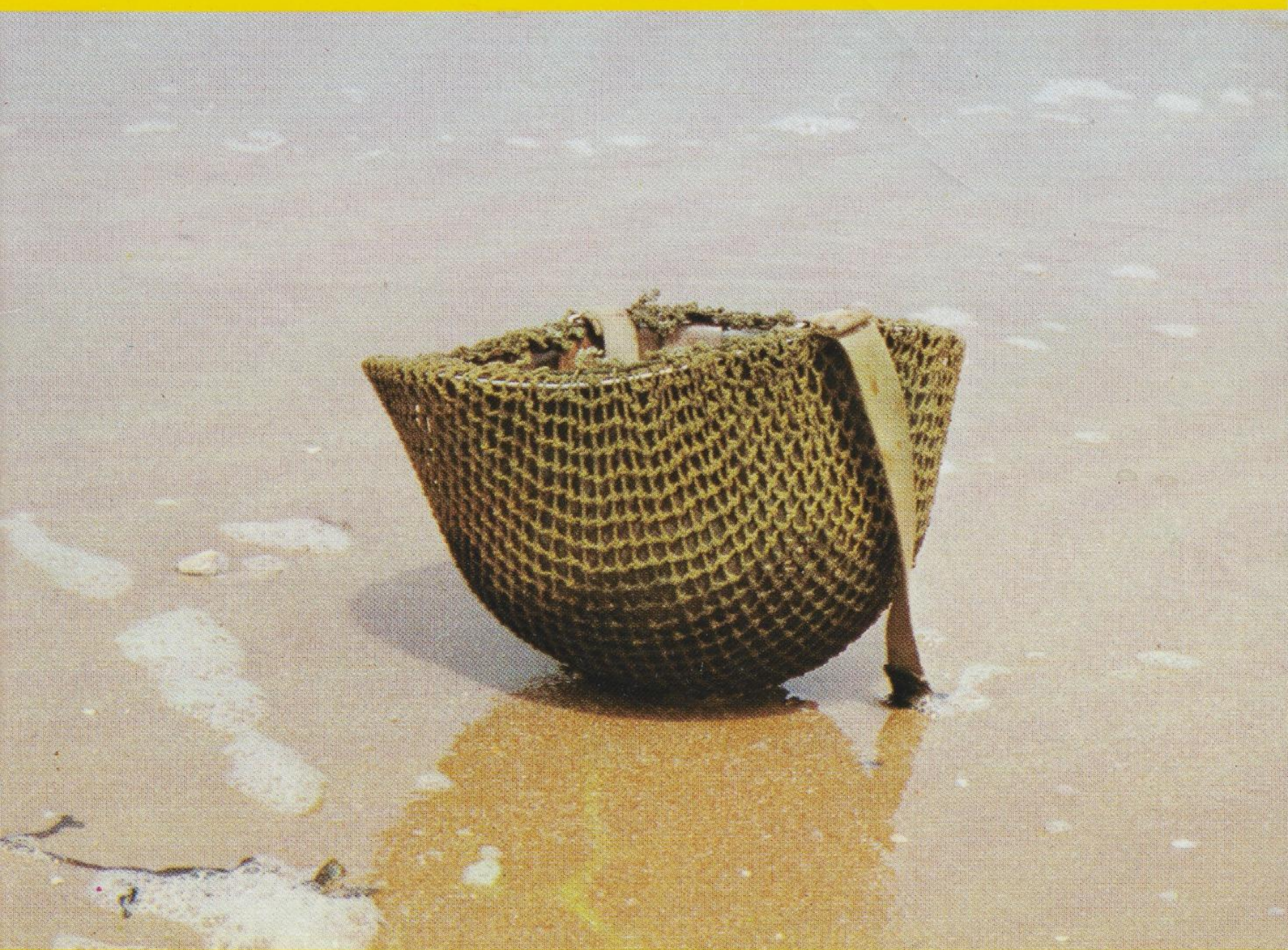


**NORMANDY 1944**

**the landing  
beaches**



GUIDE HEIMDAL

# **the landing beaches**

Text by  
Jean-Pierre BENAMOU

English - American translation  
by Philippe Jutras  
50 Ste Mère Eglise

Copyright Heimdal 1982  
All rights reserved  
for all countries



Above : a german sentry is watching the sea facing the Pays de Caux (Bundesarchiv). Below : Field Marshall Rommel inspecting the coast of Normandy (Bundesarchiv).

## INTRODUCTION

During the month of March 1943, after the German Army setback in North Africa and in Russia, a "Joint or Combined Headquarters" in London composed of English and American officers was given the task to study the possibility of landing troops in Western Europe in order to strangle the German Army of Occupation between the Allies on one side and the Russian Army on the other.

This Allied Army was to operate without any financial restriction whatsoever and benefit of the latest technological developments in war material rolling off the production lines thanks to the war effort of all the Allies.

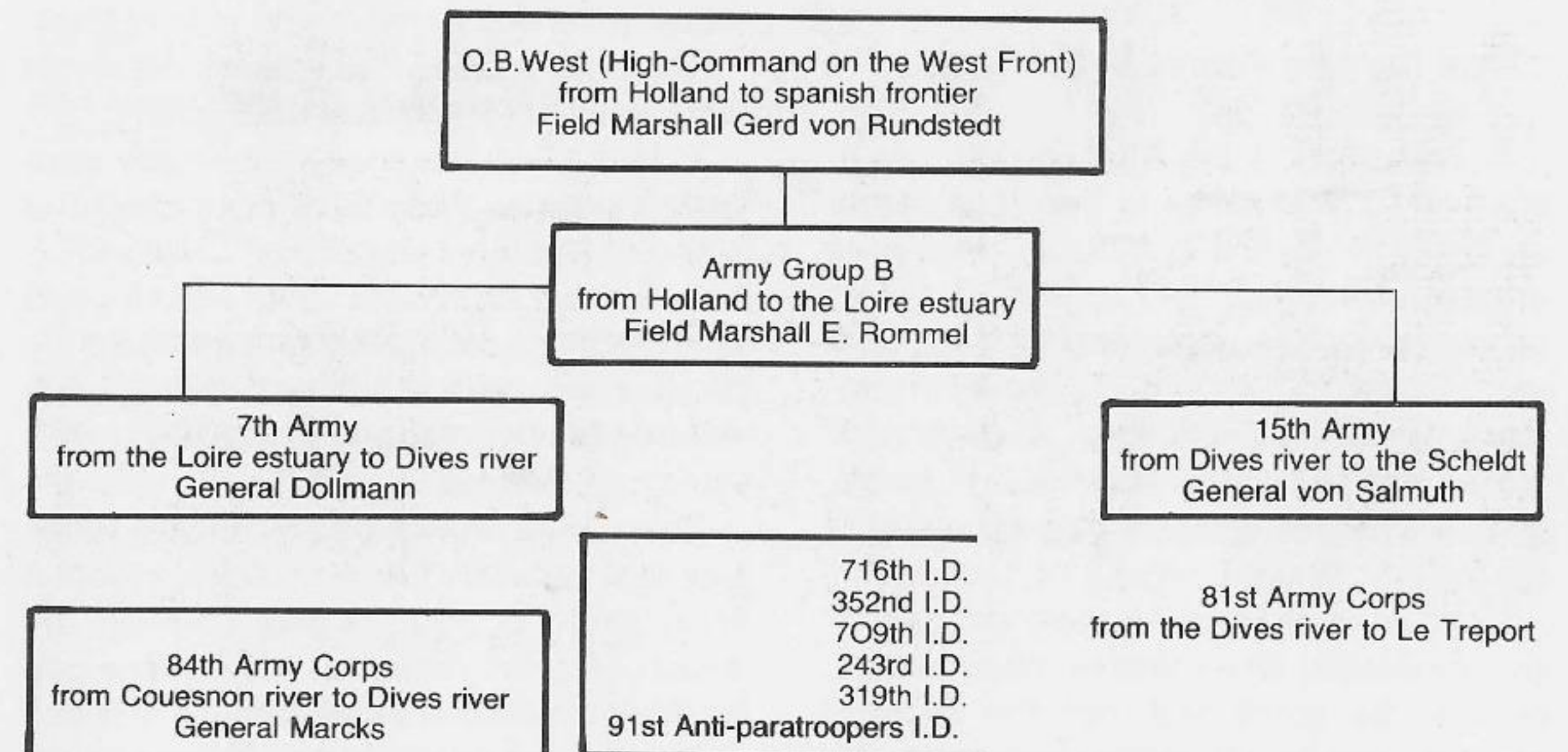
General Sir F. E. Morgan was named the Commanding Officer of (COSSAC)\* and given the mission to prepare a massive assault on the Continent during the first months of 1944. This operation was to carry the code name *Overlord*.

Right away, General Morgan brushed aside the Pas-de-Calais region as a possible landing site because of its strong defenses and as "a logical place to land". After all, Napoleon and Hitler had considered Pas-de-Calais as a base from which to invade England. On the other hand, that region in lower Normandy between the Orne River and the Cotentin Peninsula seemed favorable because of scattered coastal defenses, large stretches of beach areas somewhat shielded from the prevailing northeast winds thus favorable to the setting up of artificial port. Furthermore, this region offered the possibility of quickly constructing air-strips near the coast line.

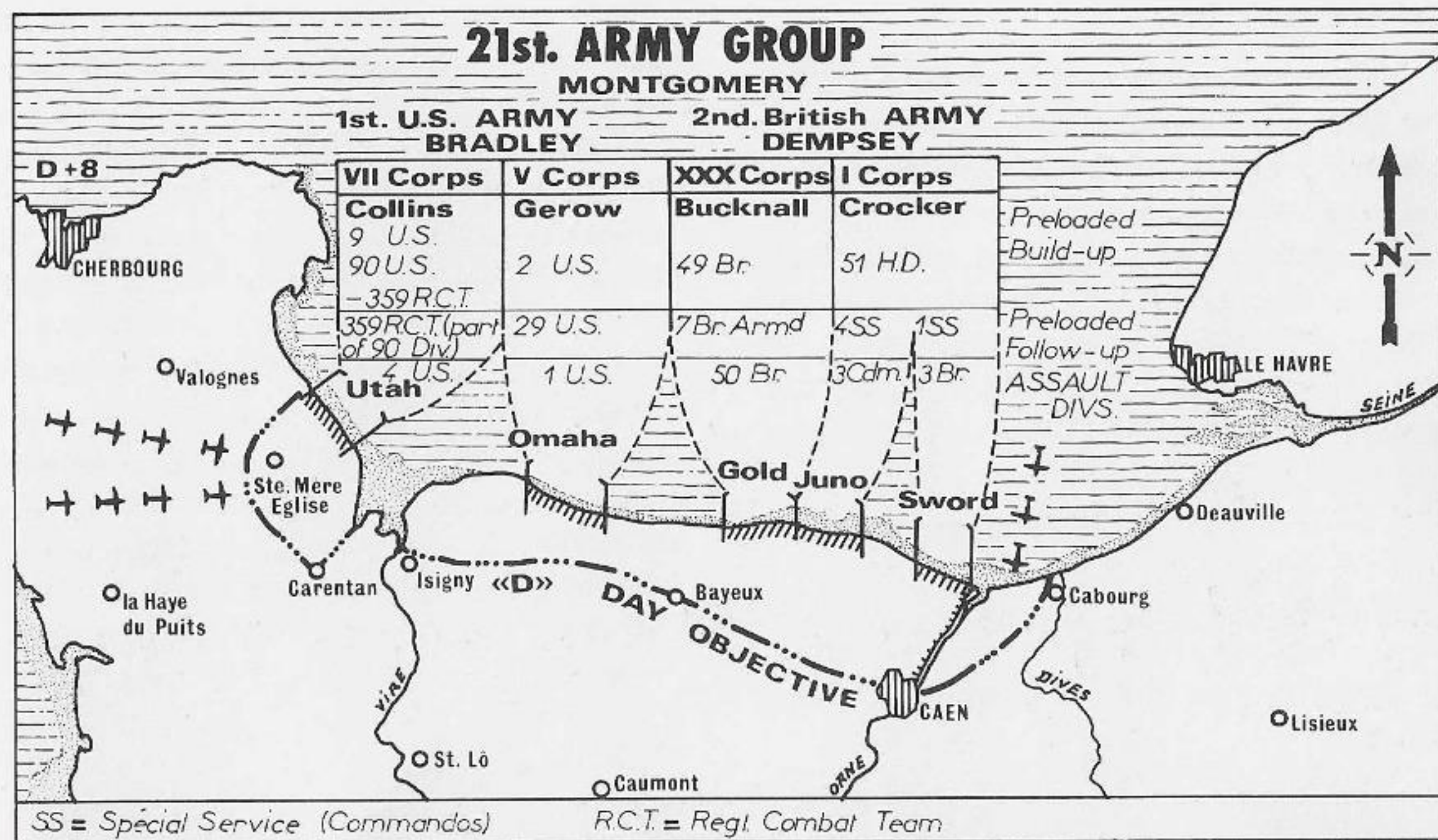
As agreed upon by the combined Land-Sea-Air operations set up two years earlier by Lord Mountbatten, The Allied Expeditionary Forces began training, in the latter

\* Combined Operations Strategic Services Allied Command.

## GERMAN FORCES ON THE WEST FRONT



In reserve of Army Group B : 21st Armoured Div. in Normandy, 2nd and 116th Armoured Div.  
In reserve of the OKW : 12th SS Armoured Div., 1st SS Armoured Div., "Panzergranadier" Div.



part of 1943, for this gigantic operation which, given the outnumbering of the German Air Force and the limitation of the German ground troops fighting capacity in Western France, "would assure good chances of success if artificial ports quickly became operational.

### 1. The German Forces in the West.

Construction of the Atlantic Wall began in April 1942 in order to free those units engaged in coastal defenses : they were urgently needed on the Eastern Front. This project paid off as evidenced by the unsuccessful raid of August 1942 led by Anglo-Canadian Forces at Dieppe. At the end of 1943, Marshall Rommel, as a fine strategist, is charged with the strengthening of the Atlantic Wall.

Conscious of Allied Air superiority which can neutralize any armored displacement of this, he concluded that the invading armies were to be stopped short on the beaches by coastal defenses backed up by armored units right behind them. Dug-outs

were set up "capable of holding on against the most sophisticated war devices". They were reinforced by genial defense obstacles strung along the beaches at low tide and in the fields along the coast in order to hinder an airborne assault.

Fifty million mines were to complete this task but only 4.5 million of them were in place at the end of the month of May 1944.

There were also large coastal areas that were flooded for the same purpose.

In May 1944, the coastal defenses were not contiguous. They were composed of a string of bunkers "blockhaus" ideally located one from another at about 1 500 yards apart with anti-tank guns set up to rake the beaches in one direction only : the window recesses facing the sea were heavily protected by buttresses.

There were some other concrete shelters that concealed an anti-tank gun with a firing angle of 120° largely covering the beach. Trench networks of machine-gun nests and of mortars finished off the beach defense system. Important strategic sites (ports, estuaries, beach exits) were particularly guarded by heavier equipment.



Douglas A-20 bombers of the 9th Air Force are crushing the Pointe-du-Hoc in May, 1944 (US army). Left : Landing zones.

There were about 60 such beach sites in the area covered by *Overlord*. The German Naval Forces capable of intervening against Operation *Overlord* consisted essentially of 126 motor boats.

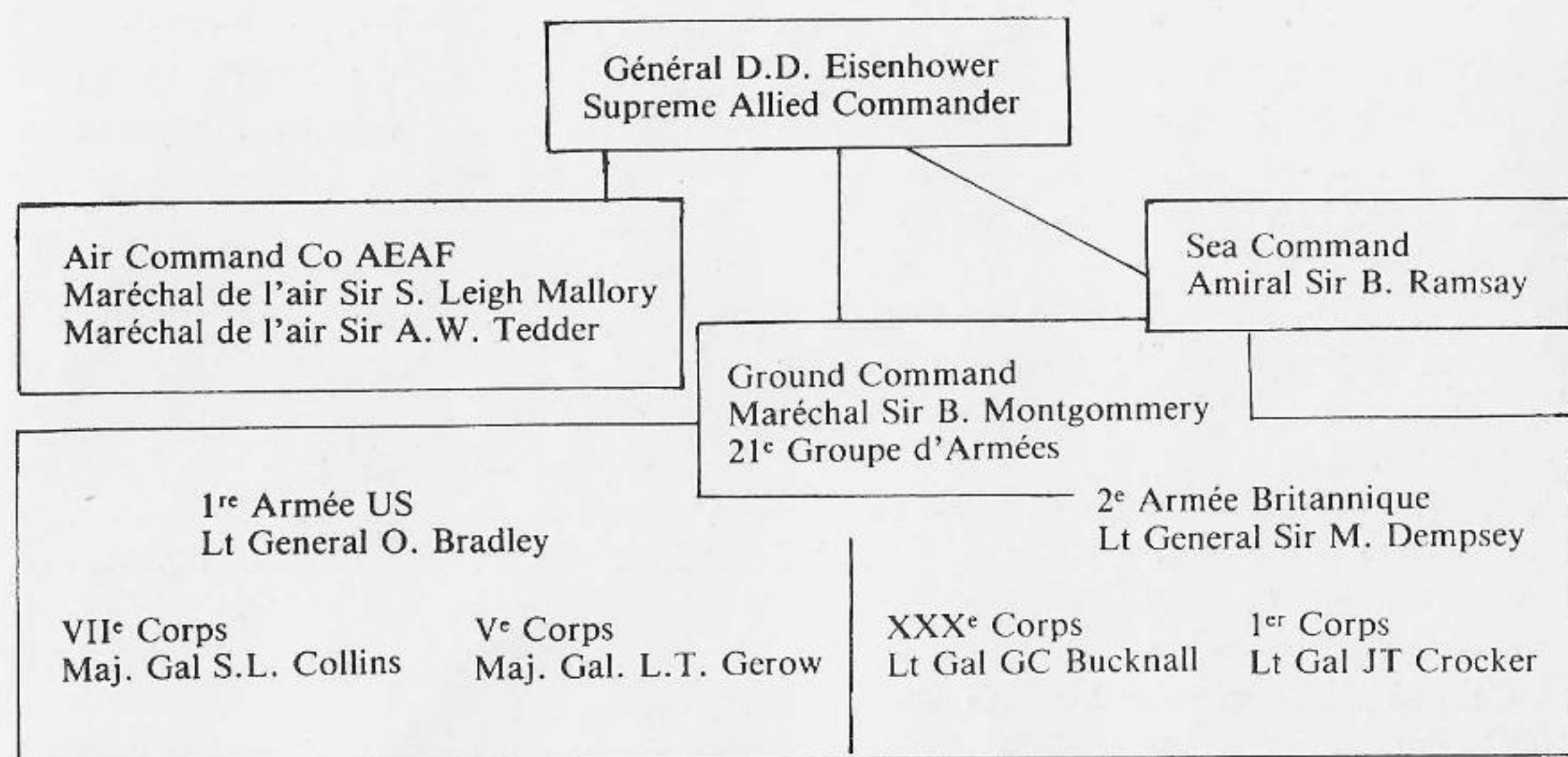
Many Coast Artillery batteries, that is, 18 batteries stretching from Le Havre to Cherbourg, could fire on these beaches jointly with those batteries of the land forces. The

German Air Force was not to be seen in the West : only 60 fighter planes and 90 bombers made up the III rd German Air Command. In May 1944 O. B. West is informed that any aircraft observed flying must be considered as enemy aircraft.

### 2. Overlord.

Since the end of May 1944 bombers of the strategic forces of the Allies isolated the beaches of Lower Normandy in dumping

## SHAEF



thousands of tons of bombs on highway and rail junctions, airports and bridges along the Loire and Seine Rivers with the precious help of the *underground* network. On 5 June, coast artillery batteries, radar stations and anti-aircraft batteries of the Dives River at Barfleur are heavily bombed by the 8th and 9th Air Forces of the U.S. Army Air Corps and by the Second Tactical Air Force of the RAF. At the same time activity is increased in front of the Pas-de-Calais in order to confuse the well known German perspicacity. Planes will drop off strips of tin-foil in that region in order to have appear on radar screens the image of an Armada advancing toward Calais.

At 10 :00 P.M. June 5th, an amphibious operation is launched by the Supreme Allied Command made up of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S Army ; Marshall Montgomery (commander of the Land Forces) ; Air Marshalls Tedder and Leigh-Mallory and Amiral Sir B. Ramsay all of the U.K. 19 600 sailors manning 6 939 ships of

which 4 126 landing-craft transporting 130 000 men cast off in a heavy sea. They were divided into 5 forces and headed for 5 landing beaches selected many months before. They were from West to East :

Force U Utah Beach-Rear Admiral Moon, USN-4th Inf. Div. U.S. Army

Force O Omaha Beach-Rear Admiral Hall, USN-1st and 29th Divs. USA

Force G Gold Beach -Commodore Penant, RN-50th Inf.Div. U.K.

Force J Juno Beach-Commodore Oliver, RN-3rd Canadian Inf.Div.

Force S Sword Beach-Rear Admiral Talbot, Rn-3rd Inf. Div. U.K.

In the skies above them 11 590 aircraft are mobilized for the operation ; some of them will tow 900 gliders to transport airborne infantry soldiers and supplies for the 3 airborne divisions.

(82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions for Force U)

(6th British Airborne Division for Force S)

## Events calendar of military operations of June 6th 1944

00h05- Parachuting of the British pathfinders who had to light-up the drop zones (22nd Independant Company).

00h15- Parachuting of the US pathfinders from 20 DAKOTAS.

00h20- Sudden attack of Major Howard's men. Their 5 gliders land next to bridges of Orne River and of the Canal de Caen to the sea (52nd foot)

00h45- The 3rd and 5th Brigades of the British 6th Parachute Airborne Division jump at the east of the Orne River.

02h30- Parachuting of the 82nd Airborne to the West and around Saint-Mère-Eglise.

01h30- Parachuting of the 101st US Airborne to the west of Utah-Beach.

03h20- Landing of 72 British gliders in the 6th Airborne zone, with their commanding officier : General Gale.

04h30- The 505th regiment of the 82nd Airborne holds Sainte-Mère-Eglise.

04h45- Attack against Merville battery.

05h50- Beginning of the naval bombing of the coast.

06h00 to 06h30- 1365 medium bombers attack the coastal fortifications.

06h30- The first troops land at Utah Beach and Omaha Beach.

07h10- The 2nd US Ranger Battalion climbs up "La Pointe du Hoc".

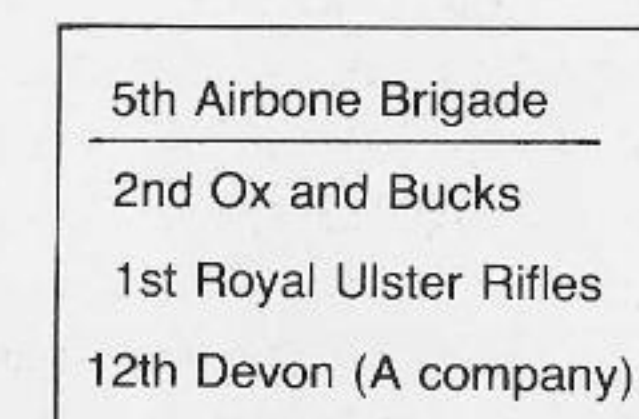
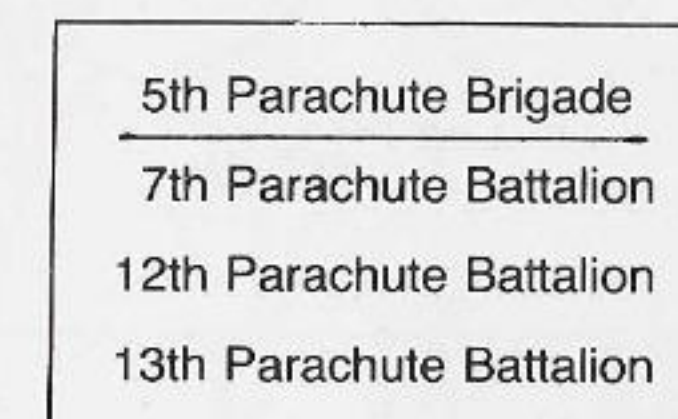
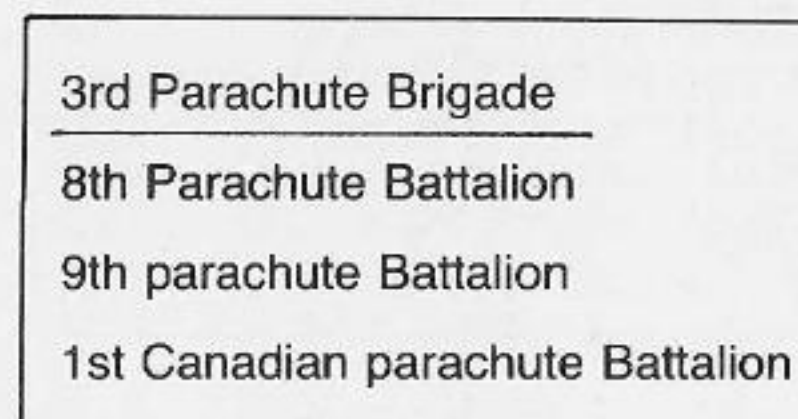
07h30- General attack on Gold-Juno-Sword.

08h00- Utah is rid and kept under the artillery fire.

08h45- Juno is taken and held. The advance begins :

## STRUCTURE OF THE 6<sup>th</sup> AIRBORNE DIVISION ON D-Day

Major-General R. Gale



Divisionnal units :

22nd Independant Parachute Company (Pathfinders)

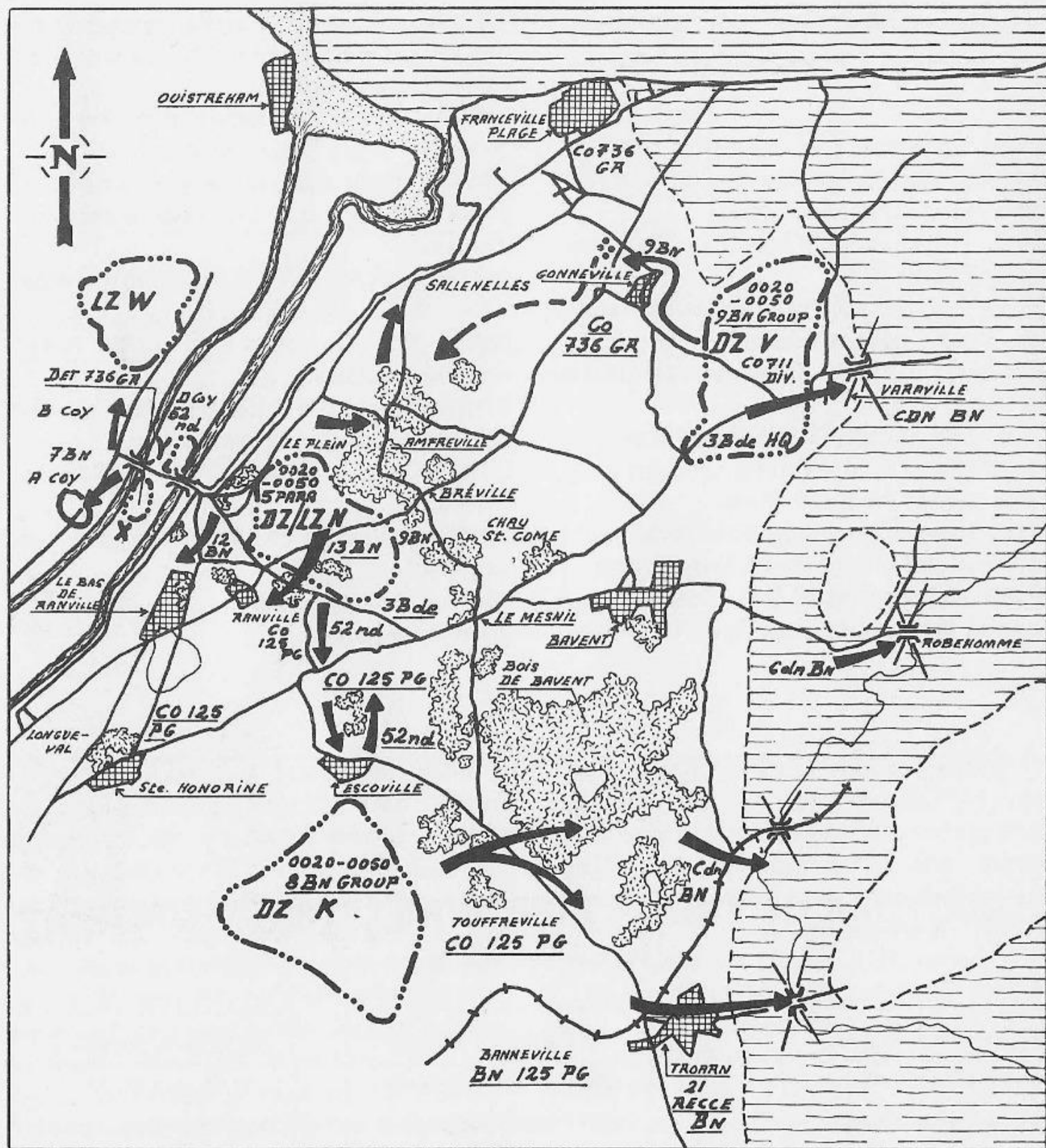
6th Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment

53rd Light Artillery Regiment (one battery)

1st and 2nd Squadrons/Glider PilotsRegiment

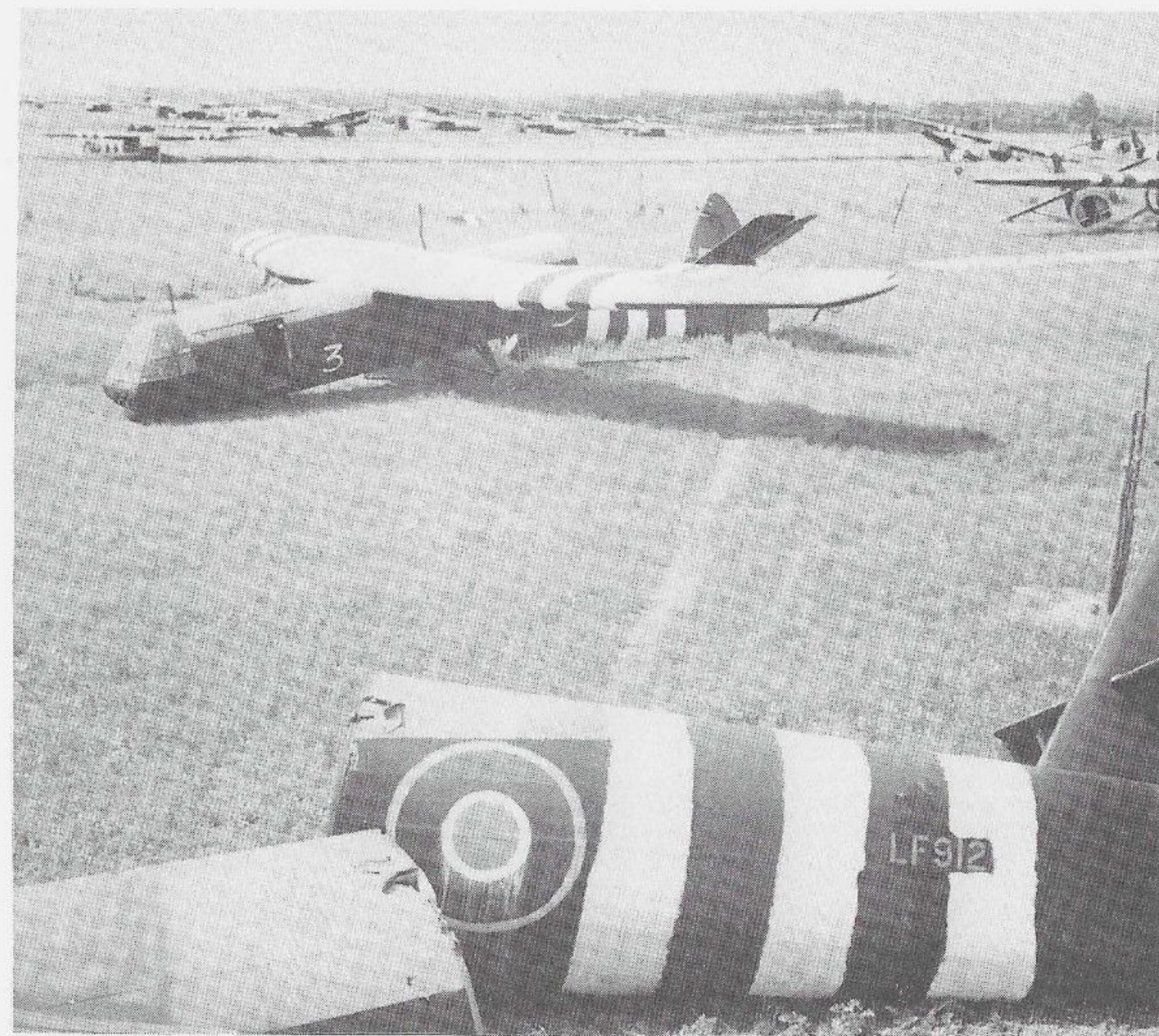
Several engineers, signals, medical and technical parachute companies.

Detached units on D-Day : 1st Special Service Brigade, N° 3, 4 and 6 Commandos, N° 45 (RM) Commando.



09h30- Sword is taken. The troops filter through the country-side.  
 10h00- Two breaches are opened at Omaha.  
 10h45- Gold is almost cleared. Mont Fleury Battery is annihilated.

13h30- Junction between the 1st Special Brigade and the British 6th ABN.  
 14h00- The first exit for vehicles is cleared at Omaha.  
 19h00- At Omaha, Vierville is taken ; the road to Grandcamp is open in many spots.



Above : Horsa gliders are now forsaken (IWM). Right : A british paratroop is watching close to a Horsa glider (IWM). Left : 6th Airbone dropping zones. Notice under water areas.

**A. BRITISH AIRBONE BEACH-HEAD.**

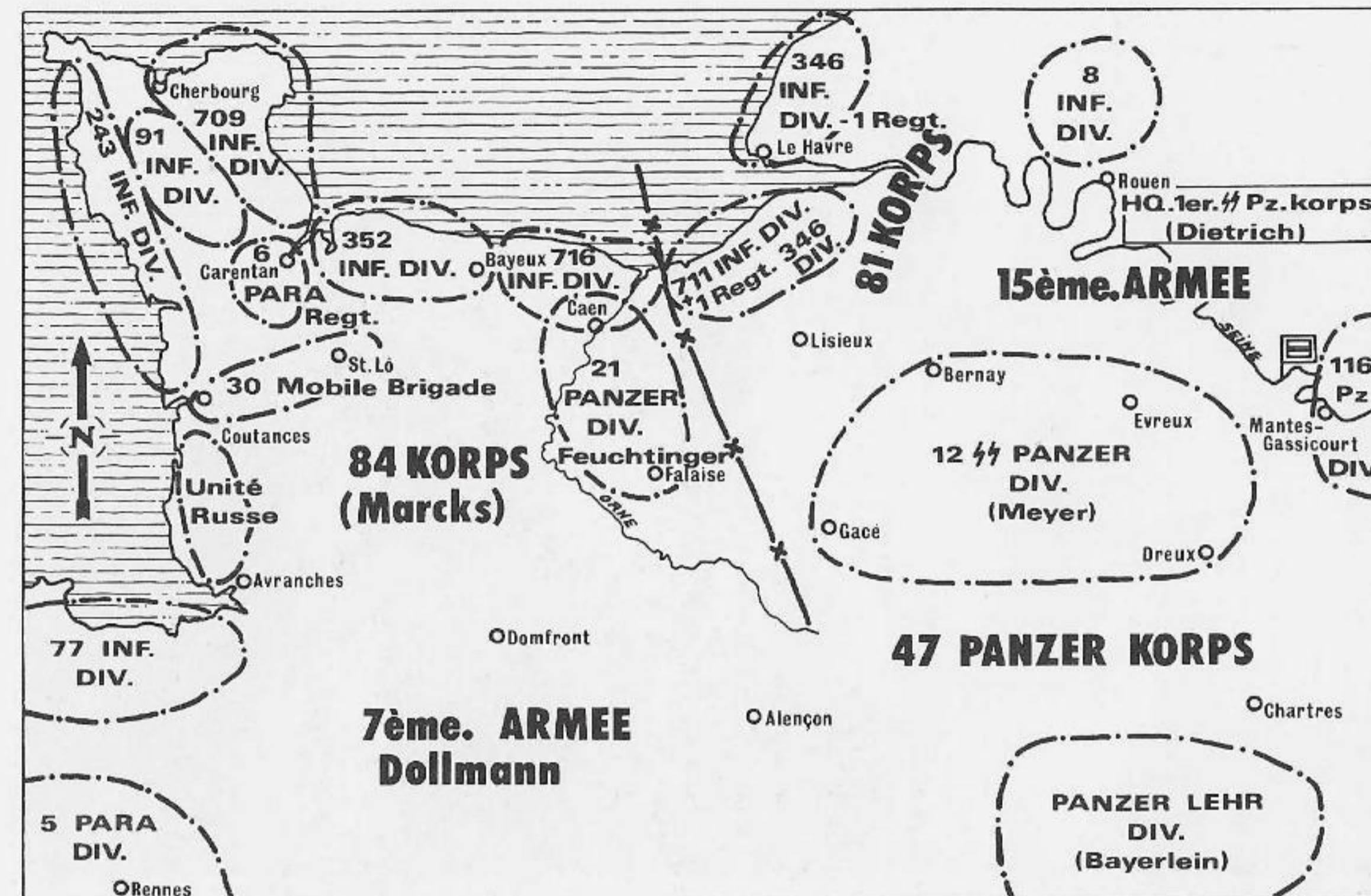
(Michelin Touring Map N 54)

*Bénouville* : - Pegasus Bridge on the canal leading to the sea from the dity of Caen ; taken by 65 men of the 2nd Bn. of the





Right : At Hérouvillette, Captain B. Priday (with a Sten sMG) and two privates of the 2nd Ox and Bucks L.I. (6th Airborne). Below : Paratroops guard an important cross-road (IWM).



This sketch shows the German units' emplacements on D-Day. The 352nd Infantry Division has just come to strengthen the 716th, what the Allies have not forecast.



Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Regiment 20 minutes past Midnight 6 June 1944.

Liberation marker on the right bank to the German 5 cm anti-tank gun set in a vat near the bridge; well maintained.

Markers and tablets indicating the exact landing spots of the 3 gliders-Centaur tank on the bank of the canal.

On the left bank the first house to be liberated by the Allies.

The British Airborne Museum built and maintained by the "Comité du Débarquement" - A monument dedicated to the memory of the commandos who linked with the paratroopers at this spot at 1:30 P.M. 6 June 1944.

**Ranville** : a memorial plaque for the 13th (Lancashire) battalion of paratroopers for having wrested Ranville from the Germans. British military cemetery with 2151 burials of paratroopers and commandos. - A commemorative plaque on the tower in the front of the cemetery.

**Amfreville** : - on the square - a monument of the 1st Commando Brigade.

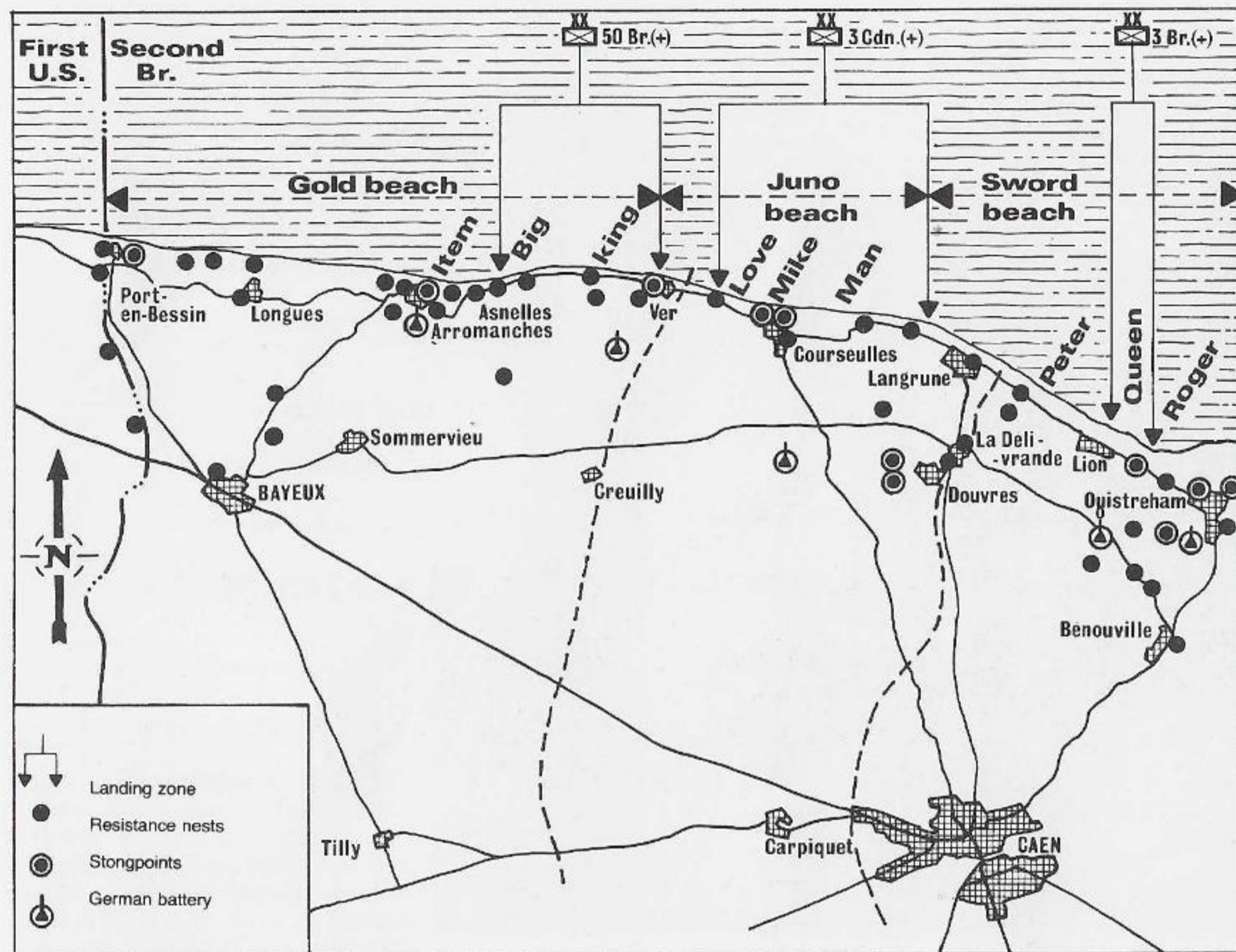
**Hauger** : - "Cairn" of the N 4 Commando built with as many stones as there were men in the unit - according to the Scottish tradition.

**Merville** : - The battery, in the southern end of the town, containing 4 75 mm guns, was finally taken after a fierce combat by Colo-

nel Otway's paratroopers of the 9th Bn. only to change hands 7 times until the month of July 1944.

#### Historical account.

The 6th Airborne Division, commanded by General R.N. Gale, had the mission to capture and hold the bridge on the canal leading the sea from Caen as well as the bridge on the Orne River 800 yards further East. The division was to deny to the enemy the space between the Orne and Dives Rivers and destroy five bridges on the Dives. Melville battery which supposedly had raised havoc in the Sword Beach landing, will be destroyed. 733 planes and 355 gliders were used to this effect.



This sketch shows the british landing zone divided into three beaches : "Gold" (50th I.D.), "Juno" (3rd Canadian I.D.) and "Sword" (3rd I.D.) The landings were carried out on a more confined front on each beach.

00h20- 3 gliders, carrying 2 sections of the 2nd "Ox and Bucks" led by Major Howard, land 100 meters away from the defences of the mechanical bridge on the canal, and control it in few minutes. At the same time, two gliders with a section of the same unit take hold of the Bridge on the Orne River. 00h45- The 5th Parachutists Brigade drops on the K zone round Touffreville and on the V zone round Varaville. The scattering is very important and a great part of the equipment is lost. A few bold sudden attacks allow the destruction of Troarn, Robehomme and Bures bridges on the Dives River.

03h30- The 5th glider brigade lands with its

airborne infantry and heavy equipment (jeeps, anti-tanks guns, howitzers, 6 Tetrach reconnaissance whippets).

04h30- 150 paras of the 9th Battalion of the 3rd Brigade succed together for getting hold Merville Battery, instead of the 600 initially foreseen. All their heavy equipment is lost and the glider carrying the sappers which should have landed at H-hour on the battery landed 1 500 meters away from this spot.

At 05h00 after merciless hand-to-hand combat, the defenders surrender, and the 75 mm guns, (mistaken for 105 mm guns) are destroyed.

08h00- local sudden attacks are repelled at



German photograph taken on 6th June when looking at "Sword" (Bundesarchiv).

Benouville and Ranville.

At about 13h30- the N° 4 Commando, opening the way for the 1st Special Service Brigade coming from Saint-Aubin-d'Arquenay, reaches Pegasus Bridge, under bagpipe sound, and settles around Amfreville.

At 20h00- Call the objectives of the 6th British Airborne Division are reached in spite of 40% of the troops not having taken part in the battle. 7 planes and 22 gliders are destroyed. 1 200 parachutists are reported missing and 100 gliders pilots are killed in action.

### SWORD Tour

Riva-Bella : - Follow the canal to its estuary to the Beach landing Monument set up in

1950 by the "Comité du débarquement". Go along the beach toward the center on the left. A German directional firing station over the cabins just below. - On the square, near the Tourist Information booth- Commando N° 4 Museum.

Follow the road to Lion-sur-Mer. As you leave Riva-Bella, at Colleville-Plage, there is a French monument of the N° 4 Commando dedicated to Major Kieffer, their Commanding Officer. the villa behind the monument served as an assembly point for the commandos and as an advanced medical aid station.

Hermanville-Plage : - Traditionnal Beach Landing monument on the dike. Commemorative stained glass windows in the chapel. A British military cemetery 500 yards inland where many French commandos are buried.



*On 6th June in Hermanville. The 1st Lancashire(3rd I.D.) has just landed. In the IWM background stands the 13/18th Hussars.*

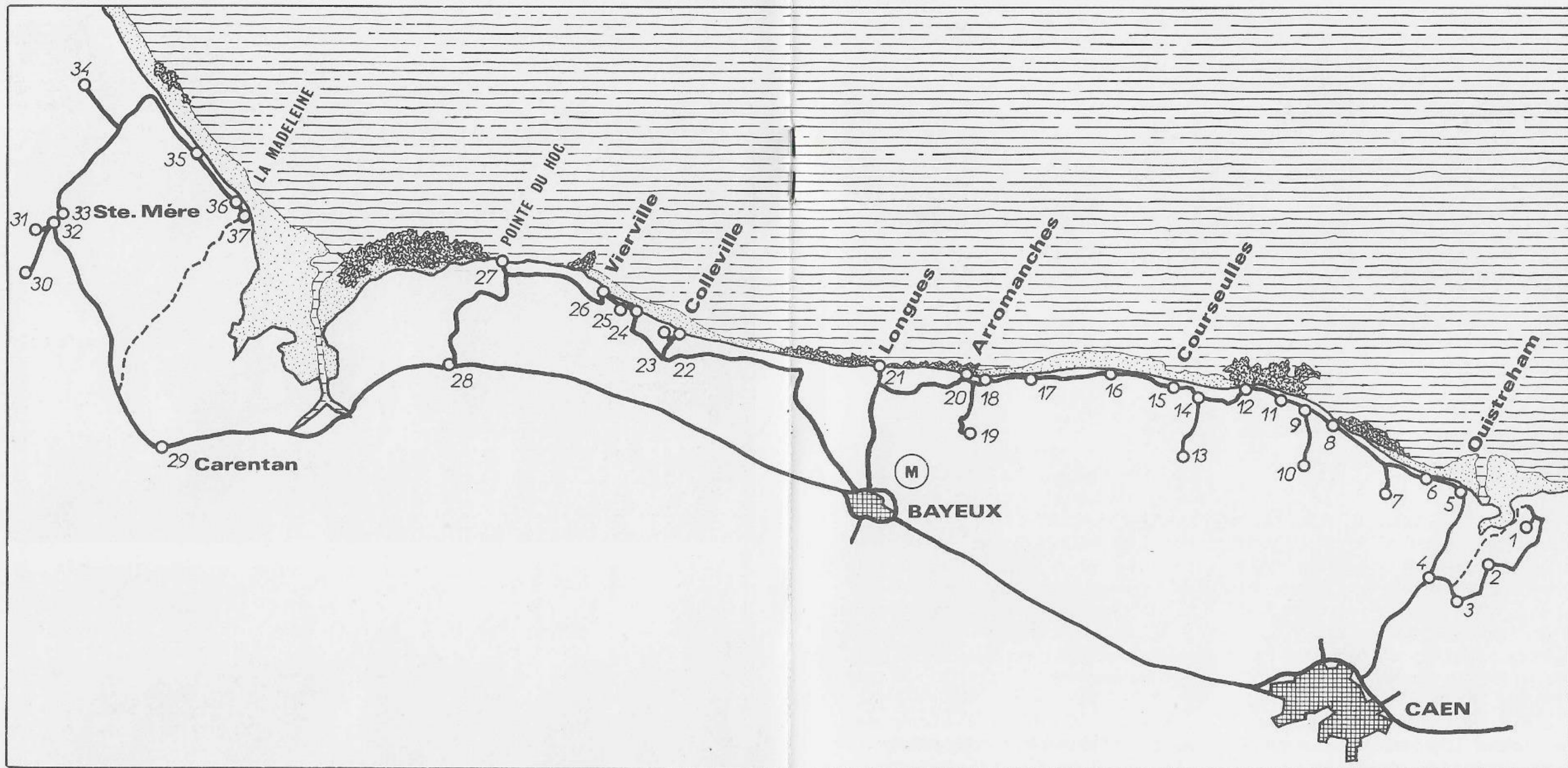
### Historical account.

At 7 :30 A.M. on 6 June 1944 the 3rd British inf. Division under the command of General T.D. Rennie landed on Sword Beach located between Lion-sur-Mer and la Brèche. His mission is to capture the city of Caen and establish liasons with the 6th Airbone Division and the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division further West. The counter-attack on the beach is not as strong as expected for the 2nd east Yorkshire Regt. and the 1st South Lancashire. Nevertheless, 12 amphibious out of 40 tank destroyers are put out of comission. At Lion-sur-Mer, the 1st South Lancashire, in support of the 41st Commando of Royal Marines, suffers heavy losses and experiences hand-to-hand combat. All of the



*Above : N° 41 (RM) Commando on "Sword". Below : The 2nd East Yorkshire is moving towards Colleville-sur-Mer (IWM).*



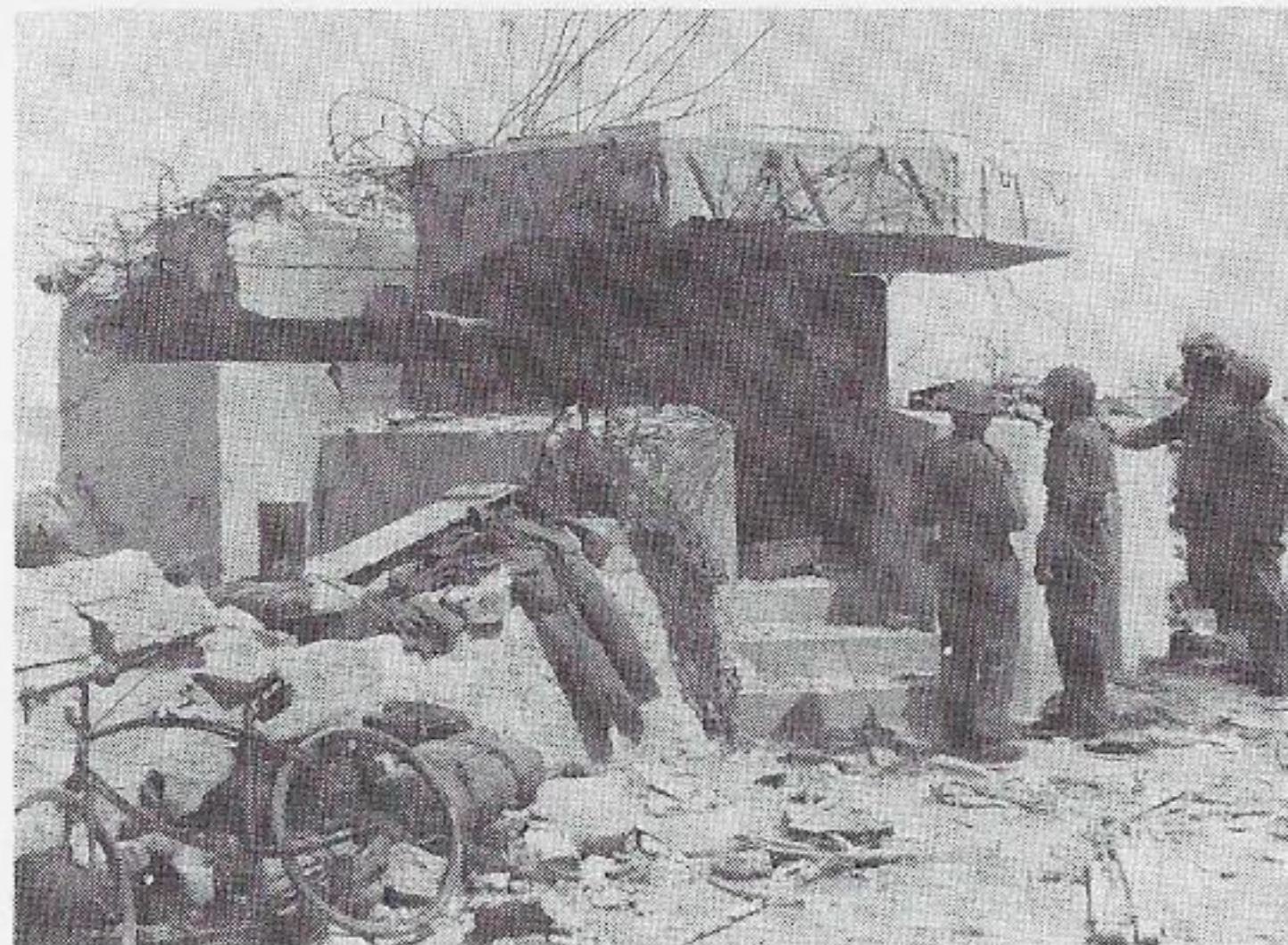


#### Concerning ways

- 1) Merville battery.
- 2) 1stSS Brigade monument at Amfreville. N° 4 Commando monument at Hauger.
- 3) South Lancashire commemorative tablet. Ranville cemetery. "Pigeon house".
- 4) Pegasus bridge. 6th Airborne museum and Commandos monument. 52nd Foot Gliders bound. "Centaur" tank.
- 5) D-Day navigation light monument (Riva-Bella). German firing-post. N° 4 Commando museum. Major Kieffer monument.
- 6) Hermanville navigation light. Chapel with D-Day leaded glass windows.
- 7) British cemetery (Hermanville).
- 8) Petit-Enfer.
- 9) N° 48 Commando monument (Langrune).
- 10) British cemetery (La Délivrande).
- 11) North Shore and Fort Garry Horse monument (Saint-Aubin). 50 mm German anti-tank gun in concrete shelter.

- 12) Bernières, la Cassine (Queens Own Rifles of Canada, Régiment de la Chaudière).
- 13) Canadian cemetery (Bény).
- 14) Courseulles (Royal Winnipeg Regiment, Regina Rifles, 1st Canadian Scottish). 1st Hussars "Sherman" DD tank, commemorative tablets and monument to General de Gaulle.
- 15) "Churchill" AVRE tank of 26th Royal Engineers at Graye. Blockhaus on the beach.
- 16) Hertfordshire monument (Ver-sur-Mer).
- 17) 50th division monument (Asnelles).
- 18) Panoramic table on a pillbox.
- 19) Ryes cemetery.
- 20) Arranches museum and harbour.
- 21) Longues battery.
- 22) 5th US Engineers Brigade monument and "Easy-Fox" sector.
- 23) US cemetery.

- 24) 1st US Division monument (Les Moulins). 6th US Engineers Brigade monument.
- 25) First US cemetery bound.
- 26) Coast Guards monument.
- 27) Pointe du Hoc.
- 28) La Cambe cemetery.
- 29) 82nd and 101st Airbornes monument.
- 30) 508th Airborne Regiment Monument.
- 31) First US monument.
- 32) Sainte-Mère-Eglise (Church and monuments).
- 33) 505th Airborne Regiment monument.
- 34) Saint-Marcouf German battery (Crisbecq).
- 35) Saint-Germain-de-Varville (Leclerc monument).
- 36) Utah Beach monuments and museum (la Madeleine).
- 37) 4th US division monument.



Soldiers of the 50th Division in front of a 50 mm German anti-tank gun on 7th June at Asnelles (IWM).

#### The Commandos :-

From 8:45 A.M. until 9:20 A.M. the 1st Special Service Brigade under the command of Lord Lovat on the beach at la Breche at Luc-sur-Mer. This Brigade was made up of the following commando units : N° 3,4,6 and 45 (Royal Marines).

General Leicester commanded the 4th Special Service Brigade made up of the 41st (RM) and the 46th (RM).

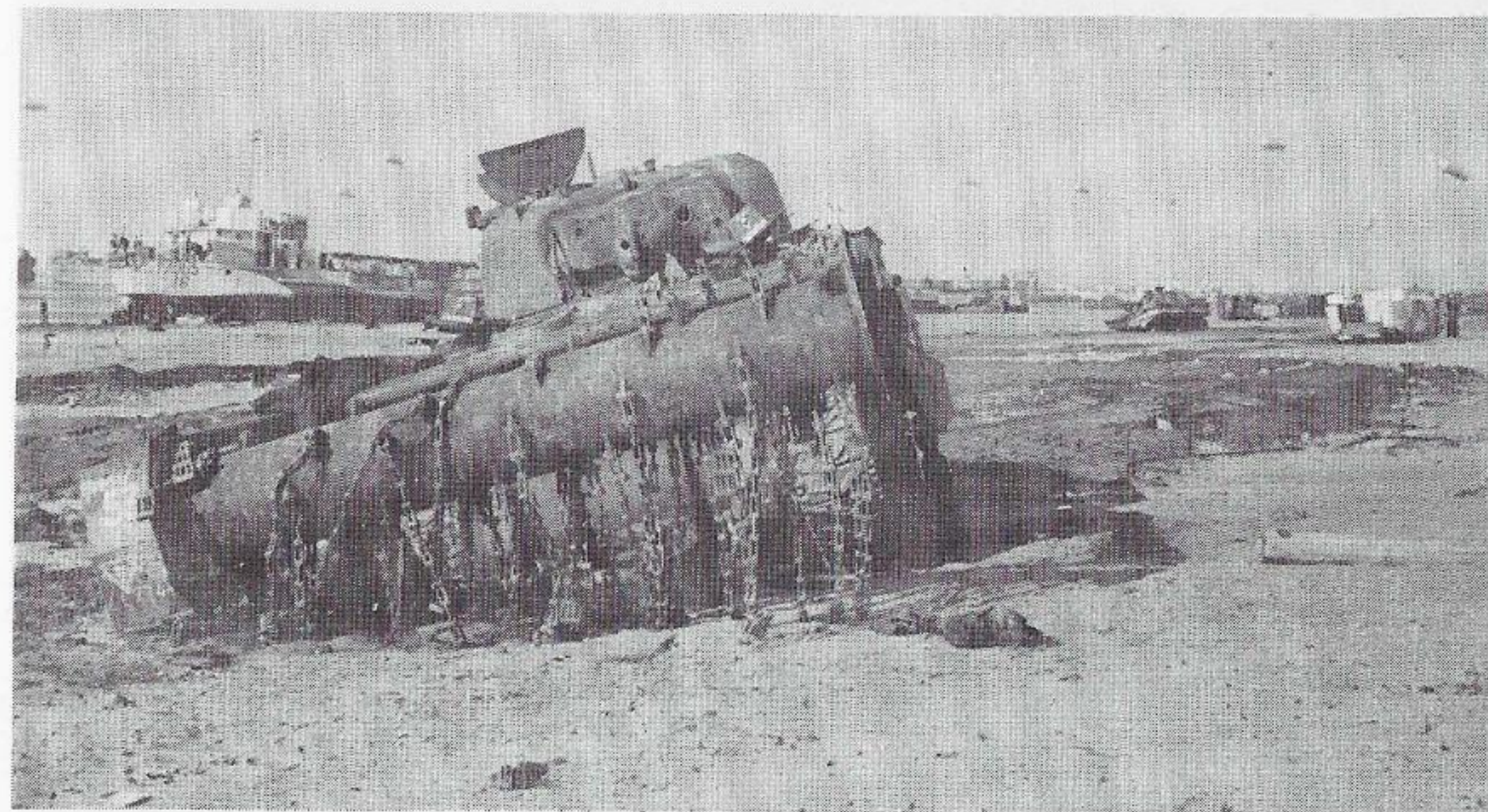
The 41st (RM) commando was given a very difficult time near the Lion-sur-Mer castle in spite of the accurate firing support coming from two destroyers out at sea. The 46th (RM) captured Luc-sur-Mer after a difficult engagement at Petit Enfer (Little Hell) with the help of Centaur tanks and the 4th Support Battery of the 2nd Armored Regt. of the Royal Commandos.

The N° 4 Commando landed at 8:20 A.M. at la Breche among the material and men of the 8th British Inf. Brigade nailed to the beach at that time by accurate enemy mortar and machine-gun fire. Lt. Colonel Dawson, the C.O., was wounded twice before reaching the highway.

The 177 Frenchmen amongst platoons 1 and 8 of this N° 4 Commando directed their English comrades toward Riva-Bella by following the crown of the road under the isolated firing of the Germans. They captured many casemates like so many little forts surrounding the former casino and, led by Sea Captain Philippe Kieffer, the green berets took hold of the position after a violent engagement.

Around 1:30 P.M. the N° 4 Commando led by Lord Lovat with his bag piper on his heels effectuates the junction between the troops coming from the beach and the paratroopers at Pegasus bridge. The rest of the Special Brigade follows suit and the red and green berets are mingled from Benouville to Hauger in order to protect the entire East flank of the landing.

Around 8:00 P.M. the 185th Brigade group occupies Periers, Beuville, Bréville and, in turn, makes the junction with Pegasus Bridge. The 9th Brigade, having landed late in the afternoon, is hindered by the bottlenecks. Its mission is to reinforce the



Flail tanks destroyed on "Gold" beach (IWM).

185th to stem the counter-attack of the 21st Panzerdivision of Caen on its way to the beach reaching Lion-sur-Mer but forced to retreat with the arrival of an impressive number of gliders in this sector and to abandon 50 tanks by the road side.

At 8:00 P.M. 30 000 men had landed at Sword. There were 630 casualties on the beach.

#### C. JUNO

##### Tour.

*Saint-Aubin* :- On the central esplanade, Fort Garry Horse memorial monument. The North Shore regiment which landed West of the monument is singled out along with the N° 48 (RM) Commando which annihilated the defenses of Saint-Aubin.



On 6th June at Bernières, North Nova Scotia Highlanders and Highland Light Infantry of Canada are landing (Pub. Arch. of Canada).

**Bernières** :- Follow the coastal road when leaving Saint-Aubin - on par with the former R.R. station- on the dike there is a small fort named "Cassine" responsible for many casualties inflicted upon the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada which is memorialized with the Regiment de la Chaudiere by 2 commemorative tablets affixed to the wall.

**Courseulles** :- On the square, right bank of the Seulles River, there is a 32 ton Sherman tank of the 1st Canadian Hussars. It was retrieved from the beach where it had sunk because of a heavy sea on 6 June 1944. It displays commemorative tablets of some of the units which landed on Juno Beach. A 47 mm cannon faces the tank. A monument recalls General De Gaulle's visit there on 14 June 1944. On the dike, 2 com-

memorative tablets of the Regina Rifles of Canada and the 1st Canadian Scottish. About 100 yards further on the dike one may see a monument in the shape of a dagger dedicated to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles.

**Graye** :- Leave the coastal road after crossing a metallic bridge at about 300 yards West of Courseulles. A monument recalls a visit by King George the VI th in June 1944. Keep going until you reach the dunes where you will see an Avre-Churchill tank of the 79th British Armored Division which has been unearthed since 1976 . A traditionnal Beach landing Monument marks the exact spot where Canadian troops set foot. There are still many blockhouses in the area.

### Historical account.

The 3rd Canadian Inf. Div. under the command of General R.A. Keller is to set foot at Vaux Beach at Saint-Aubin. After mopping-up the beach is to proceed to Carpiquet, a plateau West of Caen, and will establish contact with the British units having landed on adjacent beaches. The 7th and 8th Brigade Groups respectively will land to the West and to the East of the Seulles River at 7 :45 A.M. and 7 :55 A.M.

#### 1. The 7th Brigade at Courseulles-Graye.

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles, preceded by an squadron of 32 tanks DD of the 1st Hussars, was to land at 7 :45 A.M. But a heavy sea sank almost one half of the tanks and the others came out of the deep provoking the desired effects of surprise ! The German defenses are still strong West of the Seulles River and one hundred casualties are inflicted upon the Royal Winnipeg Rifles right on the beach, while the Regina Riflies, pulling away from the shore, rapidly infiltrate the streets of Courseulles. At 9 :30 A.M., th 1st Scottish- sets foot in front of Graye under a bombardment of mortars and in an imbroglio of vehicles rolling at snail-pace out of the beach exit through a flooded area. That is where a Churchill-Avre tank of the 26th Armored Squadron of the British Royal Engineers is used as filler for the road. This tank, since 1977, thanks to the British Army and the Town of Graye, may be seen at the exact spot where it had been used as filler for a strategic military road in 1944.

#### 2. The 8th Brigade at Bernières-and Saint-Aubin.

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada at 8 :50 A.M. without the Fort Garry Horse tank destroyers carefully unloaded after the

rebuffs experienced by the 1st Hussars. In front of "La Cassine" 65 Fusiliers are moved-down by machine-gun fire before three brave men eliminate the machine-gun nest grenades and submachine-guns. Later on, the Regiment de la Chaudiere easily mops up the Town of Bernieres under sporadic mortar fire. The townspeople are glad to be able to speak "patois" with their French-Canadian cousins from across the Atlantic.

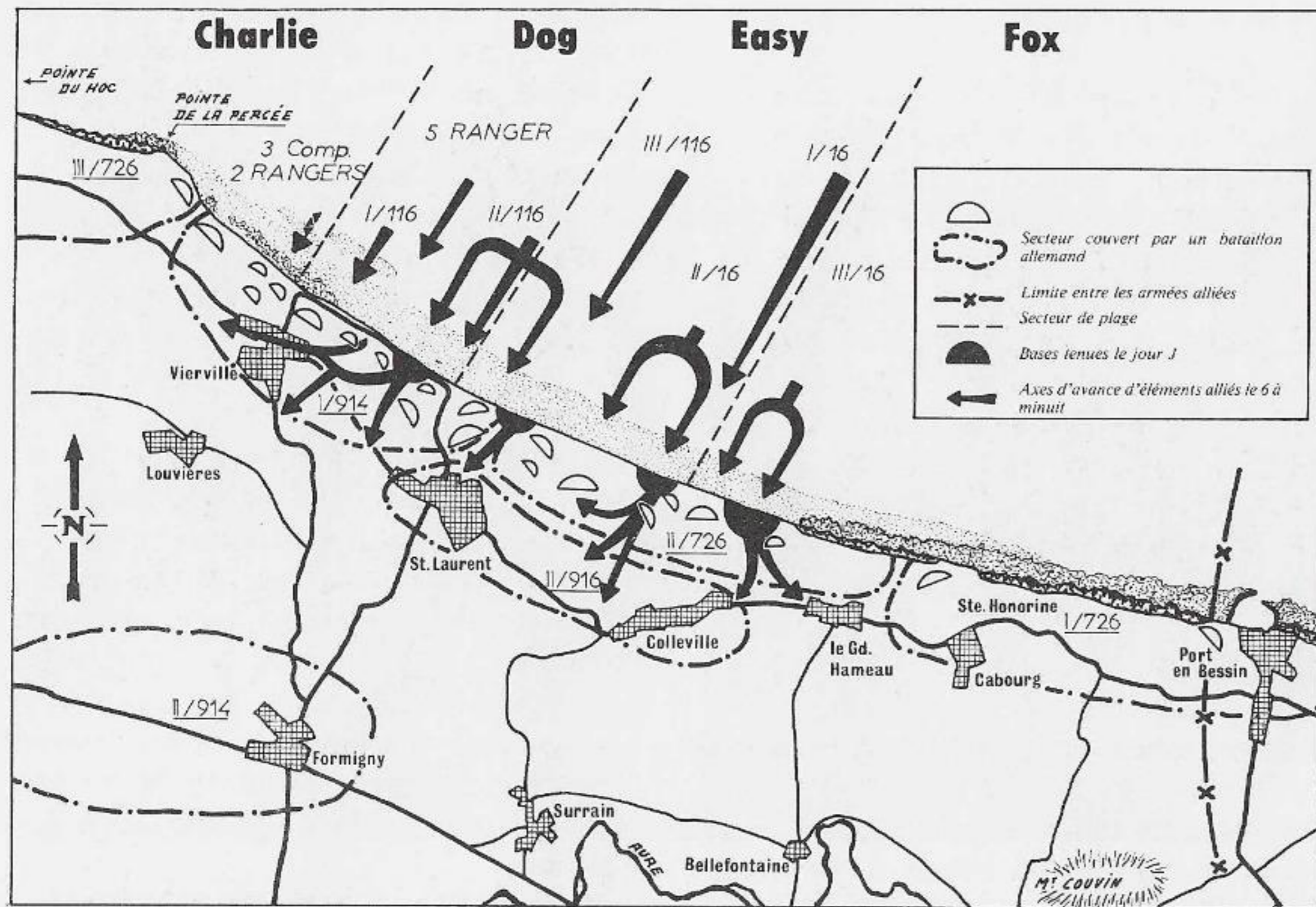
In front of Saint-Aubin at 8 :05 A.M., the North Shore Regiment, backed up by the tank destroyers of Fort Garry Horse, is immobilized by two small forts firing upon the exact landing zone chosen by the regiment which is compelled to shift further west and leaving only a few platoons to lend a hand to the 48th Royal Marines Commando that has landed at 8 :10 A.M. with the mission to neutralize the beach defenses.

This redoubt will hold until 11 :30 A.M. at which time the Commando, supported by Centaur tanks of the 2nd Armored (RM) Regiment will accept the surrender of the garrison. This same unit will progressively reach LANGRUNE at noontime. This community will be liberated later on in the day after very hard street fighting.

The 48th (RM) Commando, having landed at 8 :10 A.M. with 630 men is decimated to 341 remaining able bodied men at nightfall.

#### 3. The 9th (Reserve) Brigade.

This Brigade sets foot on the beach at Bernieres at 11 :30 A.M. 6 June, accompanied by tanks of the Sherbrooke, Que. Fusiliers. The Stormont Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders will be in Beny at 6 :00 P.M. and, at 8 :00 P.M. will link with the tanks of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers and the North Nova Scotia Highlanders at Villonles-Buissons where they will remain on the front line for exactly one month.



On the night of 6 June 1944, the 8th Brigade controls Anguerny and Anisy ; The 7th Brigade is at Creully and Le Fresne-Camilly ; The 9th is north-west of Caen.

The 50th British Inf. Div. is contacted at Ver-sur-Mer but is threatened on its eastern flank by a counter-attack of the 21st Panzerdivision and by the effective fortification network of the radar station at Douvres-la-Délivrande a town that will be captured on 13 June 1944. 21 500 men landed at Juno Beach with 3 200 vehicles. There were 961 Canadian casualties but only 293 British casualties.

#### D. GOLD - BEACH

##### Tour or Circuit.

*Ver-sur-Mer* : - A monument to the 2nd Bn. of Herfordshire Inf. Regt. a unit charged

with the security of the beach and mopping-up operations of the town.

*Asnelles* : - A monument to the 231st Brigade of the 50th Inf. Div. ; memorial tablets of the Dorset and Hampshire Regts., two assault units on Gold. An orientation table of Arromanches a top of the cliff of Saint-Come located on a former German radar station with adjacent vat-type anti-aircraft positions. From that point one way see Port-Winston (Mulberry "B") the artificial port set up in mid June 1944 which accommodated 3 million men and 1 million vehicles during the six months that it was in operation.

*Arromanches* : - Its museum, built in 1954 and managed by the Comité du Débarquement, responsible for the circuit of the Normandy Beach Landings, has an excellent diorama which gives a comprehensive idea of the land, sea and air operations of D-Day, 6 June 1944. A scale model



On "Omaha" beach, soldiers of 5th US Engineers Brigade are helping wounded infantrymen of 116th Regiment (US Army).



of the artificial port which faces as the Museum is a major attraction. This museum happens to be one of the main attractions of the Normandy Beach Landings.

*Longues* : - The German Coast-Artillery battery at Longues had 4 guns shrouded by armor plates 15.2 cm thick. Three of the guns are still in their casemates. The field

of fire (directional and observation) is appreciated at this site which is still the same as it was in 1944.

*Ryes* : - There is here a cemetery with 630 graves of British soldiers who, for the greater part, had landed at Gold-Beach.

*Bayeux* : - Leave the circuit of the British Normandy Beach Landings to relax, eat and visit this historic city.

By taking the By-Pass at Bayeux you will see the largest British Cemetery in Normandy (4 654 graves and a crypt listing the names of 1 809 soldiers Missing in action). At about 100 yards from the Cemetery one may visit a new museum, built in 1981, featuring all aspects of the Battle of Normandy after 6 June 1944. Free parking. Engage once again the By-Pass in a northerly direction to a round-about where there is a monument commemorating General De Gaulle's visit to Bayeux on 14 June 1944. Then follow the directions to Omaha-Beach and to the American Cemetery at Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer (Colleville). The road is well indicated.

#### Historical account.

The 50th British Inf. Div. (Northumbrian) commanded by General D.A.H. Graham, has as a primary mission the capture of the City of Bayeux and the control of National Highway  $\pm$  13 (R.N. 13) after the establishment of a liaison with the Americans to the left and the Canadians on the right. The

50th landed at 7 :25 A.M. 6 June on about 3 miles of beach between Le Hamel and La Rivière.

The 231st Brigade Group lands on time without tank or artillery support East of the planned area facing a network of small forts willing to fight it out in spite of heavy naval and aerial bombardments inflicted on the previous day (5 June).

The 2nd Devon Regt. will not overtake Hamel Beach until 4 :30 P.M. At 800 yards to the East, the 1st Hampshire Regt., behind mine clearing tanks of the 22nd Dragons, dashes inland southeast of Arromanches. The 1st Dorset Regt. participates in the battle of Hamel and keeps on battling to Ryes using captured German arms having run out of ammunition.

The 69th Brigade lands at 900 yards of the 231st at La Rivière, heavily defended against the combined assaults of the 5th East Yorkshire and of the 6th Green Howards backed up by support tanks and by naval artillery of destroyers out at sea.

There are 94 men killed in action at this spot before the 5th East Yorkshire is able to reach Ver-sur-Mer.



A beach party on "Charlie" sector (IWM).



On 7th June, The 2nd US Division is landing at Omaha Beach (US Army).

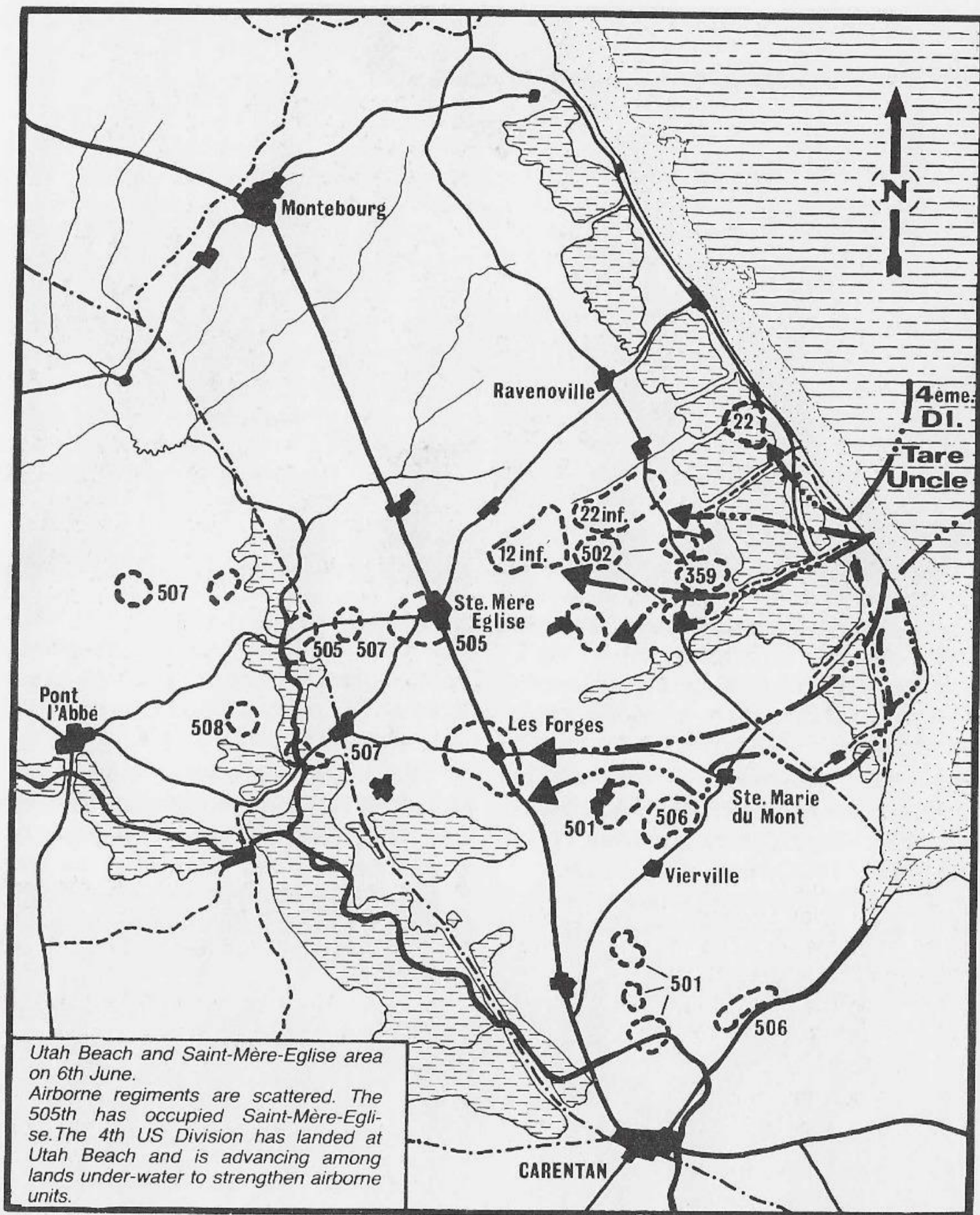
The 6th Green Howards, before noon, will clear Mont Fleury Battery and Mare Fontaine Battery 1500 yards to the South. The 47th (RM) Commando, having received the mission to capture Port-en-Bessin, avoids the battle of Le Hamel and sets foot 1500 yards further East at 8 :00 A.M. after the loss of 4 Landing Craft because of hidden obstacles due to the rising tide. After the loss of 50 men on the beach, they engage in a combat to reach hill 72 at nightfall. This objective is 2 miles South of Port-en-Bessin. Fighting will continue in this locality until the morning of 8 June after the Royal Marines will have lost 800 men.

*D-Day Evaluation* : - 25 000 men put ashore ; 413 casualties on the beaches ; 89 landing-craft lost ; all objectives attained except Port-en-Bessin and the liaison with the 1st U.S. Inf. Division.

At 8 :00 P.M. young Frenchmen are smoking "Navy Cut" cigarettes in Bayeux. An Infantry patrol of the "Gloster" of the 56th Brigade, with a face darkened with charcoal, made an appearance in the northeast sector of Bayeux and promised to come back at dawn.

Longues : - After many aerial bombardments during the preceding weeks this battery was the only to engage naval ships at sea after these ships had opened fire on the beaches 40 minutes before sunrise on D-Day.

It was finally hit in the afternoon by the battle-cruiser AJAX after 20 minute duel, but resumed firing action in the afternoon. It was the French battle-cruiser "Georges Leygues" that put this battery out of action around 6 :30 P.M. The garrison surrendered on 7 June with the arrival of British troops.



### E. OMAHA.

#### Tour.

At Colleville-sur-Mer, the Americans

cemetery of Normandy with 9 583 graves and the names of 1 5557 of soldiers (MIA) missing in action inscribed on a wall behind the central monument.



On 5th June, paratroops of 82nd Airborne are checking their harness before emplaning (Saint-Mère-Eglise museum).

A small monument dedicated to the 5th Engineer Special Brigade US Army. An obelisk to perpetuate the memory of the Americans killed on 6 June 1944. A memorial tablet on the beach to the 1st Inf. Div. and 116th Inf. Regt. USA and the 29th Inf. Div. US Army. There is also a marker above the coastal road to memorialize the 6th Engineer Special Brigade : not well preserved.

Vierville-sur-Mer :- Marker for the 1st US Cemetery on French soil. A coast guard memorial tablet on a blockhaus at Dog Green Beach. It was from this blockhaus where an 88 German gun, still in position, destroyed many landing-craft and vehicles on the beach.

A few elements of the breakwater still remaining from the Mulberry "A". Artificial port destroyed in the great storm of 19 June 1944.

Retake ( N-814) the road to Grandcamp to see the entrance to Pointe-du-Hoc, a memorial to Col. Rudder's Rangers now under the control of the US Battelfield Monuments Commission. A worthwhile stop. Leave (N-814) at Grandcamp to take N-13 to La Cambe where 20 507 German soldiers are buried. Continue on N-13 toward Cherbourg noticing at Isigny a monument to the 29th Inf. Div. which liberated this town on 9 June 1944.

At Carentan (taken 12 June 44) by the 101st US Airborne Division notice a monument in front of City Hall to that effect.



Above : General Maxwell D. Taylor commanding the 101st Airborne when emplaning to Normandy (US Army). Right :C-47s are dropping paratroops during an exercise just before D-Day (US Army).

### Historical account.

The 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions, US Army are to assault Omaha Beach located between La-Pointe-de-la-Percée and Sainte- Honorine-des-Pertes at 6 :30 A.M. 6 June 1944 with the 116th Inf. Regt. spearheading the operation. Other units such as Engineer Special Brigades, Tank Bataillons and Rangers and Artillery support are attached to these divisions for this assault.

Their mission is to clear the beach ; to prepare 5 exits and establish their units between Isigny, Treviers and Vaucelles (near Bayeux). The 2nd Ranger Bn is given



the mission to capture the battery at Pointe-du-Hoc.

### \*ADDENDUM

A very fragile bridge-head of about 1 to 2 kilometers deep on 7 kilometers wide is achieved at the price of 2 200 casualties on the beach. 34 250 men are ashore but only

100 tons of supplies are salvaged out of 2400 expected ; the rest is at the bottom of the sea.

*Pointe-du-Hoc* : - The mission of 225 soldiers on detached service with the 2nd Ranger Bn. US Army under Colonel Rudder's Command, is to destroy this battery with 6 15.5 cm guns capable of spraying Omaha Beach and of engaging ships out at sea. After many aerial bombardments and the concentrated fire of two destroyers just before H-Hour, set at 7 :10 A.M., the Rangers began to escalate the steep cliff with rope ladders affixed to grapnels shot on top of the cliff by cannons anchored to landing barges some 300 yards away. The climbing goes on well enough because of good previous training and in spite of a downfall of hand grenades pouring on them and of automatic weapons fire aimed at the Rangers. The mopping-up of this lunar terrain is long, arduous and unproductive. Finally, at 9 :15 A.M. the cannons are located 800 yards inland and are destroyed. There are many counter-attacks that are repelled during the day by the Rangers who, on the verge of exhaustion, will not be relieved until 11 :00 P.M. 7 June 1944 . They numbered 135 casualties in this valiant operation.

- At H-Hour the first wave of infantrymen lands amid the obstacles, water up to their armpits, without protection from the amphibious tanks, 75% of which was at the bottom of the sea along with the motorized artillery. Enemy automatic weapons, anti-tank guns and mortars pin down the infantrymen in the water mainly at Charlie, Dog and Fox beaches.

The assailants, whose assault barges are dragged off-course by a strong current, do not recognize their objectives and try at first to find shelter in sand hills which will shelter them from the fire coming from right above them.

- At 7 :A.M. the second wave sets foot on the beach. It is immediately subjected to devastating german fire obliging the men to duck in the water, right where they are, adding to the general confusion.

- At 7 :30 A.M. the Engineer Special Brigade, anti-tank and artillery units land without being able to play any operational part whatsoever due to the dramatic conditions in which the ground troops find themselves, bunching behind a destroyed vehicle to find a bit of shelter, behind a beach obstacle, or behind a sand mound for those who were able to make it to shore without being wounded.

- At 9 :30 A.M. the GI's advance at the pace of the rising tide, sheltered by the wreckage dispersed on the shore on many kilometers of the beach. But the anti-landingcraft defenses have not yet been neutralized thus creating much damage to the barges of the successive assault waves. Destroyers come within 1 200 meters of Omaha Beach and fire upon the small german forts and LCT (R)s fire rockets galore upon Saint-Laurent and Colleville.

- At 10 :00 A.M. on easy beach, a few officers and men rally those little groups of men who quit the sand mounds and together clear the nearest machine-gun nests and mortar positions while taking advantage of the bombing of the hill which action has set fire to the tall grass thus giving them smoke protection.

- At 10 :30 A.M. some 600 men of the 116th Infantry Regiment and of the 5th Rangers start for Vierville on the double, each platoon leader chanting in a high pitched voice the name of their respective companies repeated by each man in a strong echo ; this simulated the downhearted into action. The stocato of their own machine guns and of the few tanks that they gave to the isolated Germans who were rapidly overtaken.

- At 11 :00 A.M. men of the 115th and 116th Inf. Regts., together, pierce the defenses of Les Moulins and infiltrate Saint-Laurent and Colleville.

- At 1 :00 P.M. there is still confusion on all sectors of the beach subject to the German artillery, mortars and machine-gun fire on a strip of sand critically reduced upon while all sorts of supplies continue arriving. The 18th and 26th Inf. Regts. effectuate a toehold in the chaos and are finally able to leave the beach toward Saint-Laurent which will be taken by them around 6 :00 P.M.

- At 20 :00 the only fit beach exit is that of Vierville. Saint-Laurent and Colleville are taken. Many bastions at the other 4 beach exits still hold by prohibiting all approach to them. A counter-attack by the Germans on Vierville is kept in check, and repelled.

#### **OPERATIONNAL SECTOR OF THE 82nd AND THE 101st AIR- BORNE DIVISIONS U.S. ARMY.**

##### **Circuit-Tour**

*Sainte-Mère-Eglise* :- The church, where a paratrooper hung from steeple during the night of 5-6 June 1944, is located on the square behind the American Monument dedicated to the men of the 82nd and 101st Abn Divisions. Near the church is the Airborne Museum. In the front of Town Hall : a Milestone, km "0" of the "Liberty Highway" which ends in Bastogne, Belgium. Biligual steles indicating Sainte-Mère-Eglise as the first town in France to be liberated during W.W. II **Saga of the All American.** (82nd Abn).

A large stele behind the milestone listing the names of the local civilian casualties from 1939 to 1945. There is also another marker located in front of the Post Office (same building as the Town Hall) erected in

1975 in tribute to all the gallant liberators of Saint-Mère-Eglise. You may see in the Town Hall lobby the 1st American Flag to waive on liberated French soil : it was raised at 4 :30 A.M. 6 June 1944. Memorial markers at the site of the 2 local temporary U.S. cemeteries (1944 to 1948). One is in front of the athletic field, (near the Museum) ; the other, on D-67 on the way to Chef-du-Pont.

The church has two stained glass windows : one represents the parachute drop on Saint-Mère-Eglise ; the other symbolically commemorates 4 military operations of the 505th P.I.R. of the 82nd Abn. Div. during W.W. II, namely : France (cross of Lorraine), Belgium (Lion), Italy-Sicily (Olive Branch), Holland (Tulip).

*Chef-du-Pont* :- A monument to the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. (PIR) On the Northern exit of Saint-Mère-Eglise there are two wooden memorial markers dedicated to the Commanders of each Abn. Division : General Ridgway for the 82nd and General Taylor for the 101st. Driving East (toward the beach) on D-15 from Sainte-Mère-Eglise you will come to Ravenoville on D-14 ; turn left on D-14 and proceed to Crisbec. Notice on the left the Saint-Marcouf Battery (4x21 cm) taken by the 4th Inf. Div. USA on 12 June 1944. At Ravenoville Beach turn right and follow the coast passing by Monument Leclerc at Saint-Germain-de-Varreville where Utah Beach begins.

#### **A. 82nd and 101st US AIRBORNE DIVISIONS.**

The 82nd Abn. Div., commanded by General M.B. Ridgway, dropped three Regiments : the 505th in DZ, drop zone O the 507th in DZ, drop zone T The 508th in DZ, drop zone N just West of Saint-Mère-Eglise.



*Medical orderlies at work at Utah Beach (US Army).*

The mission was, in addition to the capture and hold Sainte-Mère-Eglise, a vital highway junction ; to take the West bank of the Merderet River ; to cover the beach landing troops ; and to link with them to open the way to Cherbourg.

The 101st Abn. Div. commanded by General Maxwell D. Taylor was to drop three regiments : the 502nd in DZ, drop zone A The 510th and the 506th were to drop mixed in drop zone C and D. These zones were between Sainte-Mère-Eglise and Utah Beach.

The secondary mission was the capture of Carentan and the linking with the US troops of Omaha Beach somewhere between Carentan and Isigny.

1 660 sorties of planes and 152 gliders were used in this operation. At 15 minutes past mid-night on 6 June pathfinders are already on the ground ready to install ground lights in predesignated landing zones. Beginning at 1 :15 A.M. some 15 000 paratroopers of these 2 divisions are dropped in successive waves but many miss their assigned drop zones because of

Anti-aircraft fire, low clouds, and gusts of wind plus the improper or insufficient briefing of the pilots of the transport planes. The regiments are scattered and mixed-up dropping in one another's drop zones and many paratroopers fall into the flooded areas as well as into the English Cheannel. The 505th P.I.R. is more successful and is able to regroup over 1000 men to capture Sainte-Mère-Eglise which is liberated at 4 :30 A.M. 6 June 1944.

In other sector many isolated groups of paratroopers will fight for many hours, days and weeks before rejoining their units.

La Fiere is taken at 8 :45 A.M. by 400 men of the 82nd Division after many encounters throughout the night. Retaken by the Germans, it will revert to American control late in the afternoon of 6 June.

The beach exits are taken by the 501st and 506th P.I.R. of the 101st Airborne Div. Beuzeville-au-Plain is besieged. Poupeville, Foucarville, Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, Saint-Germain-de-Varreville are taken in the forenoon.

The bridge on the Douve River and the locks of La Barquette at Carentan are under the control of the paratroopers.

At the end of the day, contact is established at the beach exits with the 4th US Infantry Division. The first to land at Utah Beach.

## B. UTAH BEACH

### Circuit Tour

- In the dunes of Saint-Martin-de-Varreville there is a monument dedicated to the beach landings and to the memory of the French 2nd Armored Division commanded by General Leclerc. This division landed at this spot on 2 August 1944.

At 4 kilometers further East, after having gone by many blockhouses you will notice the dunes of La Madeleine and the strong point W-5, site of the present Utah Beach Museum, set up by the Comité du Débarquement. There is a monument to the "Assault Division", the 4th US Infantry Division, in front of the Museum. A few yards away there is another converted bunker serving as a monument to the 1st Engineer Special Brigade (Col. Eugene Caffey) with a crypt below listing the names of the first US casualties at Utah Beach. "Liberty Highway" starts here at the beginning of RN 13 D which runs through Sainte-Marie-du-Mont and Saint-Come-du-Mont.

### Historical account.

The 4th US Infantry Division, commanded by General R.O. Barton, is given the mission to control the roads above the flooded area and to establish contact with the 101st US Airborne Division and then to keep going in a Westerly direction to reinforce the 82nd US Airborne Division.

- At 6 :30 A.M. after the preliminary naval bombardment following the aerial attacks on the German strong points and artillery batteries, the landings-craft of the first wave of the beach landings are swept away some 2.5 kilometers to the East of the initially planned landing spot, due to the strong current of the rising tide. This navigation error paid off as this particular spot (La Madeleine and La Grande Dune) was not heavily defended because of sparser defenses and less important fortifications.

The 8th US Infantry Regiment (Col. Van Fleet) lands in 10 minutes time and is quickly rejoined by 28 Sherman tanks out of 32 launched from 8 miles (12 kms) out at sea.

**Guides "Heimdal" déjà parus : Série "Normandie" :**

- Eu, ville normande
- Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte
- Granville
- Les plages du débarquement
- Bataille de Normandie
- Les plages du débarquement,  
édition anglaise
- Comment reconnaître les meubles normands
- La cuisine normande
- Les horloges de Basse-normandie
- Prénoms normands et vikings
- La Normandie et les vikings

**Série "Heimdal-Breizh" :**

- Le costume de Cornouailles
- Le mariage en Cornouailles

**Demandez-les à votre libraire.**

**Editions Heimdal - BP 124 - 14402 Bayeux.**

**Prix :**

