



## The Battle for Normandy



Delayed 24hrs because of bad weather, the liberation of France under the code name “Overlord” began on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944. By dawn, eighteen thousand British and American parachutists were on the ground in Normandy, capturing essential bridges and disrupting German lines of communication.

At 6.30 that morning the first American troops landed on the beaches followed an hour later by the British and Canadians and by midnight over 100 thousand allied troops were ashore and apart from the Americans on Omaha Beach were making progress inland. The Germans still hesitated to commit full resources against the bridgehead believing it was only a ploy. Casualties were relatively low; allied losses were under two thousand.

That same day the Germans took 400 Greek Hostages, three hundred Italian POWs and a couple of hundred Jews by boat out to sea from Crete and scuttled them; there were no survivors. It was this creed that the Allies were determined to destroy.



Artist's impression of a Lysander on operations

Such is a quick recap of that day in June, but the preparation, planning and training had started a long time before. Intelligence was vital and in 1942 **Colonel "Remy" Renault-Roulier** had brought the blueprints of the coastal fortifications with him when he and his family escaped to England. His further clandestine operations back to occupied France were orchestrated by SOE staff such as **Harold Cochrane (20)**, lately assistant Advocate General in the Sudan. The Notre Dame Brotherhood kept the information up to date and was confirmed by aerial reconnaissance. It was essential to guard Allied plans from the German High command and bombing raids had to give no indication as to the preferred invasion area.

### **The choice of landing in Normandy**

An Allied landing in force on a broad front in Normandy would mount several threats to the German forces. The port of Cherbourg and coastal ports further west in Brittany could be attacked. An overland attack could be made towards Paris. From Paris an attack could be made to the border with Germany. Normandy was a less-defended coast. Normandy was also an unexpected jumping-off point. There was potential to confuse and scatter the German defending forces.

The initial plan proposed a landing from the sea by three divisions, with two brigades landed by air. In total, 47 divisions would be committed to the Battle of Normandy. 19 divisions would be British, five Canadian and one Polish under British command. There would be 21 American divisions with one Free French division. In total there would be over a million troops.

General Montgomery presented his strategy for the invasion. He envisaged a ninety day battle, ending when all the forces reached the River Seine. The objective for the first 40 days was to create a bridgehead. This would include Caen and Cherbourg, a vital deep-water port. The breakout from the bridgehead would liberate Brittany and its Atlantic ports. After ninety days the Allies would control a zone bounded by the River Loire in the south and River Seine in the northeast.

In May, there was a diversionary raid on railway junctions and marshalling yards south of Paris and despite growing Allied air superiority casualties were heavy. **Count Henri de Boisgelin (07)** and his American born wife Rachel reported from their Chateau at Houssay. *“Many of us living near were awakened by a tremendous roar of motors, by firing, and then the sky was lighted up for miles around by explosions. But at that time the Germans were masters here, and anyone who stepped out of a house before five in the morning risked being shot. By the noise and the glow in the sky, when the planes came down the Germans knew what had happened, and they were looking at everything before anyone else ... It grieves us to tell ... these painful details but the planes caught fire which made the identification of those who were in them extremely difficult.”*

Of the fifteen aircrew shot down over the de Boisgelin's village of Beauchery only one survived; and of those killed only two, could be identified. The remains were placed in five coffins and buried by the villagers in a collective grave in the Beauchery Communal Cemetery.

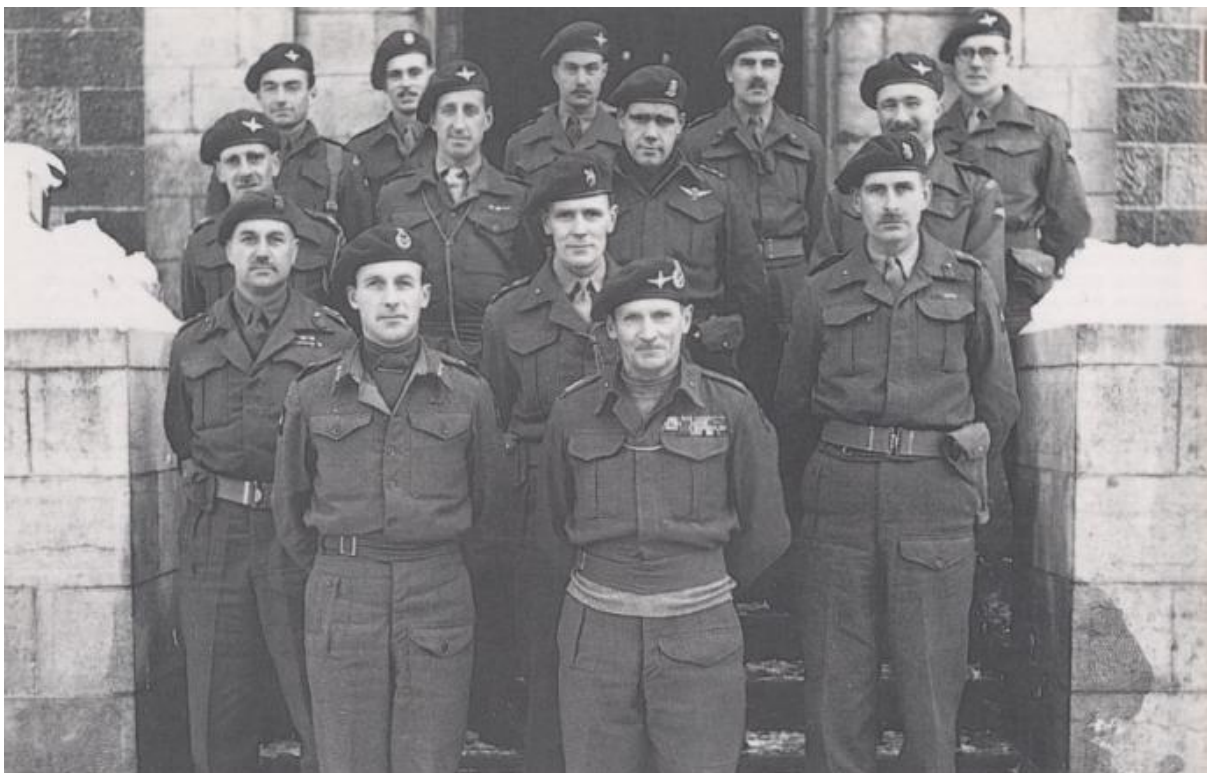
*“Never has our village seen such a big crowd – 1,800 to 2,000 people. At that lovely time of the year, there were plenty of lilac and lilies of the valley, also tulips and rarer flowers. The five coffins disappeared under the tulips ... and whilst they were all being taken to their last resting place in this peaceful corner of the cemetery where grass often grows, we were thinking of their families who might be thinking of them alive – somewhere in Europe”.*

The spot where one of the bodies had fallen to earth became a place to express the hope for liberation. Rachel de Boisgelin watched as flowers were placed there, and recalled how the Germans tried to catch those responsible, and how the villagers continued to lay their tributes to ‘fearlessly keep alive the memory of those fallen aviators’.

Liberation for the de Boisgelins and their fellow countrymen was now underway. It was at a cost, not just of those in action, but men in training such as **Hugh Pritchard**, Captain of the School in '38 and after Magdalene Oxford was with his regiment the Grenadier Guards in preparation for the invasion; he was killed when his tank overturned on manoeuvres at the end of March.

**Denis Beatson Hird (30)** had served at the fall of France but would now be returning in a fresh Battalion as a company commander with – 10<sup>th</sup> Highland Light Infantry. They were part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Scottish Division and had moved south from the wilds of Caithness to Sledmere, the home of **The Sykes** and eventually to finish their preparations in Sussex. Last minute training, last minute parties and the sense of imminent action.

The ground forces taking part in the invasion came from three sources; those withdrawn from combat operations elsewhere such as Italy. Those that had taken a mauling at Dunkirk in 1940 and had been held in reserve for this occasion and those that would be going into battle for the first time. There were OBs in all these categories and some found themselves in a role they had not expected. **Gerard “Florrie” Ford (30)** was a regular officer of the South Lancashire Regiment, but more airborne troops were required. His battalion was selected and they were transformed into the 13<sup>th</sup> (Lancashire) Bn of the Parachute Regiment. Not quite as dramatic but **Major John Drummond (28)** with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of The Ulster Rifles were also allocated to the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division to be carried in by glider. Light artillery would go with them including 210 Battery of the Worcestershire Yeomanry commanded by the **Hon Charles Russell (26)**.



**Florrie Ford** (centre back row) with other senior officers of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne. Photo taken in the Ardennes in January 1945 not long before he was killed. Tall officer behind Montgomery, right of picture is Brig. Nigel Poett (Downside) son of **OB Maj-General Joseph Poett (73)**.

The 6th Airborne Division was part of two Corps that made up the British 2<sup>nd</sup> Army; they would land after midnight on the 6<sup>th</sup> June in advance of the main invasion force. The Army was under the command of General “Bimbo” Dempsey, the son in law of **Percy O’Reilly (84)** an Olympic Polo Silver Medallist of 1904.



General Miles “Bimbo” Dempsey

The British beach landings would take place on “Sword”, “Juno” and “Gold” facing the line of Caen to Bayeux. The American Army under General Bradley landed further along the coast to the west of Omaha and Utah Beaches.



The Airborne assault just after midnight went relatively to plan; however there were troops dropped well away from their targets, lost in the flooded marshland or worse still in the River Orne. Americans were machine gunned as they came down at Sainte Mere Eglise. **John Drummond’s** glider had to make an emergency landing at Worthing when the towing plane had problems; he had to take off twice to play his part in the liberation.



Men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Ulster Rifles Leaving their landing zone

**Florrie Ford** gathered his company on the hunting horn and took up their allocated position north of Ranville on the eastern side of R Orne. Apart from startling the cows and the Comtesse de Rohan Chabot at her chateau all was quiet; there were no Germans to be seen – yet but the first village in France had been liberated. They dug in and waited; the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division was on its way

At 0730hrs, **Hugh Dinwiddy (Hon)** in command of his landing craft carrying Canadian troops was the first to hit Juno Beach. His craft had been part of a flotilla that had set out from the mother ships but the initial bombardment had not suppressed the coastal defences; they met stiff resistance and the other craft disappeared in a shower of debris and floating bodies. Any survivors had to be ignored as the second wave came into the beach.



Others that came ashore included **Maxwell Chamberlain (36)** another past Captain of the school, with the Lincolns; he had last faced the Germans at Dunkirk. Another regiment seeking revenge from that retreat were the Royal Norfolks after the murder of their men at Le Paradis; **Eric Cooper-Key (35)** had been in India with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at the outbreak of War and had been frustrated by home defence until now.



Eric Cooper-Key

Two of the armoured regiments that were part of the initial landings were the 8<sup>th</sup> Kings Royal Irish Hussars with a young **Philip de May (41)** leading his troop in action for the first time. With the 13/18<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars was **Captain Anthony Lyon Clark (26)**; originally he had been a regular officer but had left when he married his American wife Margot and he had re-joined at the outbreak of war from New York. Many other OBs would follow in the weeks and months ahead particularly with the Guards Armoured Division. Over 20 OBs were serving officers with the Irish Guards among them was **Basil Eugster (33)** already with an MC & Bar and **John Swann (41)** who landed with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Battalion on the 1 July. He would be the third OB Mick to be killed in action when his tank was hit in September when the breakout was complete.



Basil Eugster

The most senior OB to arrive on the beaches was **Brigadier Jerry Sheil (15)**, the Commander Royal; Artillery for the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division. Jerry, Irish and a horseman of note had commanded 10th Field Regiment with the BEF and had to “spike his Guns” before evacuation at Dunkirk. He then took over 128 (Highland) Regiment RA to win the first of his DSOs in North Africa and his second was awarded in Sicily; a charismatic leader. His Division was in the second wave and came under the command of the Canadians and for battle hardened troops the Highlanders were going to have their worst experiences of the War in the weeks ahead.

Another Gunner to land was **Captain Guy Chilver-Stainer MC (32)** with “DD” Battery RHA and like the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars they were old Desert Rats of the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. The Diary of the time gives a good description of their crossing and arrival in Normandy;

*5 June*

*“Packed tightly in 3-tonners, the Battery moved to the quay-side and embarked on the American M.T. ship 16 at midday. Accommodation was bad: the holds of a cargo ship, with*



*men packed tightly and only a few raised in hammocks, offer little ventilation or peacefulness. The Captain was a man of seventy years who had only recently returned to the sea. His officers contrived to run the ship successfully, albeit on rather happy-go-lucky lines. Picking up our own private barrage balloon, we sailed out down the Thames, waving to the rest of the Regiment .on M.T. 16 en passant, and anchored off Southend Pier.*

*6 June*

*Here we were waiting, when news came that the operation had started early this morning. The Colonel had briefed Battery Commanders on 3rd June, but only now could the plan be revealed to everybody and detailed orders and maps issued. The latter were available on a lavish scale. Meals on board were difficult (rations were the "compo" type), Self-heating tins of soup and cocoa were a new and welcome idea.*

*7 June*

*The convoy sailed at 0600 hours, and had an uneventful passage down the English Channel,*

*8 June*

*By the schedule we were due to land today, hot rough weather was slowing up the off-loading on the beaches. One had to be content with being one small part of the vast Henley Regatta scene that was the Allied invasion's shipping lying off the coast of Normandy. The scene never lacked interest as one watched throughout the day. Rodney and Ramillies were firing steadily - at what? You could only guess it was towards Caen, One heard that on the evening of D Day the Canadian (3rd Canadian Division) reached the edge of Caen, but later had to come back.*

*9 June*

*Landed and moved inland to Hermanville.*

*13 June*

*Today **Capt. Chilver-Stainer**, bored with the lack of O.P. (observation post) work, went to Cambes and saw the C.O, of the 1st K.O.S.B. His offer of help was gladly accepted: a few hundred yards in front of their forward posts were some sixteen tanks, dug-in, with their crews all protected by slit-trenches. The only O.P. possible was in a farm building exactly, two hundred yards from the nearest enemy tank (some weeks later the exact distance was paced). To get there involved crawling over exposed country: **Captain Stainer** reached the O.P. and had a highly successful shoot".*

The Initial plan, apart from securing the bridgehead, was to capture Caen. This proved insurmountable as it was strongly held by the Germans and further repeated attacks were unsuccessful. The 13/18 Hussars who were to support the initial assault had many of its tanks stuck in the shallows and although their engines were flooded went into action but could not move to cover the attack. It was to take another month to force the enemy out of the city. Caen was bombed and shelled into a ruin and over 6000 civilians were killed. While Caen held the British fought their way south between the city and Bayeux to try and encircle from the south east; it was to take them to Tilly sur Seullles and Villers-Bocage.

**Denis Beatson Hird** and the HLI embarked on Derby Day - 17<sup>th</sup> June and waded ashore on Juno Beach before marching in full battle order and soaking wet the 14

miles to their concentration area just short of the Caen Bayeux main axis route. “As a Battalion we were still novices at the art and practicalities of war”. This was soon to change as they went into action in some of the most difficult terrain imaginable. In their first week they would lose 66 killed and 210 wounded.

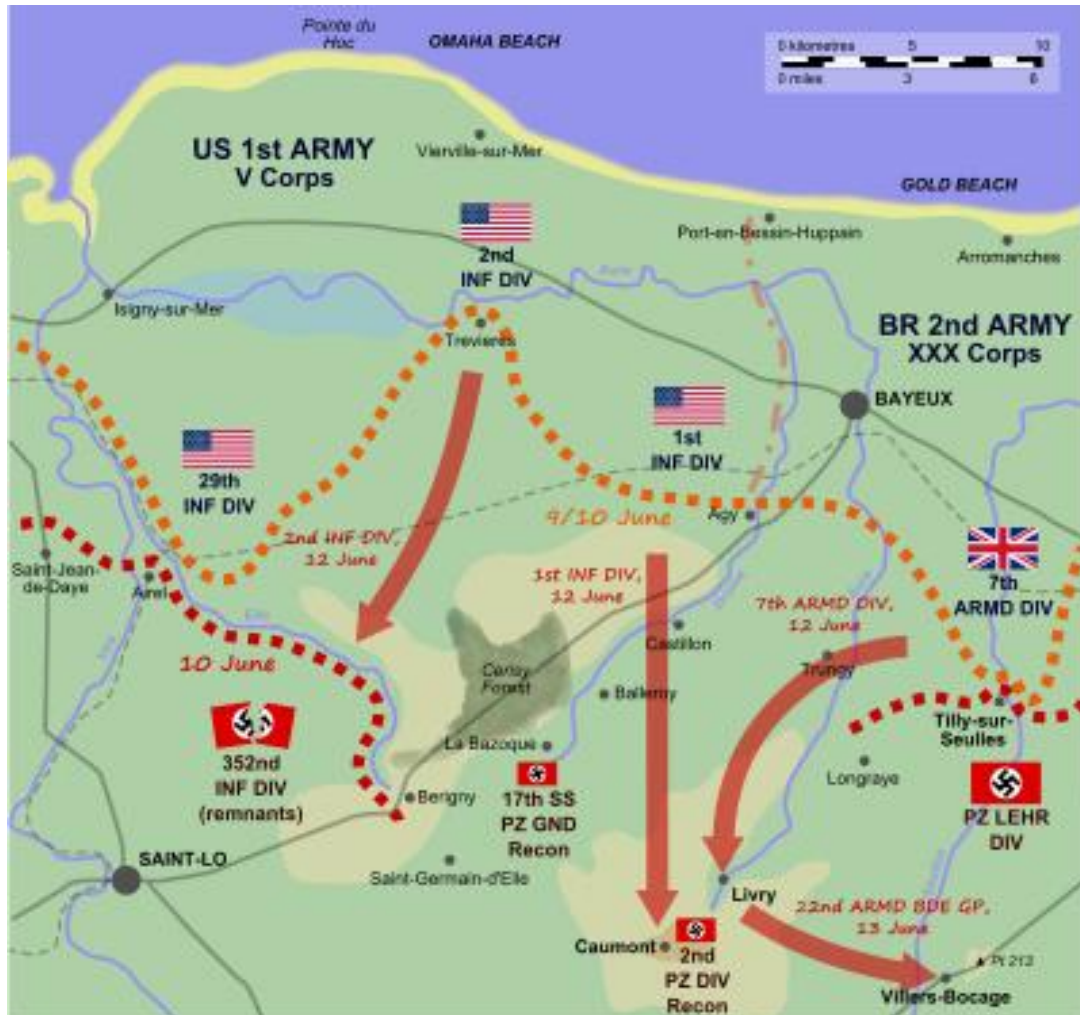


Bocage referred to the local countryside of small fields, often hilly with narrow sunken lanes and high hedges. It was difficult for the infantry to operate in and was even more hazardous for armoured vehicles. The Germans with simple hand held anti-tank rockets were able to knock out the tanks at short range.



The Sherman nicknamed by its British crews “The Ronson” or “The Tommy Cooker”

The British equipped with American Shermans found that once hit, the vehicles would “brew up” like a chip pan. The Germans could still pack a punch and the British were held at Villers on the 13 June and could not force the breakthrough; they had to withdraw. It was mortar fire that killed **Philip de May** on the 14<sup>th</sup> June as the regiment leaguered up for the night. One week into the invasion and it brought to an end the phase of gaining ground. It was now attrition that would take Caen.



Information was being quickly relayed to Army commanders by teams from the General Headquarters Liaison Regiment known as “Phantom”. Intelligence gatherers they ensured that the battle map and unit locations were current. Commanding one of these teams was **Major Denis Russell (27)**, a son of the Hon Cyril and a peacetime Middlesex cricketer and stockbroker.



A "Phantom" Team

Behind the enemy lines were the men of "Plan Sussex" either Free French under the control of Colonel "Remy" or allied linguists. Among the Americans, and under the auspices of the OSS (forerunners of the CIA) was **Reggie Dussaq (39)**, an enlisted soldier, fresh out of Princeton and recruited for his linguistic skills. Reggie was later killed in August.



Back in England, German plans and movements were being monitored by Bletchley Park.

Key analysts in the specialist "Testery" group such as **Kevin O'Neill (35)**, later Head of the Canadian equivalent of GCHQ, were scanning their decrypts. They thwarted the German plan for a massed attack by torpedo boats against allied shipping crossing the Channel; Leonard Cheshire VC who later married the onetime St John's assistant matron Sue Ryder, led the raid on Le Havre on the 14 June destroying the pens and leaving only one boat afloat. Bletchley also confirmed that Hitler still

believed that the landings were a ruse and was refusing the re-deployment of divisions from the Pas de Calais region.



B-17s on a Raid in support of the Landings

Some 3000 aircraft had supported the allied landings and they continued to fly missions to assist the ground forces. Although air superiority had been gained, there were still casualties. One such, was a Flying Fortress of 710 Bomb Squadron out of Rattlesdon. On the 19 June the plane was hit by flak and trying to limp home came down over the Channel. The ball turret gunner was 20 year old **Sgt Hugh Crimmins (39)**; the crew was lost. Hugh's brother **Thomas (38)** was a contemporary of **Reggie Dussaq** at Princeton and later killed at Okinawa.

Wounded within the bridgehead were initially dealt with by the supporting RAMC Field Ambulances until Field Hospitals could be set up and evacuation organised. The medical treatment plan was organised and actioned by **Lt Colonel "C P" Stevens (29)** and his staff and was all part of the detailed organisation that was required by an operation on a huge scale.

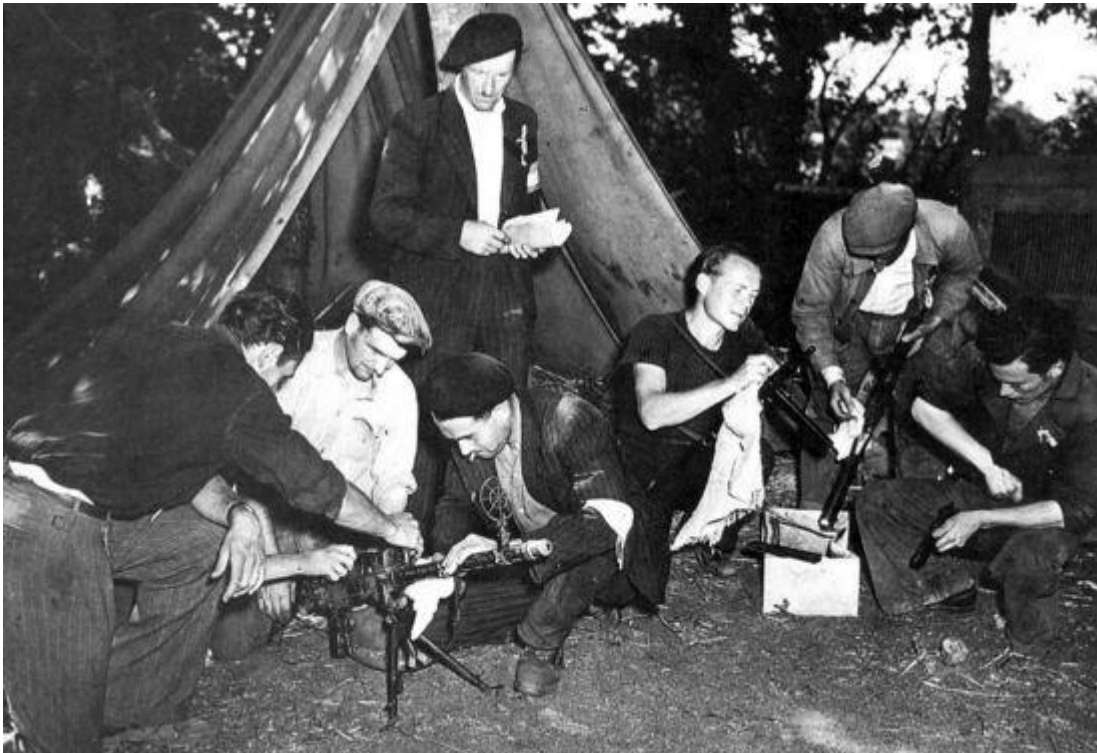


Mulberry “an exceptional piece of engineering and construction”.

To this end, resupply was vital and two floating harbours were brought across the channel; one to support the British, the other the Americans. “Mulberry” would provide a port the size of Dover and was constructed with much secrecy by engineering companies around England. One such was Measures Brothers under its Managing Director **Frank Outred (24)**. The harbours was constructed at Aramanches and at Omaha by 9 June. A severe storm was to wreck the American port on the 19 June but the British harbour designed to last 3 months, operated for 8 months and brought in over 2.5 million men, half a million vehicles and 4 million tons of stores.

The various factions and circuits of the French Resistance were included in the plan for *Overlord*. Through the London-based headquarters that supposedly embraced all resistance groups, the British Special Operations Executive orchestrated a massive campaign of sabotage. The Allies developed four plans for the French Resistance to execute on D-Day and the following days. Coded messages were transmitted. One famous pair of these messages is often stated to be the general call to arms by the Resistance. A few days before D-Day, the (slightly misquoted) first line of Verlaine’s poem, *Chanson d'Automne*, was transmitted. “*Les sanglots longs des violons de l'automne (Long sobs of autumn violins)*” alerted the resistance fighters of the Ventriloquist network in the Orleans region to attack rail targets within the next few days. The second line, “*Bercent mon coeur d'une langueur monotone*” (“soothe my heart with a monotonous languor”), transmitted late on 5 June, meant that the attack was to be mounted immediately. It was appropriate that this Group should be the first to be informed as it was set up and commanded by **Baron Philippe de Vomécourt**

(19) and was one of the first organised after the arrival of Philippe's brother **Pierre (19)**, SOE's first Group Leader in May 1941 .



Both SOE and the SAS were involved in taking offensive action. **Major John Farmer (35)**, the local SOE coordinator in the Auvergne together with his operator Nancy Wake, organized some 2000 Maquis in the battle of Mont Mouchet over the 10 – 11 June holding up the rapid advance north to Normandy of some 3000 German troops. Later some 7000 maquisards brought together by Farmer and Wake would hold down some 22 thousand of the enemy

**Ellery Anderson (35)** had an unexpected landing south of Falaise in a manure heap; the Resistance leader insisted that he had a bath and a change of clothes before they started operations within the German defended area.

**Alex Muirhead (38)** and his SAS team were dropped into the Morvan region of Burgundy to assist some of the most formidable groups in France. German retribution was swift and savage; villages razed and their populations murdered; names such as Oradour, Dun-Les-Places will not be forgotten. At Tulle, in the "Vomecourt" area of activity a hundred men were sized and killed by the SS; "I came home to find my husband and son hanging from the balcony of my house" recalled one woman.



Nancy Wake GM; **John Farmer's** assistant in SOE

The work of the Resistance was invaluable to the Battle for Normandy. On the 6 June, the 2<sup>nd</sup> SS Panzer Division equipped with the latest heavy tanks were ordered north from their base at Toulouse. It should have taken them 3 days to reach the combat area; it took them two extra weeks because of ambushes and sabotage.



Maquis inspect the fruits of their labour



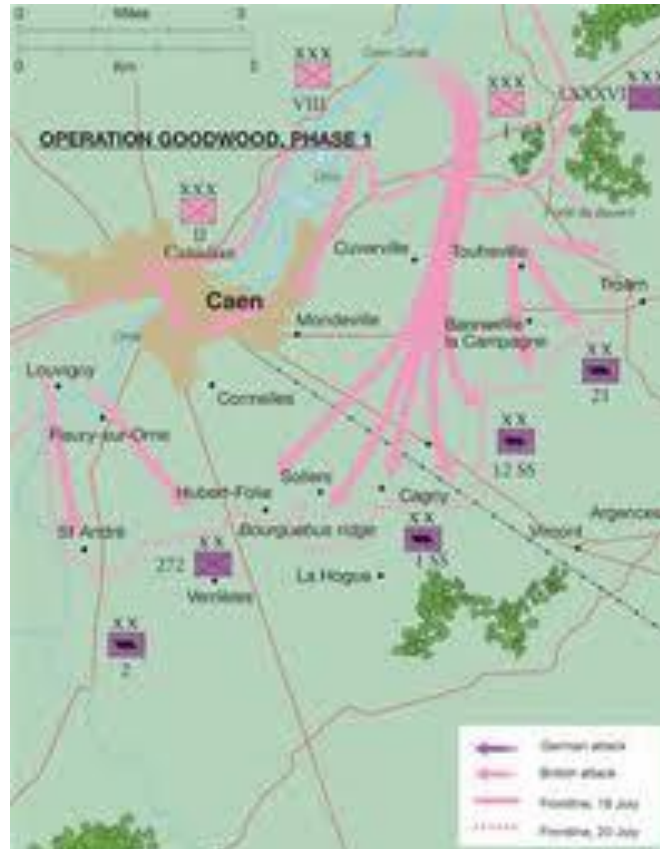
Although reinforcement was slow in arriving, the Germans were proving extremely difficult to dislodge and defeat in an area better suited to defence than attack. Temporarily blocked trying to outflank the enemy at Villers Bocage, Montgomery ordered General Dempsey to break out to the west of Caen with an Operation named Goodwood. Although this was to be a feint to allow Bradley and his forces time to outflank Villers and continue the advance East, Montgomery gave Dempsey the objective of Falaise to the south of Caen. On the face of it, the ground seemed far more attractive than the bocage; once across the River Orne it was flat and open and ideal for the use of armour. However, the Germans had mined the ground and it suited their tanks better than the allied vehicles.



German “Tiger” Tank

The German armour had a much more powerful gun capable of a devastating round at a longer range, they could take on the Shermans well before our tanks could respond. They also had the formidable 8.8 anti-tank gun. Dempsey believed that the Germans could ill afford any tank losses whereas he had plenty in reserve; of greater concern would be the loss of experienced tank crews and there were few infantry replacements. This was to be an armoured led battle by three divisions.

However, the Germans still held Caen in strength as had been shown only one week previously when the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division with **Jerry Sheil** had failed to take the village of Colombelles on the NE outskirts of the city and had been forced to withdraw. This was yet another setback that the Scots had suffered since moving through Ranville originally taken by **Florrie Ford** and the 13<sup>th</sup> Paras on D Day. Montgomery was highly critical of the Highlanders saying “They have failed every mission given to them”; their general was one of several sacked by the Allied Commander. It would seem that Dempsey’s Divisions would risk flanking fire from the outskirts of the City as they moved south and not only have to break through German minefields but defensive ones laid by the Highlanders to protect their lines.



Probably aware of these difficulties, Montgomery had lesser objectives than Falaise in mind for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army but failed to Inform Eisenhower as Supreme Commander which was to lead those at SHAEF to believe that the operation was a failure. The attack was to be led by 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Tank Regiment commanded by David Silvertop. He was the son of **Cmdr Arthur Silvertop RN (90)** of Minsteracres killed at Horne Reef (Jutland) in 1916. David was four at the time of his father's death and his mother eventually sent him to Ampleforth before a commission in the 14/20<sup>th</sup> King's Hussars.

The Operation started on 18 July with a huge rolling artillery barrage assisted by RAF fighter bombers. The RTR reached their objective to the East of Caen but with heavy casualties. The lead division then passed to the Guards Armoured and by the end of the day they had reached Cagny to the east of the city where they consolidated. In the next couple of days, the Germans counter-attacked but the positions held and on the 20 July Dempsey called a halt to the armoured operations and brought forward his infantry.

Among the casualties on the 18 July was **Anthony Lyon-Clarke** with his Regiment fighting with 27<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade on the eastern flank of the main thrust. They had found Troarn heavily defended and successive attacks failed. The Brigade was broken up at the end of the Operation and the Regiments re-distributed.



## Tightening the noose – The Falaise Pocket

On the American front during July, they launched a major operation (Cobra) to clear eastern Normandy and Brittany; the German defences in that area were collapsing. The British played their part outflanking Villers; **Denis Beatson Hird** and his men were part of this operation. Bimbo Dempsey signaled “ it was the 15<sup>th</sup> Scottish Division that broke the main enemy defensive line south of Caumont and opened the way for the Armoured Divisions; the result of your great action can now be seen by everyone”. On 1 August General Patton’s Third Army took over the offensive and swung south taking Le Mans on 8 August and approached the Falaise Pocket with the British, Canadians and Poles working their way south to join them.

Under the command of the Canadians moving down from Caen were the 51<sup>st</sup> Highlanders with **Jerry Sheil’s** gunner regiments in support. Many of the infantry were carried on American self-propelled guns known as Priests from their pulpit style turrets. The personnel carrier version with the gun removed were known to the troops as “de-frocked priests”. Between the 6 – 8 August the Highlanders took all their objectives deep into the German defensive positions and felt their honour was restored after their early setbacks and criticisms in July.



Michel d’Arcangue

Under the command of Patton approaching from the west was the French 2<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Division led by General Leclerc that had landed on their home soil on 1 August. With the 12<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers, known as “The Big Brothers” for their reputation of coming to the aid of others was **Lt Michel d’Arcangues (30)**. Michel, the son of the Marquis d’Iranda had initially run an escape route from his home Basque country over the Pyrenees for allied servicemen. With the Germans closing in on his activities, he went over the mountains himself in March 1943 and made his way to England to join the Free French Forces. On 12 August, the Division played an important role in what was the decisive battle for Normandy.



Falaise

Montgomery's noose on the forces of General von Kluge was tightening and by the 21 August they were surrounded. Eisenhower was to record; "The battlefield at Falaise was unquestionably one of the greatest 'killing fields' of any of the war areas. Forty-eight hours after the closing of the gap, I was conducted through it on foot, to encounter scenes that could be described only by Dante. It was literally possible to walk for hundreds of yards at a time, stepping on nothing but dead and decaying flesh." 15 thousand Germans had been killed and a further 50 thousand captured. It was not without Allied losses; **Capel Pritchard (41)**, a cousin of Hugh, had been commissioned in April as a 2Lt in the "Sharpshooters" The County of London Yeomanry. He was serving with the combined 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> CLY that had to amalgamate following heavy losses in the bocage and the battle for Villers. The regiment came under 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade commanded by the young Michael Carver who many years later as Chief of The Defence Staff had **Lt Colonel Tony Wallerstein (51)** as his Military Assistant. In countryside near the village of Roufigny described as "thick and close and anything but suitable for tanks, **Capel** and his crew were hit and killed on 18 August.

The War Diary of "DD" Battery in support of the CLY reported on 18 August;

*"A great day, with some of the best shooting of the whole campaign. The guns moved up by batteries while the armour deployed along the high ground, which had Ronal at its eastern end. The weal (right) flank was exposed but with little threat from the Germans, who with seven anti-tank guns, two Mark IV's, a Panther and some two hundred infantry, succeeded in holding off any direct attack by " B " Squadron down the road into Roufigny, which lay at the foot of the escarpment. Towards the end of the day " A " Squadron crossed the stream 1,000 yards west of the village and spent a lonely night on high ground south-west of Roufigny.*

*Meanwhile, all day the O.Ps, were shooting continuously at Germans moving east in all sorts of vehicles from tanks to farm-carts. We put down frequent concentrations*

*on Roufigny and Fresnay-le-Buffard to its south. One could see most parts of the country as far south as Habloville.*

*But the day was not without disaster. **Captain Chilver-Stainer**, with " C " Squadron CLY, was a having some good shooting from the ridge. A burst of gun-fire caught him sitting with his legs only in the turret of the tank. He was seriously wounded in the arm, also in the neck and chest, First unconscious, then delirious, he only recovered consciousness in the Casualty Clearing Station".*



Temporary Burial

**Capel Pritchard** was not the last OB casualty in these battles; a week later **Reggie Dussaq** died from a traffic accident when his jeep was hit by lorry and overturned.

The Normandy phase of the campaign was all but over; **Michel d'Arlangues** and the Free French were heading for Paris. **Florrie Ford**, now second in command of the Lancashires, was to be awarded an MC at Pont L'Eveque for "his example when wounded, and his attempt to save his batman from a burning building"; the army was on its way to Belgium and beyond. **Charles Russell's** Battery would be credited with firing the first artillery rounds onto German soil. **Denis Beatson Hird** would command his company of Glaswegians across the Rhine and the Elbe to Hamburg; victory awaited them.



Battle end; "DD" Battery with captured staff car

This has been but a brief insight into what had been an extraordinary three months in which many OBs played a part, some of whom I have mentioned and several paying the ultimate sacrifice. It underlined that this had been an Allied Operation and that OBs from Britain, USA and France had taken part in common cause as they had in their schooldays on the playing fields at Runnymede.

### **WE WILL NOT FORGET THEM.**

#### **BIOGRAPHY.**

**d'Arcangues Michel;** eldest son of the 7<sup>th</sup> Marquis d'Irlanda born 1919 and left Beaumont in 1930. Involved in Basque culture. 1940-3 organized escape routes for allied servicemen through the Pyrenees. Joined Free French in London, commissioned in 12<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers. Liberation of France Croix de Guerre. After demob wrote on Basque affairs. Nationalist. Drowned in mysterious circumstances off San Sebastian 1946.

**Anderson Ellery:** Left Beaumont 1935. Joined R Gloucestershire Hussars. WW Capt. Parachute Regt. North Africa, MC. SAS France, Germany. War Crimes Investigator, Tfr Ulster Rifles. Korea. Special ops behind Enemy Lines. 1953 Antarctic Expedition. 1958 shipwrecked sailing to Australia. Adventurer & Military romantic.

**Beatson Hird Denis:** Left Beaumont 1930. Joined HLI, served during the fall of France, Dunkirk. Coy Cmd 10<sup>th</sup> Bn for Normandy. MC. 1945 Second in Command. Interview part of Imperial War Museum archive. Business executive.

**de Boisgelin Henri;** younger son of Ct Louis, left Beaumont 1907, Succeeded to the title after death of his father and brother Alexander KIA 1914. WW1 French Navy. Married Rachel Strange daughter of American Banker in 1925. Inherited Chateau de Houssay and its lands in the Seine et Marne region.

**Chamberlain Maxwell;** left Beaumont 1936, Captain of School, Cricket and Boxing. 1939 commissioned in the Lincolnshire Regiment. Dunkirk, D Day, Arnhem and Germany. After War career soldier USA, Egypt, Palestine, Malaya. Lt-Col. MBE.

**Chilver-Stainer Guy:** left Beaumont 1937, alpine skier. Woolwich. To RA. WW "DD" Battery RHA Western Desert, MC. Normandy Wdd. After War Captain Army Ski Team. 1956 Manager Olympic Langlauf team. Director Scottish National Ski Council.

**Cochrane Harold;** gs of Irish Lawyer Sir George Fottrell. Left Beaumont 1920, New College Oxford. Lincoln's Inn, Bar 1926. Asst. Advocate General Sudan. WW Capt Intelligence Corps attached SOE, parachutist. 1945 Lt Col responsible for Int. report War Crimes Belsen. Killed Traffic Accident Germany 17 August 1946.

**Cooper-Key Eric;** gs of First Sea Lord, Left Beaumont 1935 for RMAS. Army cricketer, County Squash, Junior Wimbledon. Commd Royal Norfolk Regiment served with 1<sup>st</sup> Bn NW Europe, MC in Holland. Post War, Korea, Malaya, Suez. Lt Col. MBE MD Security Express.

**Crimmins Hugh;** American from Baltimore educated in Switzerland and Beaumont leaving 1939. WW Joined USAAF. Promoted Sgt on Bomber crew 710 Bomb Squadron in UK. KIA 19 June 1944. Air Medal and Purple Heart. Tablet Brittany American Cemetery. Brother Thomas (38) Lt Marine Corps KIA 13 May 1945 Silver Star.

**Dempsey Miles;** Irish descent, educ. Shrewsbury. RMAS. WW1 R Berkshire Regiment. MC. Cricket for Sussex & Berks. WW2 rapid promotion to Lt General comd N Africa, Sicily, Italy. 2<sup>nd</sup> Army France & Germany. Kt in the Field. 1946 C in C Middle East. 1948 married Viola O'Reilly youngest daughter of Percy (84). Ch. Race Course Betting Board. RIP 25<sup>th</sup> Anniv D Day 1969.

**Dinwiddy Hugh;** educ. Radley, Cambridge, Rugby & Cricket Blue. Cricket for Kent. RC convert. WW Lt RN. 1948 English Master at Beaumont and sports coach. 1956 Makere University.

**Drummond John;** gs of 1<sup>st</sup> Ld Russell. Left Beaumont 1928 captain of school. RMAS. Royal Ulster rifles in India. WW 2 I/C 1<sup>st</sup> Bn on D Day. CO 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. DSO capture of Katterntum Bridge Bremen April 1945. 1955 Brigadier N Ireland. Brothers WW; Peter Sqn Ldr RAF, AFC. David, Major Irish Guards, Wdd. POW Anzio.

**Dussaq Reginald;** born Mercer County USA. Left Beaumont 1939. Cousins Carlos Brown (KIA) and Philip de Tura Clarke also at school. To Princeton. WW Pte 1<sup>st</sup> class OSS (Sussex Plan) Killed traffic accident 25 August 1944 Normandy.



**Eugster Basil;** Left Beaumont 1933 Captain of School & Boats. Christ Church Oxford. Commd Irish Guards. Palestine, MC. WW Narvik Bar to MC. France CO 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn DSO. CO 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. GOC 4<sup>th</sup> Div. Hong Kong. UK Land Forces. Colonel of the Regiment. also KCB, KCVO, CBE. Brother Michael Lt IG KIA N Africa April 1944.

**Farmer John;** Left Beaumont in 1935, all-round sportsman, actor and dancer. Spoke French and German fluently Recruited by Buckmaster for SOE code name Hubert. Worked with Nancy Wake in the Auvergne region (Freelance Circuit). Refused to carry suicide pill. Awarded MC and French gallantry medals. Post War with MI 6.

**Ford Gerard;** left Beaumont in 1930. Prize cadet at RMAS. Commd South Lancashire Regiment. Re-rolled to 13<sup>th</sup> Bn Parachute regiment. Normandy MC. Promoted to staff Lt Colonel 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Div. KIA Rhine Crossing March 1945. Nick-Name "Florrie" after the singer.

**Lyon Clarke Anthony;** son of three times married William Lyon Clarke. Left Beaumont 1926, RMAS. commd 13/18<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars. Left on marriage to live in New York. Rejoined as Technical Adjutant. KIA 18 July during Op Goodwood , Buried at Ranville War Cemetary.

**de May Philip;** of Moravian aristocratic descent. Left Beaumont in 1941. Commd in 8<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Irish Hussars. KIA 14 June at the end of the Battle for Villers-Bocage. Brother Ferdinand Captain Grenadier Guards.

**Muirhead Alexander;** left Beaumont 1938, To Sidney Sussex Camb. And St Thomas's. Commd Worcestershire Regiment. Seconded SAS N Africa. N W Europe MC. His Team first discovered Belsen Concentration Camp in April 1945. Post War Gynaecologist & Obstetrician. Medical adviser to BBC.

**O'Neil Kevin;** one of 4 talented brothers. Left Beaumont 1935 with open scholarship in Classics to Wadham Ox. WW commd Royal Fusiliers seconded to Bletchley Park. Worked with "Testery" on "Tunny" cyphers. Post War headhunted to Government Communications Security Establishment in Canada. Director 1971-80.

**O'Reilly Percy;** born Coolamber House Westmeath. Left Beaumont in 1884. Served in the Rifle Brigade. Retired captain. Land owner and sportsman. International polo player. Olympic silver Medal 1904. Eloped with Miss Alice Hamilton Boyd Rochford. Their youngest daughter Viola married General Sir Miles Dempsey 1948. (The O'Reilly and O'Dempsey lands adjoined)

**Outred Francis;** Left Beaumont in 1924 to study law. Later engineering in Dublin. Managing Director of Measures Brothers mainly providing structures for the railways. WW tank track production and work for the Mulberry Harbours. 3 sons at the school.

**Pritchard Capel;** son of OB lawyer. Left Beaumont 1941. Commd County of London Yeomanry (Sharpshooters). Normandy. KIA at Roufigny in the final battle of the Falaise Gap. Buried Banneville- La-Campagne War Cemetary.

**Pritchard Hugh;** born Shanghai. Left Beaumont 1938, Captain of school to Magdalene Ox. WW commd in Grenadier Guards. Killed on training with 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn when his tank overturned 11 March 1944. Buried Putney Vale Cemetery.

**Renault-Roulier Gilbert;** born 1904 in Brittany. 1920 joined Banque de France. Member of right wing French Action. 1936 Film producer. 1940 joined de Gaulle in London. Entrusted with intelligence gathering network. Founded Confrerie de Notre Dame. Considered most famous secret agent in France. Post War fell out with de Gaulle for demanding pardon for Petain. Numerous decorations including DSO. Son Jean Claude at Beaumont leaving 1948.

**Russell Charles:** son of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ld Russell of Killowen. Left Beaumont 1926, Captain of School and cricket. To Oriel Ox. Golf half Blue. Lincoln's Inn. WW commanded 210 Battery Worcestershire Yeomanry. Fired first rounds into Germany. Wdd, Croix de Guerre. Post War, QC, Kt Judge Chancery Division. Ld Justice of Appeal. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ld Russell of Killowen.

**Russell Denis:** son of Hon Cyril, succeeded cousin Charles (above) as captain of School and cricket '27. To University College Ox. Stockbroker. Middlesex cricketer. WW Major RA. Sqn Ldr "Phantom" General HQ Liaison Regiment. MBE.

**Sheil William:** from Dublin, Lest Beaumont 1915 for Woolwich. WW1 in France. Adj School of Equitation. Retired '35. WW 2 CO 10 Field Regt. BEF. Dunkirk. CO 128 (Highland) Regiment N Africa. DSO. Sicily DSO. Italy. CRA 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Div Normandy, NW Europe CBE . Killed 29 April '45. Buried Reichswald Cem. Sheil Barracks Verden named in his memory.

**Silvertop Arthur;** son of George Silvertop of Minsteracres, first RC High Sheriff of Northumberland since Reformation. Mother: Caroline Weld. Left Beaumont 1890 to RN. Married sister of Admiral Robin DalGLISH (93). Cmdr HMS Defence KIA Battle of Horn Reef (Jutland) 1916.

**Silvertop David:** son of Arthur, educ Ampleforth left 1930. Commd 14/20<sup>th</sup> Kings Hussars. WW. N. Africa MC with 4<sup>th</sup> Armd Brigade. Normandy CO 3<sup>rd</sup> RTR led Operation Goodwood. He was KIA in Holland 25 September and his DSO was announced in October. A Street in Antwerp is named in his honour.

**Stevens Charles:** Known as "CP" one of three sons of Colonel Harold Stevens CMG DSO (00). Left Beaumont 1929. Medicine at Edinburgh. 1935 RAMC served Palestine, Middle East, War Office. Lt Colonel Medical Staff Planner for D Day. 1948-55 Senior Admin MO SW Medical Board. 1957 Director National Spastics Society.

**Swann John;** son of Harold and Mary Swann of George St W1. Left Beaumont in 1941 for Trinity Camb. Commd Irish Guards. France with 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. KIA nr Lille 1 September 1944. Buried at Lille Southern Cemetery.

**De Vomecourt Philippe;** father killed WW1. gf in Franco Prussian. One of three brothers at Beaumont. Left 1919. Spent 10 years in Africa. WW after the arrival of his brother Pierre the first SOE group leader in France split the Country between them and brother Jean. Arrested in 1944 organised the biggest mass escape (53) from prison in Occupied France. Over the Pyrenees in January and returned in April (price of 2 million Francs on his head). Organised sabotage etc till Liberation. Decorations; DSO, Legion d'Honneur. Croix de Guerre avec Palme, American DSC for extreme gallantry.

**Wake Nancy**; born NZ brought up in Australia. Married Frenchman living Marseille. WW joined with Tom Kenny (27) in organising escape routes over the Pyrenees. Betrayed. 1943 to England, Husband captured and executed. Joined SOE April 1944 to Auvergne as radio Operator for John Farmer (35). Helped raise resistance till liberation. Known to Gestapo as "The White Mouse". One of most decorated Servicewomen of the War including GM, Legion d'Honneur, US Medal of Freedom.