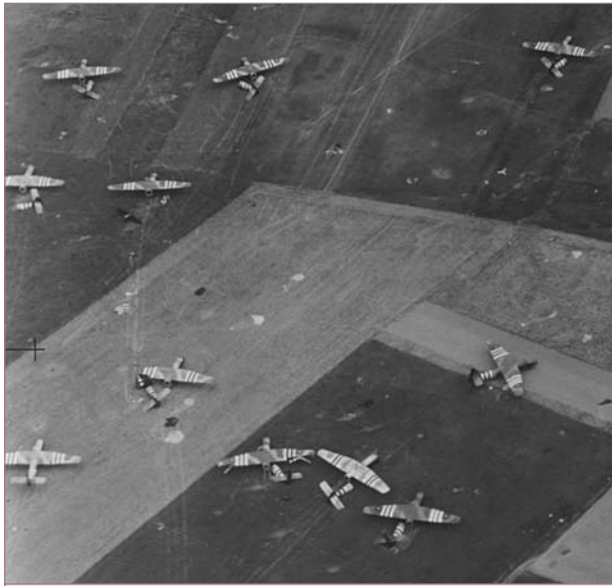
During 5 June, 6,939 vessels from eight different navies and many merchant fleets assembled off the coast of southern England. From 2100 hours, the Western Task Force – Assault Forces “Omaha” and “Utah”, plus their respective naval bombardment groups – assembled south of Hayling Island; they were soon joined by the Eastern Task Force, with Assault Forces “Sword”, “Juno” and “Gold”, plus their bombardment groups. As the armada headed south toward Normandy, the first Allied bombers passed overhead en route to strike the German defences. Next, from 2330 hours, 1,100 Allied transport planes travelled south across the Channel, transporting 17,000 airborne troops to Normandy.

IWM PL 25481



Three fully-loaded US Navy LCTs (Land Craft Tanks) at Portland Harbour, 3 June 1944.

IWM CL 59



Oblique aerial view of parachutes and Horsa gliders in Normandy on D-Day.

From 0016 hours, the British 6th Airborne Division landed north-east of Caen to seize key bridges over the River Orne and Caen Canal. First, in “one of the finest flying feats of the war”, three Horsa gliders accurately crash-landed in the marshy terrain immediately adjacent to the Caen Canal bridge at Bénouville (known ever since as “Pegasus” Bridge after the winged horse emblem worn by these liberators). Led by Major John Howard, the men of the 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Ox & Bucks LI) and the 249th Field Company Royal Engineers boldly stormed across the bridge, guns blazing. A German soldier recalled that witnessing a “para platoon in full cry had frightened the daylight” out of him. Within five minutes, and for the loss of just two killed, the Paras had secured the bridge and liberated the first French building – the Café Gondrée. Subsequently, the Paras held the bridge until relieved later that day by forces that had landed on “Sword” beach, while other units of the 6th Airborne also secured several bridges over the Orne, the Ranville–Hérouvillette area east of the river, and the Merville Battery.

Meanwhile, from 0100 hours, two American airborne divisions landed in the marshy terrain behind “Utah” to seize key bridges and road

junctions and thus delay German counter-attacks and facilitate an Allied advance from the beach. At 0215 hours, the German LXXXIV Corps concluded that these airborne assaults were the start of the long-anticipated Allied invasion, and consequently went onto full alert. For many hours to come, however, the higher German authorities – including Hitler – remained convinced that the landings were just a diversion prior to the main Allied attack in the Pas de Calais.

As these airborne operations unfolded, the Allied naval armada approached the Normandy coastline, being first spotted by German naval observers at 0325 hours. During the next two hours, the armada dropped anchor opposite the five invasion beaches. To the enemy, the sight of such a vast military force was shocking: “But that’s not possible” was all that Lieutenant Frerking at Strongpoint WN62 on “Omaha” beach could utter! After 1,900 Allied bombers had attacked enemy positions, and as dawn approached, the invasion fleet opened fire, with spotting provided by RAF, Fleet Air Arm and US Navy aircraft, on the German defences. All was now set for the five assault landings to begin as scheduled – from as early as 0630 hours at “Utah” to as late as 0745 hours at “Juno”, according to the tidal conditions.

KEY FACTS

Allied Forces Deployed on D-Day

- **The Invasion Fleet: 6,939 vessels**
 - 1,213 warships
 - 4,126 transport vessels
 - 1,600 support vessels
- **The Aerial Armada: 11,680 aircraft**
 - 4,370 bombers
 - 4,190 fighters and fighter-bombers
 - 1,360 transports
 - 1,760 other aircraft
- **The Ground Forces: 159,000 troops**
 - 130,000 troops landed via beaches
 - 29,000 airborne troops

The landings: “Sword”



IWM B 5103



Commandos of 1st Special Service Brigade land on “Sword” beach around 0840 hours, with Piper Bill Millin nearest the camera.

The eastern beach – “Sword” – stretched for eight miles from the Orne estuary at Ouistreham in the east through to St-Aubin-sur-Mer. The Allies had divided this beach area into four sectors – from east to west, “Roger”, “Queen”, “Peter” and “Oboe” – but offshore rocks prevented the British 3rd Division from landing on the latter two sectors. The 8th Brigade Group, which formed the division’s spearhead, attacked the defences manned by the German 736th Grenadier Regiment on “Queen” beach, who were centred around the strongpoint at la Brèche. The British assault force fielded a particular combination of infantry, commandos and specialised armoured units that, broadly speaking, would be repeated on the other two Anglo-Canadian beaches. The specialised armour included amphibious Duplex-Drive (DD) Shermans, Flails, Churchill AVREs, Centaurs and BARVs. In addition, the force fielded two small groups that provided crucial

capabilities: the dedicated Royal Engineers (RE) and Royal Navy (RN) beach clearance teams courageously cleared enemy obstacles such as mines while under fire, and the beach masters skilfully directed the forces that had reached the beach and prevented chaos from ensuing. RAF Beach Balloon Flight disembarked inflated barrage balloons from the landing craft and set up passive defences against an already depleted Luftwaffe threat in the region.

At 0530 hours, the large transport ships of Force “S” began to lower their small Landing Craft Assault (LCAs), packed full with the leading infantry platoons, into the turbulent seas of the Channel. As these small craft struggled toward the coast, the heavy seas pitched them about, causing many of the soldiers aboard to be violently seasick. To combat his troops’ sagging spirits, Major “Banger” King of the East Yorkshire

Regiment read extracts from Shakespeare's Henry V to his men via the landing craft's tannoy, including the famous "once more unto the breach" passage. Alongside them, the larger Landing Craft Tanks (LCTs) either unloaded their cargoes of amphibious DD Shermans or else carried on toward the shore, aiming to land their Flails, AVREs and Centaurs. As the craft approached the beach, Allied cruisers, destroyers and support craft fired at the German positions. From 0650 hours, this fire was reinforced when the 72 field guns of the 3rd Division's artillery regiments opened fire on the German defences after 18 landing ships brought them to within six miles of the coast. This immense firepower effectively suppressed the German defences, and consequently most of the leading landing craft managed to approach the beach without being damaged by enemy fire.

As the first wave of 20 LCAs neared the beach at 0715 hours, it became obvious to the Allied soldiers that, due to the bad weather, the incoming tide at "Sword" beach was already higher than had been expected. Consequently, several landing craft inadvertently crashed into submerged German obstacles that the Allies had expected to be visible above water. This unexpectedly high tide reduced the depth of the beach, conveniently limiting the amount of dead

ground that the infantry needed to cross, yet also inconveniently restricting the space in which the armoured vehicles could assemble. At 0726 hours – one minute later than scheduled – the beach clearance and control teams, together with the assault infantry, struggled through the surf to the shore, with the supporting Flails and AVREs alongside them. A few minutes later, the first of the 28 DD Shermans that had neither sunk in the heavy swell nor succumbed to German fire reached the beach. By 0750 hours, the 1st South Lancashire Regiment (South Lincs) and the 2nd East Yorkshire Regiment (East Yorks) were ashore and fighting themselves forward, aided by the fire support provided by the specialised armour that had made it ashore.

During the next two hours, the British forces overcame intense enemy resistance to capture the coastal strongpoint at la Brèche. In the aftermath of this action, one observer captured for posterity the grim realities of war. He described this sector of the beach as "a sandy cemetery with unburied new dead and half undead, missing arms and legs, their blood clotting in the sand". As this engagement raged, other British and French troops fought their way east into the fringes of Ouistreham, and successfully pushed nearly two miles inland to capture Hermanville-sur-Mer. All morning, the follow-up forces – the 185th and 9th Infantry Brigades, together with further commandos from the 1st Special Service Brigade – continued to land on the ever-narrowing strip of sandy beach. The huge traffic jam that built up prevented the supporting armour from moving inland to the team at Hermanville. At noon, the 185th Infantry Brigade began to push inland despite its lack of supporting armour, which was ordered to catch up as best it could.

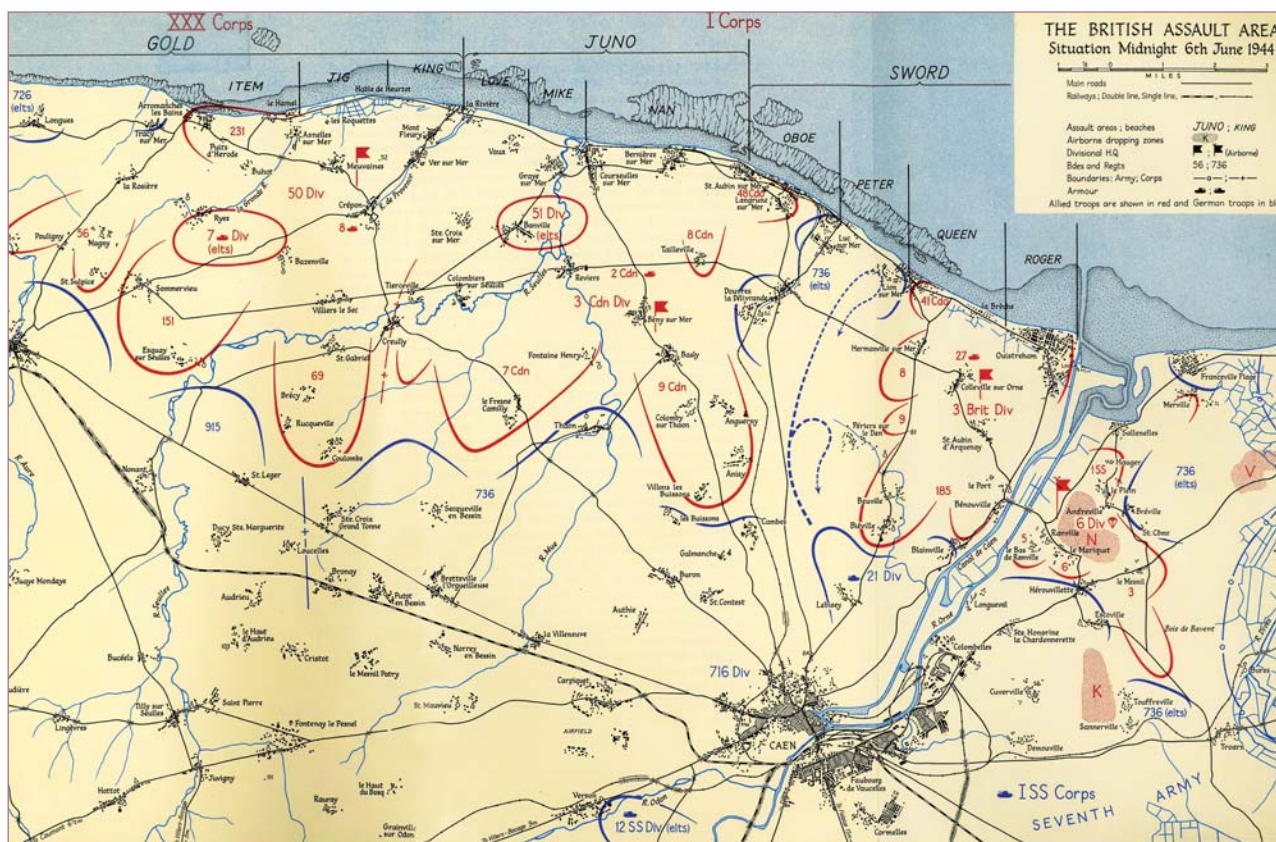
IWM B 5091



Infantry from the British 2nd Army waiting to move off "Sword" beach while under enemy fire.

"A sandy cemetery with unburied new dead and half undead, missing arms and legs, their blood clotting in the sand"

“Juno”



The British–Canadian assault area.

Meanwhile, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, also part of Lieutenant-General Crocker's I Corps, assaulted “Juno”, the central British–Canadian beach. The Allies had divided this beach, which stretched six miles from St-Aubin-sur-Mer in the east through to la Rivière, into three sectors – “Nan”, “Mike” and “Love”. On “Nan” beach, the 8th Canadian Brigade Group assaulted with two infantry battalions plus 48 Commando Royal Marines (RM), supported by specialised armour; further west, the 7th Canadian Brigade Group landed on “Mike”. At 0745 hours, the assault

forces approached the beach, only to encounter determined enemy resistance. Thus it was not until 0900 hours that they managed to secure the first exits from the beach. During the rest of the morning, Canadian and British Commando forces advanced through St-Aubin and Courseulles, before pushing up to four miles inland. Pockets of enemy forces, however, continued to hold out in the coastal villages until early evening.

"Gold"



The western British–Canadian beach sector, "Gold", stretched for nine miles from la Rivière in the east through to Porten-Bessin. The Allies had divided this beach into four sectors, named (from east to west) "King", "Jig", "Item" and "How". Offshore rocks restricted the assault mounted on "Gold" beach by the British 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division – part of Lieutenant-General Bucknall's XXX Corps – to just "King" and "Jig" sectors. Between 0545 and 0715 hours, Allied naval vessels bombarded the German defences, augmented by the 72 ship-borne artillery pieces fielded by the 50th Division. According to Sergeant Major Jack Villader Brown, the latter fired rapidly for so long that "the guns got so hot the blokes could hardly handle them".

Next, the 69th Brigade Group assaulted "King" at 0730 hours with the standard formation of two infantry battalions backed by specialised armour. Simultaneously, a similar grouping from 231st Brigade Group, plus an additional Royal Marine (RM) Commando, landed on "Jig". Despite their understandable apprehensions over the imminent battle, many of the assault troops "were so glad to get off the landing craft to escape the seasickness". The infantry landings

IWM B 5141



"Gold" beach – 6 June 1944.

were aided by the naval bombardment's effective suppression of most of the German defences, with the exception of the strongpoint of le Hamel. Although the AVRE and Flail teams successfully landed on schedule alongside the assault infantry, the Centaurs and DD Shermans were delayed. The latter arrived late because the rough seas prevented them from "swimming" ashore. Instead, their LCTs had to bring them right up onto the shore line. At Mont Fleury, behind "King" beach, the 6th Green Howards successfully fought their way off the beach, thanks in part to the exceptional courage displayed by Sergeant Major Hollis.

Further west, the German strongpoint of le Hamel remained largely undamaged, despite the prior strikes mounted by Allied Typhoon fighter-bombers. The limited amount of available armoured support proved insufficient to prevent the Hampshires from becoming pinned down by enemy fire opposite le Hamel. Private Hooley from "A" Company recalled poignantly that "a sweet rancid smell, never forgotten, was everywhere; it was the smell of burned explosive, torn flesh, and ruptured earth". He remembered witnessing a Flail tank explode after taking a direct hit, "out of which came cartwheeling through the air a torn shrieking body". Despite these grievous losses, the British forces nevertheless managed to fight their way doggedly forward. By around 0930 hours they had secured the beach against determined enemy resistance. The battle for le Hamel itself, however, raged on until afternoon. One Hampshire soldier recalled it was a "bloody awful" experience, which he "did not expect to survive". Subsequently, during the rest of the morning, the forces of the 50th Division pushed inland four miles toward the town of Creully, and 47 Commando Royal Marines struck west four miles to seize Porten-Bessin and close the gap with the Americans at "Omaha".

"Omaha" and "Utah"

A nine-mile gap existed between "Gold" and "Omaha", the eastern American beach. The spearhead of General Gerow's VII US Corps – the 1st US Infantry Division (known to all as the "Big Red One") – landed on "Omaha". This beach ran for four miles from Port-en-Bessin in the east through to Vierville in the west. To support the 1st Division's assault, 329 American B24 bombers dropped 13,000 bombs on the German coastal defences. The bad weather forced the air crews to bomb blind using just their instruments. Just before releasing their bombs they were ordered to wait a few seconds longer than calculated to ensure that no bombs fell on the invasion armada. As a result, most of the bombs fell behind the German coastal defences. The poor visibility also hampered naval fire support, and concerns about friendly-fire casualties prompted commanders to redirect tactical air support onto targets deeper in the hinterland. The combination of these factors left the enemy defences relatively intact. In addition,

Allied intelligence had failed to detect the reinforcement of this coastal sector by the German 352nd Infantry Division. All of this bore ill for the actual assault, which commenced at 0640 hours.

The leading American infantry first had to struggle through neck-deep, heavily-pitching water. When they reached the shore, moreover, they encountered murderous enemy fire that inflicted terrible casualties. As incoming waves deposited more forces onto the beach, the area became a scene of death and destruction. All morning the invading troops bravely strove to advance off the beach despite the hail of defensive fire they encountered, and despite the mounting toll of the dead, the dying and the wounded lying on the beach. Indeed, it was largely through such bravery that by noon on D-Day at "Omaha" the Americans still had a foothold on enemy-occupied soil, even if this remained precarious.



The American assault area.

IWM EA 26941



American troops landing on D-Day.

Events panned out very differently on the other American beach, "Utah", located along the south-eastern corner of the Cotentin Peninsula. "Utah" lay 13 miles west of "Omaha", from which it was separated by the marshes along the Vire and Douve estuaries. On this beach, the forces of Lieutenant General "Lightning" Joe Collins' VII US Corps were to land. The 4th US Infantry Division's assault began at 0630 hours after accurate naval gunfire had smashed the relatively modest German coastal defences. The Germans had

only lightly fortified the "Utah" sector because they believed that their deliberate flooding of the low-lying areas behind the beach provided a strong natural defence. In the face of this moderate resistance and despite the difficult terrain, the Americans soon managed to advance across the marshy hinterland to link up with the US airborne forces dropped a few hours previously in the Merderet and Douve valleys. The successful landings on "Utah" were achieved for the price of just 200 American casualties.

Advancing inland

IWM B 7032



The Pegasus Bridge over the Caen Canal at Bénouville.

During the rest of D-Day, the Allies advanced further inland from these separate beaches to create two larger beachheads. Advancing south four miles from "Sword", elements of the 185th Brigade reached Biéville, while 45 Commando Royal Marines thrust south-south-east and crossed Pegasus Bridge to link up with the airborne forces located east of the Orne. The commandos then continued north-east to link up with the Paras at Merville Battery. Meanwhile, as 41 Commando Royal Marines attacked the town of Lion-sur-Mer, the 8th and 9th Infantry Brigades thrust south-west, but the bitter resistance offered by the "Hillman" strongpoint stalled their drive on the vital Périers ridge. This setback enabled elements of the German 21st Panzer Division to advance northwards toward the coast through the three-mile gap that still existed between the "Sword" and "Juno" beachheads.

"Allied resistance, however, prevented all but small units of enemy forces from reaching the coast"

Allied resistance, however, coupled with persistent air support, prevented all but small units of enemy forces from reaching the coast.

In the meantime, the 3rd Canadian Division had advanced up to five miles inland across a five-mile front that ran from Anisy in the east through to Creully. At the latter location, the Canadians had linked up with the 69th Brigade, part of 50th Division, which had advanced six miles south from "Gold" beach to the town of Coulombs. Further west, the 50th Division's other two brigades had advanced up to five miles south-west to reach positions just two miles short of Bayeux. In addition, by nightfall, elements of two new British divisions had begun to disembark onto the Normandy beaches. Further west, American forces pushed inland from "Utah" to link up with their airborne comrades. At "Omaha", American soldiers determinedly fought their way inland to secure by dusk a tenuous four-mile wide by one-mile deep foothold on French soil, but only at the cost of over 2,000 casualties.

BRITISH SPECIALISED ARMOUR (79th Armoured Division)

- DUPLEX-DRIVE (DD) SHERMAN (amphibious tank)
- ARMoured VEHICLES ROYAL ENGINEERS (AVRE) (bunker-busting assault vehicle)
- ROYAL MARINE CENTAUR IV (close support tank)
- SHERMAN FLAIL (mine-clearing tank)
- BEACH ARMoured RECOVERY VEHICLE (BARV) (recovered drowned vehicles and pushed-off landing craft)

IWM MH 2014



Elements of the 7th Armoured Division breaking out from "Gold" beach.

By midnight, the 159,000 Allied troops, marines, airmen and naval personnel ashore had together successfully established four sizeable beachheads. The forces that had assaulted "Sword" had linked up with the 6th Airborne to create a 25 square mile salient, while the forces that landed at "Juno" and "Gold" had joined up to create a 12-mile wide beachhead; further west came the two American beachheads. Although the invasion front remained vulnerable to German counter-attack, the stunning success achieved on D-Day now made it very difficult for the enemy to throw the liberators back into the sea. The successful establishment of the "Second Front" on 6 June represented a crucial step on the Allied march to victory over the evil empire that was Hitler's Nazi Reich.

"the stunning success achieved on D-Day now made it very difficult for the enemy to throw the liberators back into the sea"

Victoria Crosses

The Victoria Cross is the British realm's highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It has precedence over any other of our Sovereign's awards or Commonwealth decorations.

The Victoria Cross was founded by Royal Warrant on 29 January 1856. The Cross itself is cast from the bronze of cannons captured at Sevastopol during the Crimean War. The design, chosen by Queen Victoria, consists of a cross with the Royal Crest resting upon a scroll bearing the words "For Valour".

Since its inception, the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1,354 times. The youngest recipient was 15 years old and the eldest was 69 years old. Three cases exist where both father and son have won the Victoria Cross; four pairs of brothers have also been recipients.

KEY FACTS

About the Victoria Cross:

- It was founded by Royal Warrant on 29 January 1856
- It has been awarded 1,354 times
- The youngest recipient was 15 years old and the eldest was 69 years old
- One Victoria Cross was awarded following the D-Day Landings.



Extracts from the Citation for the Victoria Cross:
COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR STANLEY ELTON HOLLIS

During the assault on the beaches and the Mont Fleury battery, CSM Hollis' Company Commander noticed that two of the pillboxes had been bypassed and went with Hollis to see that they were clear. When they were 20 yards from the pillbox, a machine gun opened fire from a slit and CSM Hollis instantly rushed straight at the pillbox, recharging his magazine, threw a grenade through the door and fired his Sten gun into it, killing two Germans and making the remainder prisoner.

Later the same day ... the Company encountered a field gun and crew armed with Spandaus at 100 yards range ... Hollis pushed forward to engage the gun with a PIAT from a house at 50 yards. He was observed by a sniper who fired and grazed his right cheek and at the same time the gun swung round and fired at point blank range into the house ... He later found that two of his men had stayed behind in the house and immediately volunteered to get them out. In full view of the enemy, who were continually firing at him, he went forward alone using a Bren gun to distract their attention from the other men. Under cover of his diversion, the two men were able to get back. Wherever the fighting was heaviest CSM Hollis appeared and, in the course of a magnificent day's work, he displayed utmost gallantry and on two separate occasions his courage and initiative prevented the enemy from holding up the advance.

Normandy today



Bayeux Memorial, which stands opposite the War Cemetery and bears the names of the men of the Commonwealth forces who have no known grave.

Today, the legacy of the D-Day Landings casts a powerful impact on the Normandy coastline. There are few locations in the world where there are so many memorials, museums, vehicles and military buildings available to be visited by those interested in the events of 6 June 1944. Indeed, what is now called "battlefield tourism" is big business. Despite fairly rapid post-war building development, traces of the German Atlantic Wall defences can be seen along much of the coastline. The remains of the "Mulberry" harbour dominate the waters off the coast at Arromanches: soon after

D-Day had ended, the Allies towed the massive concrete structures of the "Mulberry" artificial harbour across the Channel and constructed this ready-to-use port facility. In addition, there are many dozens of memorials, monuments and museums that can be visited. Some of the key sites include the Pegasus Bridge Museum at Bénouville, the Atlantic Wall Museum in Ouistreham, and the 6 June 1944 Museum at Arromanches. Out in the open, visitors stand little chance of finding even the smallest relic of the fighting, as the souvenir hunters have long since swept the whole area clean.

Normandy today (cont.)



D-Day veteran Roy Shaw salutes his fallen comrades at the Canadian war cemetery, Bény-sur-Mer, 5km from Juno beach.

Finally, the D-Day battlefield also features the immaculately maintained Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Military Cemeteries. Those located near to the coast are Bayeux, Bény-sur-Mer, Cambes-en-Plaine, Douvres-la-Déliverande, Hermanville-sur-Mer, Ranville and Ryes, as well as the American and German cemeteries at St Laurent and La Cambe respectively. Those commemorating the 60th Anniversary of D-Day will, no doubt, wish to pay their respects to those military personnel who paid the ultimate price for bravery carrying out their duty in the cause of freedom.

KEY FACTS

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains over 1,179,000 war graves at 23,203 burial sites in 148 countries around the world. It also commemorates a further 760,193 Commonwealth war dead on memorials to the missing.

Commonwealth governments share the cost of maintenance in proportion to the number of graves of their war dead: UK – 79%; Canada – 10%; Australia – 6%; New Zealand – 2%; South Africa – 2%; India – 1%.

BRITISH AND CANADIAN ARMY AND NAVY UNITS WHO WERE ASSIGNED TO OPERATION "NEPTUNE/OVERLORD"

6TH AIRBORNE DIVISION

3rd Parachute Brigade

5th Parachute Brigade

6th Airlanding Brigade

6th Airborne Armoured Recce Regiment
53rd Airlanding Light Regiment RA
22nd (Independent) Parachute Company (Pathfinders)

"SWORD" (3RD INFANTRY DIVISION)

Assault Force ("Queen")

8th Brigade Group

1st South Lancashire Regiment,
2nd East Yorkshire Regiment,
Headquarters, 1st Special Service Brigade
3, 4, 6, 41 (RM), 45 (RM) Commandos;
elements 10 (Inter Allied) Commando

13th/18th Royal Hussars – (DD),
22nd Dragoons – (Flails) 2 squadrons,
5th Assault Regiment RE – (AVRE)
5th Independent RM Armoured Support
Battery – (Centaur)

(Reserve): 1st Suffolk Regiment

(Support): 33rd Field Regiment RA
76th (Highland) Field Regiment RA

Reserve/Follow-up Forces

Headquarters, 27th Armoured Brigade;
Rest of 3rd Division

"JUNO" (3RD CANADIAN INFANTRY DIVISION)

Assault Force ("Nan")

8th Canadian Brigade Group

North Shore Regiment,
Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

HQ, 4th Special Service Brigade:
48 (RM) Commando

Fort Garry Horse – (DD), 2 troops,
22nd Dragoons – (Flails) Squadron,
5th Assault Regiment, RE battery,
2nd RM Armoured Support Regiment – (Centaur)

(Reserve): le Regiment de Chaudière

(Support): 14th Canadian Field Regiment, RCA
19th Canadian Field Regiment, RCA

Assault Force ("Nan" / "Mike")

7th Canadian Brigade Group

Regina Rifles,
Royal Winnipeg Rifles,
1st Hussars – (DD), 2 troops,
22nd Dragoons – (Flails) Squadron,
6th Assault Regiment RE – (AVRE) Battery,
2nd RM Armoured Support Regiment – (Centaur)

(Reserve): 1st Canadian Scottish

(Support): 12th Canadian Field Regiment RCA
13th Canadian Field Regiment RCA

BRITISH AND CANADIAN ARMY AND NAVY UNITS WHO WERE ASSIGNED TO OPERATION "NEPTUNE/OVERLORD" (cont.)

Reserve/Follow-up Forces

4th Armoured Brigade

(Reserve): 2nd Devonshire Regiment

51st Infantry Division

(Support): 90th (City of London) Field Regiment RA and 147th (Essex Yeomanry) Field Regiment RA

Rest of 3rd Canadian Division

83 Group RAF

Assault Force ("Jig")

231st Brigade Group

"GOLD" (50TH NORTHUMBRIAN DIVISION)

Assault Force ("King")

69th Brigade Group

5th East Yorkshire Regiment,
6th Green Howards,
4th/7th Dragoon Guards – (DD), Squadron,
Westminster Dragoons – (Flails), Squadron,
6th Assault Regt RE – (AVRE), Battery,
1st RM Armoured Support Regiment – (Centaur)
RN and RE beach clearance and control teams

1st Dorset Regiment,
1st Hampshire Regiment,
Nottinghamshire Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers) – (DD) Squadron,
Westminster Dragoons – (Flails) Squadron,
6th Assault Regiment RE – (AVRE) Battery,
1st RM Armoured Support Regiment – (Centaur)
47 (RM) Commando

(Reserve): 7th Green Howards

Reserve/Follow-up Forces

7th Armoured Division

(Support): 86th (East Anglian) (Herts Yeomanry) Field Regiment RA

33rd Armoured Brigade

49th Infantry Division

Rest of 50th Division

MAJOR ROYAL NAVY WARSHIPS ASSIGNED TO OPERATION "NEPTUNE"

BATTLESHIPS

HMS Nelson
HMS Ramillies
HMS Rodney
HMS Warspite

MONITORS

HMS Erebus
HMS Roberts

CRUISERS

HMS Ajax	HMS Sirius
HMS Arethusa	HMS Danae
HMS Argonaut	HMS Despatch
HMS Belfast	HMS Diadem
HMS Bellona	HMS Emerald
HMS Black Prince	HMS Enterprise
HMS Capetown	HMS Frobisher
HMS Ceres	HMS Glasgow
HMS Orion	HMS Hawkins
HMS Scylla	HMS Mauritius



50th anniversary of the D-Day Landings, 6 June 1994.

Glossary

This booklet is intended to be of interest to young people as well as veterans. As the former may not be acquainted with basic military terminology, a simple glossary of

1944 British Army terms relating to variously sized commands is included here. These commands are listed in descending order of size with the rank of the commander shown in *italics*.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Army Group <i>General or Field Marshal</i>	The largest military command deployed by the British Army, comprising two or more armies and containing 400,000–600,000 troops.
Army <i>Lieutenant General</i>	A military command controlling several subordinate corps, plus supporting forces, amounting to 100,000–200,000 troops.
Corps <i>Lieutenant General</i>	A military command controlling two or more divisions, as well as other supporting forces, amounting to 50,000–100,000 troops.
Division <i>Major General</i>	The standard 1944 British Army formation, an infantry or armoured division, containing 10,000–20,000 personnel.
Brigade <i>Brigadier</i>	A formation that contains several battalions or regiments that amount to 3,000–6,000 personnel, which exists either independently or else forms part of a division.
Regiment <i>Lieutenant Colonel</i>	A unit typically of armoured or artillery forces, amounting to 500–900 soldiers, that equates in status and size to an infantry battalion.
Battalion <i>Lieutenant Colonel</i>	A unit usually comprising 500–900 soldiers (such as an infantry, engineer or signals battalion).
Squadron <i>Major</i>	Typically, a sub-unit of an armoured or recce regiment that equates in status and size to an infantry company.
Company <i>Major</i>	A small sub-unit of a battalion. A typical infantry company could contain around 150–180 soldiers.
Battery <i>Major</i>	A small sub-unit, usually of artillery, that forms part of a battalion.
Unit	A small military grouping that ranges in size from a section (of 10 soldiers) up to a battalion or regiment (500–900 personnel).
Formation	A large military grouping that ranges in size from a brigade up to an army group.
Amphibious assault	An operation where ground forces are transported across water and then disembarked to attack and capture an enemy-held coastline or river-line.
Beachhead	An area of enemy territory captured after an amphibious assault, in which the invaders can establish themselves.
Flank	The territory adjacent to a beachhead or military unit, from where the unit might be vulnerable to enemy counter-attacks.
Lodgement Area	A sizeable area of captured enemy territory, including a major port, that an invading force could use as a supply base from which to launch further decisive military operations.
Nazi Reich	Adolf Hitler's National-Socialist (Nazi) regime in Germany 1933–45; this was the Third German Empire, or Reich.
Second Front	With Germany fighting the Soviets on the Eastern Front, the Allies opened up an additional ("Second") major front in Normandy on D-Day.



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'A nation that forgets its past has no future.'
These words by Winston Churchill could not be more apt to
describe the purpose of this series of booklets,
of which this is the third.

These booklets commemorate various Second World War actions,
and aim not only to remember and commemorate those who
fought and died, but also to remind future generations of
the debt they owe to their forebears, and the inspiration that
can be derived from their stories.

They will help those growing up now to be aware of the veterans'
sacrifices, and of the contributions they made to our security
and to the way of life we enjoy today.

