

# D. DAY

6th JUNE 1944

A Personal  
Reminiscence  
by **DOUGLAS  
REEMAN.**

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# D-DAY

6<sup>th</sup> JUNE 1944

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DOUGLAS  
REEMAN





[illegible]

**T**HE Senior Naval Officer gathered us together and informed us without fuss or emotion that the waiting was over. D-Day, hoped for and at the same time feared, was no longer a rumour or some hazy plan; it was a reality. The greatest invasion of all time was about to begin.

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# THE 'LITTLE SHIPS'

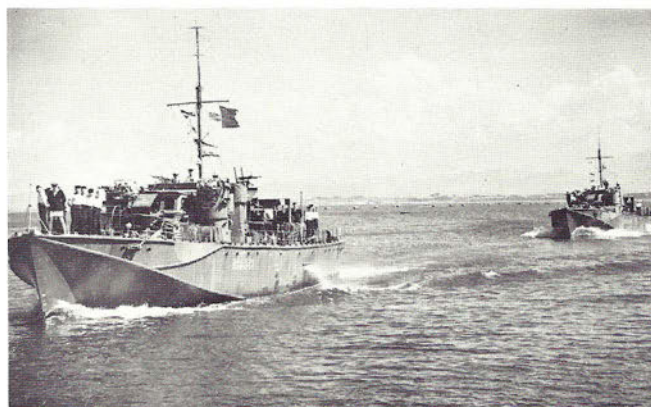
At the time of the invasion of Normandy I was serving in the navy's Light Coastal Forces. These were made up of Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs) and Motor Gunboats (MGBs), small in size but powerful and deadly. As somebody said of us, 'Faster than anything bigger, bigger than anything faster.'

They ranged in size from 70 to 115 feet long, the former with a crew of a dozen or so, the latter manned by some 30 souls who worked and lived in conditions that had not advanced much since the days of Nelson.

But because of their smallness these boats, the 'Little Ships' as they were affectionately known, had a personality and a sense of comradeship which were unique. A part of the wartime navy and yet somehow completely separate, like submariners and minesweepers. Their war was a fast one where there was little time to ponder and calculate the cost of a fight. For that reason their crews – like their boats – were very young, the vast proportion of whom were 'Hostilities Only' and, like their officers, volunteers. I remember that in our boat the oldest man aboard was the Skipper, and he was a veteran of 26. It occurs to me now that only five of our company, which totalled 30, were entitled to draw their daily issue of rum, which means they were the only ones who were aged more than 20.

Most of them had been schoolboys when the war had started, but by 1944 they had seen action in the Narrow Seas, the North Sea, and from one end of the Mediterranean to the other.

Of course there were the usual changes, as in any ship's company. A new face when a man was killed or sent ashore badly wounded. Others gone to replace less experienced hands in different boats, or to attend courses for promotion.



Two MGBs entering Algiers Harbour.

Many of the actions were fought at night, hunting along the blacked-out coasts of occupied Europe for small fast convoys in which the escorts often outnumbered the supply ships. The MTBs and MGBs were heavily armed with cannon, rapid-fire Oerlikon guns and machine guns. To say nothing of torpedoes and depth charges.

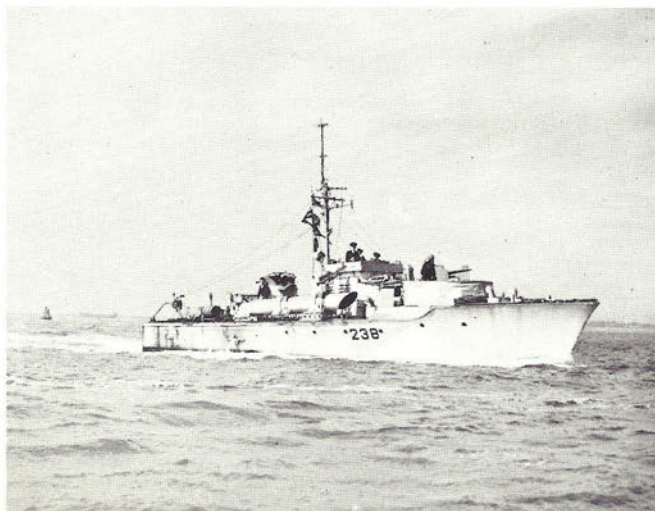
Our opposite numbers in the German navy were the fast E-Boats which were better armoured against bullets and flying splinters and extremely well built and handled.

When the flotilla returned to England from the Mediterranean most of us thought we knew all about amphibious operations and working in co-operation with the army, the 'Brown Jobs'. We had followed the Eighth Army along the North African coast which had seen so many victories and retreats in the first years of the war. We had covered the invasion of Sicily in 1943, and the thrust into Italy three months later. There had been many losses in ships and men, aircraft and tanks, but for the first time in a war which had witnessed so many setbacks, we had reached a turning point and had planted our feet on enemy soil.

In our small company there had been the usual show of reckless courage and fear. Complaints or an admission of anxiety were met with the navy's own special formula – 'You shouldn't have joined if you can't take a joke.' It usually brought a few grins.

From the bright sunshine and blue sea to the shabby drabness of England at war. Convoys on passage for the UK were still hunted relentlessly by U-Boat packs in the North Atlantic – the Killing Ground. But there was a definite air of change in the country too. Amidst the bombing and the rationing, the dread of receiving a telegram about a son or husband, there was the will to hit back, to take that one final chance and end it. Some newspapers even demanded a Second Front in Europe now. Always a simple objective for those who do not have to fight in it. But the feeling was there.

MTB of the Vosper type under way.





# CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES

In the navy we all knew it was coming. It had to. There *was* no other way, although to the vast majority of us the hows and the wheres remained a complete mystery.

The military had of course been training and exercising for many months. Co-operation between the British, the Americans, and the Canadians, as well as the smaller groups of Free-French and other occupied countries, had to be perfect, the timing exact. Many of the troops who were destined to face German firepower in Europe had never seen action before. For the planners it was an immense task.

And everyone who was to take part could be certain of only one thing. If the invasion failed, there would be no more chances, no Dunkirk this time to prevent the enemy from reversing the attack. If anybody needed reminding of this, he had only to consider the fact that the German army had been fighting us, the Americans, and the Russians on several fronts at once.

The thing which puzzled me more than anything was how were we going to keep this mammoth operation a secret?

The enormous build-up of tanks and their measured

progress south to the Channel ports and harbours; a fleet of landing-craft the like of which had never before been seen; supply and fuel trucks; anti-aircraft guns; steel for building bridges; floating pontoons to create protection for all the small craft once they had arrived at their destinations – surely some spy would see one of these things and report back?

We know now that false information was fed to the enemy, and false buildings constructed at places far away from the coast. To add to the deception the navy maintained its regular patrols and convoys. The Royal Air Force flew daily sorties over Europe to watch for unusual troop movements which might indicate that the enemy was aware of our intentions. But still nothing happened.

We got down to training with the army and their landing-craft. Our main purpose would be to throw an unbreakable barrier across the Channel and protect the crowded vessels from attack by German E-Boats and, as it was suddenly announced, their new midget submarines. It was not hard to picture what would happen to the ponderous, barely manageable landing-craft if either of those weapons was able to get amongst them.

Sherman tanks on parade at 'Invasion City'.







**Cromwell tanks and vehicles pass along a French road after the landing. Crusader AA and Stuarts.**

As I said, we thought we knew all about manoeuvres with the army. How wrong we were, and as we learned about loading troops into any available vessel if so demanded, or worked ashore with toughened commando units, we realized, I suppose for the first time, what lay ahead.

The supervision was rigid, probably the hardest thing to accept, and nothing was left to chance. At regular intervals we returned to our base on the east coast. Again, nothing must betray the fact that we were being employed anywhere but on our regular station.

CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES the posters shouted. We no longer needed reminding.

Then our training ceased. Most of us had a terrible sense of anti-climax. We were so keyed up for the actual operation, it was like getting a pat on the head and being sent home. The vast array of army units seemed to vanish into their holes, as if the whole thing had been cancelled after all.

It was difficult to understand and to get back into our other routine. An air of gloom and apprehension seemed to pervade the whole boat. But still we waited.

You could sense the change without having to be told. Trouble with the shore patrols when the libertymen came to blows in the local pubs, quite often caused by some indiscreet drinker remarking on the Jacks having too much spare time, what about the Second

Front? It did not help much.

It was getting dangerous. No man can be expected to fight a fast-moving enemy, possibly in pitch darkness at ranges sometimes less than those at Trafalgar, if his mind is elsewhere. There were only two sorts of sailor in E-Boat Alley, the quick and the dead.

The weather was mostly bad. Even as June came to the Channel it was grey, rough and misty. More like November than early summer.

I remember it well. I had been home on leave to see my parents for a couple of days. My father asked me what we were all doing. I answered vaguely that we might be on some sort of manoeuvres. That did not tell him anything important, but it stopped my mother from worrying too much. Looking back I suppose it was very hard for her with her only two sons away, one at sea the other in the air.

That was on the Saturday. Not long after returning to the base I knew something was going to happen. I said as much to the Skipper. He just shrugged and remarked, 'About bloody time.'

We were called unexpectedly to see the Senior Officer, a lieutenant-commander who had once been a solicitor. I cannot remember a word he said, except something about the need for total secrecy.

Manoeuvres, I had told my father. *Bloody hell*. It was no longer a rumour, it was not next week, it was tomorrow.



# THE REAL THING

We scrambled to get ready for sea and tried to cope with the sudden arrival of intelligence packs and sealed charts. The mass of information seemed endless and with little time to study it. Destinations, grouping zones, depths and distances, where the enemy coastal defences were – they had certainly done their homework.

It was Normandy, come hell or high water. I tried to discover how I felt about it.

Excitement, anxiety, fear – it was all and none of those things. I was 19 and did not want to die after getting that far; too many I had known had fallen along the way. Equally I knew I could not stand the waiting and the uncertainty all over again.

War changes a lot of things in a young man. I found that I could not decide whether to write a 'last letter' to my parents just in case the worst should happen. In the end I decided against it. Maybe I was afraid of displaying too much emotion which in the past years I had had to learn to conceal. I consoled myself with the sailor's belief that someone would foul things up anyway, and tonight we would be back in harbour.

The flotilla put to sea in a stiff, biting wind and an endless array of broken whitecaps.

It was then the Skipper told our small company that this was not another exercise. It was on.

I watched their expressions, young faces I had come to know so well. They seemed to take it better than I had, or so it appeared. There was some disbelief and anxiety, but that was normal enough before anything dicey.

I looked at the Skipper who seemed so much older and more experienced than the rest of us. He appeared to hesitate as he outlined briefly what might be expected of us. Perhaps, like me, he was moved by the occasion and wanted to find the right words. Something stirring, like *England Expects*.

Beyond him two rusty freighters escorted by an equally battered corvette headed towards the harbour we had just left. One was trying to take in her barrage balloon, which they sometimes flew in case of sudden air attacks. It looked ridiculous as it dived about like a fat whale and several of the lads laughed.

The Skipper turned. 'Dismiss them. They'll do, I think.'

Somehow those brief words were just as inspiring as any signal.

We made heavy going of it as we thrust out into open water. We were loaded down with full tanks and extra ammunition, and the steep waves caused the slender hull to lift and plunge so much that I thought I was going to throw up.

The Skipper left the bridge once the flotilla had formed up to the SO's satisfaction, and we went through all the usual drills before darkness closed in again.

No room for errors. We would be meeting up with other

units, some completely foreign to the area. It only needed a sloppy challenge or acknowledgement, or a trigger-happy gunnery officer, and all hell would break loose.

I thought of those hundreds of ships leaving their various hiding-places, harbours and estuaries, little-used inlets, anywhere which could conceal a vessel until she was needed to move. How would it look to a pilot in one of the patrolling Sunderlands or Catalinas, I wondered?

I pictured the staff officers, mechanics, engineers, and above all the many instructors as they stared after their charges.

Off you go, boys. We've done our part. Now it's up to you.

And all the others who had rarely left their operations rooms and signal stations since the dream had started to form into deed. The weather men, the perky Wrens, and the dockyard maties. A mixed collection which had been welded into a single force.

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**Sherman tanks and equipment stowed aboard Tank Landing Craft.**





# ENTERING THE DANGER ZONE

Throughout the slow passage, signals were received about various formations and last-minute changes.

The gun muzzles swung across the grey clouds, the Oerlikons ready to rip into action if a bomber screamed through the haze and drifting spray. And still nothing happened.

Into the Channel and west along the coast, the sea merging with the sky as dusk began to close in. Past the Isle of Wight, with the Needles watching us like pale spectres as we growled abeam.

One signal reported that the attack was to be delayed; some of the landing-craft had been rerouted back to shelter because of the weather. If the Skipper was worried he did not show it.

We overtook two elderly trawlers, painted grey and classified for the duration as minesweepers. Long thin funnels, and low-lying greasy smoke. Old-timers both of them, and they rocked in the swell as our tight line ploughed past them. An old RNR two-ringer gave us a wave and our lads waved back.

The Skipper appeared on the swaying bridge. 'It's on again. Tuesday morning.' He bit hard on his unlit pipe. 'I must be getting past it.' We all laughed, and the tension began to steal away like mist.

It was like heading into a void. No stars, nothing, while we continued westward to the first rendezvous.

We changed course yet again, tested the guns, and timed the ammunition supply.

When the third hand came up to relieve me there was a strong smell, Pusser's ki, that glutinous cocoa beloved by sailors. I had been shivering badly. Cold and some fear as to how I would behave. When I looked at my watch it was well past midnight. So we would attack *tomorrow*.

The word seemed to stick in my mind. Tomorrow. But the scalding hot ki did much to help. It usually did. This time it was so thick you could almost stand a spoon in it, and there was a deeper taste. Rum. Somebody's illegally hoarded tots, but it was marvellous.

The signalman grinned through the darkness. 'Just the job, eh, sir?'

I went below and tried to rest, but only when dawn came up did I feel I could sleep. By then it was too late.

Later in the day we sighted the first labouring formation of landing ships, with ranks of little landing-craft tossing about like corks on either beam.

I felt a lump in my throat. They looked so frail, so ugly, and yet everything depended on them and their youthful commanders. They were the slowest vessels afloat, and we had to reduce speed to keep station on them.

There were the usual moans. 'Roll on my bloody twelve!' While from our doughty coxswain, 'Once I get ashore after this you'll not get me to sea again in ten million bloody years!' Except he did not say 'bloody'.

But the tension seemed to have gone altogether. Our Scouse gunlayer was whistling 'Maggie May' while he crawled around his two-pounder, too engrossed even to look at the lengthening ranks of landing-craft. He had come to us as a hard case, and had been more in the detention barracks than out. But in Coastal Forces he had found his proper place in things. Ashore he was as bad as ever, but once at sea you never had to look for him or to check his work. In a weak moment he had once spoken about his upbringing in Liverpool, his home which made all the other slums seem good places to live. We would need his skill and his aim tomorrow, I thought.

A destroyer boiled past, her loud-hailer rasping out instructions to the various landing-craft. They did not really need to be told to keep proper distance apart and on the right bearing, but when darkness found them once again it would make station-keeping an even worse nightmare.

We looked around for other warships but they did not seem much in evidence. With their superior speed they would soon overhaul this strange armada. But it would have been reassuring to see a few of the big fellows before night fell.

It was hard not to count the hours, difficult to concentrate on the other ships' blurred outlines, their giveaway bow-waves, and the spray which burst above their blunt stems.

No more signals. No recall. Surely to God the Germans *must* know what we're up to?

On and on, and another slight change of course. There were several angry cries of alarm as a torch splashed light on the superstructure of one of the bigger landing-ships. It vanished almost immediately, and doubtlessly somebody had been torn off a strip. But I felt the shock of it around me, as if everyone expected swift attack from the darkness.

It was unnerving to think of all those vessels and all the thousands of men who were being carried towards the enemy coast. How much worse it must be for the soldiers. Waiting, waiting, their imaginations running riot, as mine was.

I felt the deck gratings bounce under my boots and heard the sullen bang of an exploding mine. God, it sounded close. Perhaps it was one of those poor little minesweepers that had run across the edge of a field, or had picked up a drifter.

They were the real heroes. It was a bad risk at any time, but to put out sweeps in pitch darkness to clear a passage for this giant armada was tempting death. There were more violent bangs, and I was aware that the watchkeepers were being joined by the others who had been snatching a break below.



No need for a call to arms or a bugle to rouse them. We were one, like a family.

The Skipper came up from the tiny chart-room, rubbing his eyes and patting his pockets as he always did. To make certain he had everything he needed. Perhaps to reassure himself.

He showed his teeth in the darkness. 'Jerry must be stone deaf.'

A voicepipe crackled and the Skipper said quietly, 'We are now entering the danger zone.'

The signalman chuckled. 'Never been out of it meself, sir.'

I raised my glasses to study the labouring ships abeam. Big shapeless lumps still without identity in the protective darkness. It was getting me down. I heard someone murmuring softly 'Oh God, oh God,' over and over. It was like being doused with icy water when I realized it was me. That did more to steady me than anything.

Dawn soon. If only the sickening motion would stop. If only. . . .



**Invasion craft seen off the French coast.**





# HOIST BATTLE ENSIGNS

The Skipper said, 'Go round the boat, Number One. Just to keep up their spirits.' He studied me through the darkness, his cap shining with spray. 'Okay?'

I grinned. 'As I'll ever be, sir.'

How close the sea was as I groped my way aft, licking across the deck and dropping away again as the hull swayed over.

I knew them all by name, and a lot more beside. Anonymous shapes with pale blobs for faces. Strapped to their guns, or crouching like athletes waiting for the starter's pistol, ready to slam in fresh magazines or belts of ammunition. No matter what was happening around them. *No matter what.*

The deck rumbled and quivered and the sour stench of fuel swirled up from the vents to make my stomach contract again. Below my sea-boots the small team of artificers and motor mechanics would hear and see nothing of the danger outside their frail mahogany protection.

*'Aircraft!'*

But for once it was not a sneak raider tearing down to investigate the array of bow-waves and white wakes. Even as I bustled back to our squat bridge I heard them droning overhead. Exactly on time, precisely as described in the secret orders. We all looked up but saw nothing. The air seemed to cringe to the mounting roar of engines. There must have been hundreds and hundreds of them.

It seemed to take no time at all for the bombers to reach their first objectives. You could faintly see the blur of land beneath the bombardment while the clouds overhead danced and reared up in vivid red and orange flashes.

The sky was not merely lit by the flashes. It really was getting brighter. When I peered abeam I saw the nearest landing-ships, suddenly bright and vulnerable as the early light found them. More bombs muttered across the water, and an aircraft fell briefly across the scarlet glow to starboard. Like a dying bird, not real somehow.

The Skipper was speaking with the coxswain. He said suddenly, 'Hoist Battle Ensigns!'

I had never seen it done before. With our tiny mast, it was hard to carry out anyway. But eventually the crisp White Ensigns were streaming from either yard above the bridge. We kept them for special occasions. Sea burials, important visitors, and even more rarely for Sundays in harbour. They looked so clean and somehow beautiful that I wanted to cheer. I think we all did.

The coxswain asked to be relieved from the wheel, and some wag called from the gloom, 'Gone to get yer brown trousers, Swain?' He ignored it and returned a few moments later wearing his best shore-going reefer, gold badges and everything. He glanced up at the ensigns and said, 'Might as well do it proper.' He sounded defiant.

The Skipper nodded but said nothing. He and the coxswain had been together from way back. If ever a boat had two backbones, we surely did.

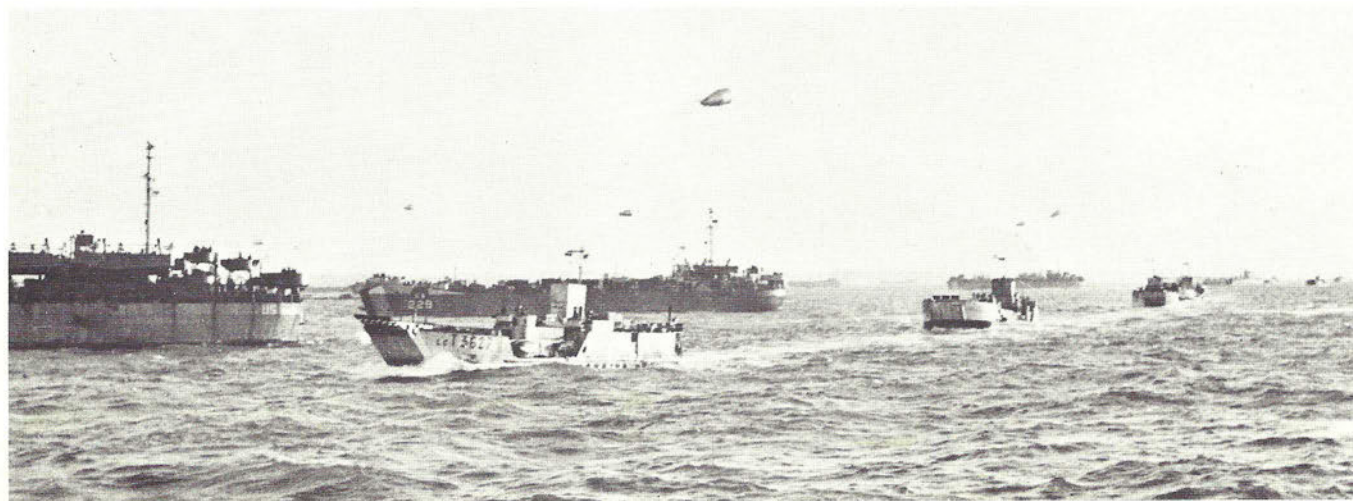
It was getting lighter by the minute, the lines of ships stretching out abeam and ahead like a Roman phalanx on the advance.

Someone gave a cheer, and we saw the first of the heavy warships sweeping up from astern. The real navy. From our low hull the cruisers looked enormous with their streaming battle flags and their turrets already swinging towards the land, high-angled and ready to fire.

On one landing-craft the soldiers were standing on their tanks to cheer and wave their black berets while the ships surged past. But their voices were lost in the roar of fans as the ships worked up to full speed, with the destroyers sweeping on either side to protect them.

It was infectious. We all waved and shouted into the din, and whereas some of us had been afraid we would be forced into the lead, we were now fearful of being left behind.

**Invasion craft seen off the French coast.**





# 'OPEN FIRE'

Tall waterspouts shot towards the sky and then drifted down again very slowly.

The Germans were awake now all right. But the fall of shells seemed ineffectual and without menace. That would not last long. The cruisers opened fire, the salvoes tearing towards the shore. It was then that I saw it for the first time. The coast of France. It stretched away on either bow, an unbroken purple shadow. There were flashes along it now, and soon the shells came down amongst and between the slow-moving columns thick and fast. Two MLs rocked about in the middle of the bursting waterspouts, as they signalled each column to its proper line of approach.

God, it was close, I thought. The land looked less than a mile or so away. And even though I knew this was a natural illusion after hours of station-keeping in complete darkness, I was surprised that we were so near.

The bombardment mounted by the second so that even the explosions ashore were lost in the crash and thunder of heavy naval gunfire. There were even battleships joining in with their 16- and 15-inch guns. Some were near the American sector, firing far inland beyond the advancing ships; others lay out of sight below the horizon far astern of us, hurling their salvoes right over us with savage intensity.

You could see the ripple of flashes along the grey horizon, and had to force yourself not to duck as the great shells tore overhead with the sound of tearing canvas. The shells were dropping on the enemy emplacements and supporting roads from each battleship at the rate of about ten tons a minute.

It made thought impossible, and when we shouted to each other our voices sounded strange, like divers talking under water. And all the while the lines of landing-ships sailed on, some breaking away in smaller formations to head for their allotted beaches. Shellbursts hurled towering columns of water all around them. It was heart-stopping to see them moving steadily through the smoke and falling spray. Nothing, it seemed, could stop them.

Lines of red and green tracer ripped across the water, and were answered immediately by the destroyers and gunboats.

It was a sight nobody could ever forget. The landing-vessels, the following flotillas of barges and towed pontoons with grotesque bridges aboard like giant Meccano sets. Battleships, cruisers, destroyers and corvettes, tugs and trawlers.

There was a sigh as one of the smaller landing-craft came to a dead stop with smoke pouring from her box-like hull as she began to heel over. The soldiers were swarming up and away from the sea, and I saw a motor-launch speeding towards her to take them off before they were flung into the water. Weighted down with their weapons and ammunition, steel helmets and heavy boots, they



**Somewhere off the nazi-held French coastline, the British Battleship HMS RODNEY pounds Hitler's defences with volley after volley of 16-inch shells.**

would not stand much of a chance. Another, and then another of them was hit, vivid blobs of tracer licking out from the shore, the shells shrieking low over the surface in straight, lethal lines. Flat trajectory cannon-fire, probably from some anti-tank guns close to the shore.

There was a single explosion on the far side of the nearest column and tongues of flame made the grey steel glow like burnished copper. Another big shell had found its mark.

But the bombardment grew heavier, if that were possible, and faintly above it we heard a new sound, a staccato roar as the tanks aboard the nearest landing-ship came to life. God help the leaders if they failed to start. Those behind them would push them into the sea when the ramps were lowered.

Our hull gave a lurch and when I clambered from the bridge and peered over the side I saw a great tear along the planking, the mahogany splinters sticking out like dark red quills.

Nothing too dangerous. She could take that and a lot more.

The Skipper had located a German pillbox, a low hump beyond some jagged anti-tank defences.

*'Open fire!'*

The two-pounder and the one Oerlikon which would bear threw their weight into the fight, their harsher rattle puny against the might of our heavy consorts.

Other ships had turned their attention to the enemy's tracer and the shoreline became lost or hazy in the smoke.

The leading craft were almost up to the beach. But there were several drifting aimlessly to mark their





Scene on the beach after the landing.

wounds, some ablaze, others on their beam-ends with no sign of life aboard.

And yet in the midst of all that some madman was playing his bagpipes and I saw one of the tank commanders give a thumbs-up to the infantry who were crouching invisibly beside the armoured vehicles.

The first landing-craft hit the beach. I found I could barely breathe as the ramp crashed down and after the merest hesitation the leading tank rumbled on to the land.

Then there were others, huddled together, or so it seemed as enemy fire raked the beach and some of the running, khaki figures fell and stayed down. One landing-craft swerved and bounced against its consort as the skipper attempted to avoid the wireless aerial of a tank which had plunged into deep water. The craft must have got caught on an underwater obstruction or had been too eager to lower the ramp and get out of the way so that others could follow.

But all along the beach the vehicles were rolling ashore. Some were hit, or crawled like blinded beasts with a track shot away. And with them the infantry, the PBI without whom no weapons on earth could manage.

Like many of the little warships we held station on the army's flank. Firing at anything which moved, until our minds were blank to everything else, and our guns jammed from overheating.

It was like a great tidal wave. Nothing could stop it as the army with infantry and sappers, stretcher-bearers and mine-detectors charged after the tanks. There was no recognition of time. It just went on and on, as if the vast panorama of battle was too great to ignore.

We went alongside a landing-craft which was backing away from the beach. She needed all the help we could offer as she zig-zagged amongst the wrecked vessels and sunken vehicles. I peered into her hull and realized that the first of the wounded were being taken off to a hospital ship somewhere back there in the drifting smoke.

How young they looked. Without their helmets, and their faces pinched with pain and shock, they were just boys again.

I never thought, at that moment, that I should be like one of them in another six days, and on my way home.

The beach itself which we had sighted at first light that morning was a scene of utter chaos and devastation. A few figures picked their way down towards the sea, first-aid parties, walking wounded, like remnants from the advancing tanks and infantry which had already vanished inland, their progress marked by more explosions and a drifting pall of smoke.

Wrecked tanks and broken steel girders which had been meant to stop their movement from the beach, shell-cases and discarded weapons. It was an aftermath of courage itself. I was reminded of the pictures I had seen of that other war thirty years earlier.

And there lay the dead where they had fallen, some by the water's edge, others higher up in attitudes of abandonment.

Maybe elsewhere along that bleak Normandy coast there was a shambles or a stalemate. But we had come through that terrible day. We were the victors.

In war you take each day and every hour as a bonus. D-Day was over and we had survived.



# OPERATION NEPTUNE-ALLIED SHIPPING

## BRITISH Battleships

RAMILLIES  
RODNEY  
WARSPITE

## Cruisers

AJAX  
ARETHUSA  
ARGONAUT  
BELFAST  
BELLONA  
BLACK PRINCE  
DANAE  
DIADEM  
EMERALD  
ENTERPRISE  
FROBISHER  
GLASGOW  
HAWKINS  
MAURITIUS  
ORION  
SCYLLA  
SIRIUS

## Monitors

EREBUS  
ROBERTS

## HQ Ships

BULOLO  
HILARY  
LARGS

## Destroyers

ALGONQUIN  
ASHANTI  
BEAGLE  
BLANKNEY  
BLEASDALE  
BRISSENDEN  
CAMPBELL  
CATTISTOCK  
COTSWOLD  
COTTESMORE  
DUFF  
EGLINTON  
FAULKNER  
FURY  
GRENVILLE  
HAIDA  
HAMBLEDON  
HOTHAM  
HURON  
IMPULSIVE  
ISIS  
JERVIS  
KELVIN  
KEMPENFELT  
MELBREAK  
MIDDLETON  
OBEDIENT  
OFFA  
ONSLAUGHT  
ONSLow  
OPPORTUNE  
ORIBI  
ORWELL

PYCHLEY  
SAUMAREZ  
SAVAGE  
SCORPION  
SCOURGE  
SERAPIS  
SIOUX  
STEVENSTONE  
SWIFT  
TALYBONT  
TANATSIDE  
TARTAR  
ULSTER  
ULYSSES  
UNDAUNTED  
UNDINE  
URANIA  
URCHIN  
URSA  
VENUS  
VERSATILE  
VERULAM  
VESPER  
VIDETTE  
VIGILANT  
VIMY  
VIRAGO  
VIVACIOUS  
VOLUNTEER  
WENSLEYDALE  
WESTCOTT  
WRESTLER

## Frigates

CHELMER  
HALSTED  
HOLMES  
RETALICK  
RIOU  
ROWLEY  
STAYNER  
THORNBOROUGH  
TORRINGTON  
TROLLOPE  
NITH

## Corvettes

ALBERNI  
ARMERIA  
AZALEA  
CAMPANULA  
CLARKIA  
CLEMATIS  
CLOVER  
GODETIA  
KITCHENER  
LAVENDER  
MIGNONETTE  
MIMICO  
NARCISSUS  
OXLIP  
PENNYWORT  
PETUNIA  
PINK

## Sloops

HIND

MAGPIE  
REDPOLE  
STORK

## Asdic Trawlers

BOMBARDIER  
BRESSAY  
COLL  
DAMSAY  
FIARAY  
FLINT  
FOULNESS  
FUSILLIER  
GAIRSAY  
GATESHEAD  
GRENADIER  
HUGH WALPOLE  
LANCER  
LINDISFARNE  
LORD AUSTIN  
NORTHERN FOAM  
NORTHERN GEM  
NORTHERN GIFT  
NORTHERN PRIDE  
NORTHERN REWARD  
NORTHERN SKY  
NORTHERN SPRAY  
NORTHERN SUN  
NORTHERN WAVE  
OLVINA  
SAPPER  
SKYE  
TEXADA  
VELETA  
VICTRIX

## Fleet Minesweepers

ARDROSSAN  
BANGOR  
BEAUMARIS  
BLACKPOOL  
BLAIRMORE  
BOOTLE  
BOSTON  
BRIDLINGTON  
BRIDPORT  
BRITOMART  
CARAQUET  
CATHERINE  
CATO  
COCKATRICE  
COWICHAN  
DORNOCK  
DUNBAR  
EASTBOURNE  
ELGIN  
FANCY  
FORT WILLIAM  
FORT YORK  
FRASERBURGH  
FRIENDSHIP  
GAZELLE  
GEORGIAN  
GLEANER  
GORGON  
GOZO  
GRECIAN

GUYSBOROUGH  
HALCYON  
HARRIER  
HOUND  
HUSSAR  
HYDRA  
ILFRACOMBE  
JASON  
KELLET  
KENORA  
LARNE  
LENNOX  
LIGHTFOOT  
LLANDUDNO  
LOYALTY  
LYDD  
LYME REGIS  
MALPEQUE  
MELITA  
MILLTOWN  
MINAS  
ONYX  
ORESTES  
PANGBOURNE  
PARRSBORO  
PELORUS  
PERSIAN  
PICKLE  
PINCHER  
PIQUE  
PLUCKY  
POOLE  
POSTILLION  
QUALICUM  
RATTLESNAKE  
READY  
RECRUIT  
RIFLEMAN  
ROMNEY  
ROSS  
RYE  
SALAMANDER  
SALTASH  
SEAGULL  
SEAHAM  
SELKIRK  
SHIPPIGAN  
SIDMOUTH  
SPEEDWELL  
STEADFAST  
SUTTON  
TADOUSSAC  
TENBY  
VESTAL  
WASAGA  
WEDGEPORT  
WHITEHAVEN  
WORTHING

## U.S.A. Battleships

ARKANAS  
NEVADA  
TEXAS

## Cruisers

AUGUSTA  
QUINCY  
TUSCALOOSA

## Destroyers

BALDWIN  
BARTON  
BUTLER  
CARNICK  
CHERARDI  
CORY  
DOYLE  
ELLYSON  
ENDICOTT  
FITCH  
FORREST  
FRANKFORD  
GLENNON  
HAMBLETON  
HARDING  
HERNDON  
HOBSON  
JEFFERS  
LAFFEY  
MCCOOK  
MEREDITH  
MURPHY  
NELSON  
O'BRIEN  
PLUNKETT  
RODMAN  
SATTERLEE  
SHUBRICK  
THOMPSON  
WALKER

## HQ Ships

ANCON  
BAYFIELD

## Frigates

BORUM  
MALOY

## Patrol Craft

484	617	1233
552	618	1252
564	619	1261
565	1176	1262
567	1225	1263
568	1232	

## Minesweepers

AUK  
BROADBILL  
CHICKADEE  
NUTHATCH  
PHEASANT  
STAFF  
SWIFT  
THREAT  
TIDE

## FRENCH Cruisers

GEORGES LEYGUES  
MONTCALM

## Destroyer

LA COMBATTANTE

## Corvettes

ACONIT  
RENONCULE

## Frigates

LA DECOUVERTE  
L'AVENTURE  
LA SURPRISE  
L'ESCARAMOUCHE

## POLISH Cruiser

DRAGON

## Destroyers

KRAKOWIAK  
SALZAK

## NORWEGIAN Destroyers

GLAISDALE  
STORD  
SVENNER

## GREEK Corvettes

KRIEZIS  
TOMPAZIS

## NETHERLANDS Sloops

FLORES  
SOEMBA

## Other vessels

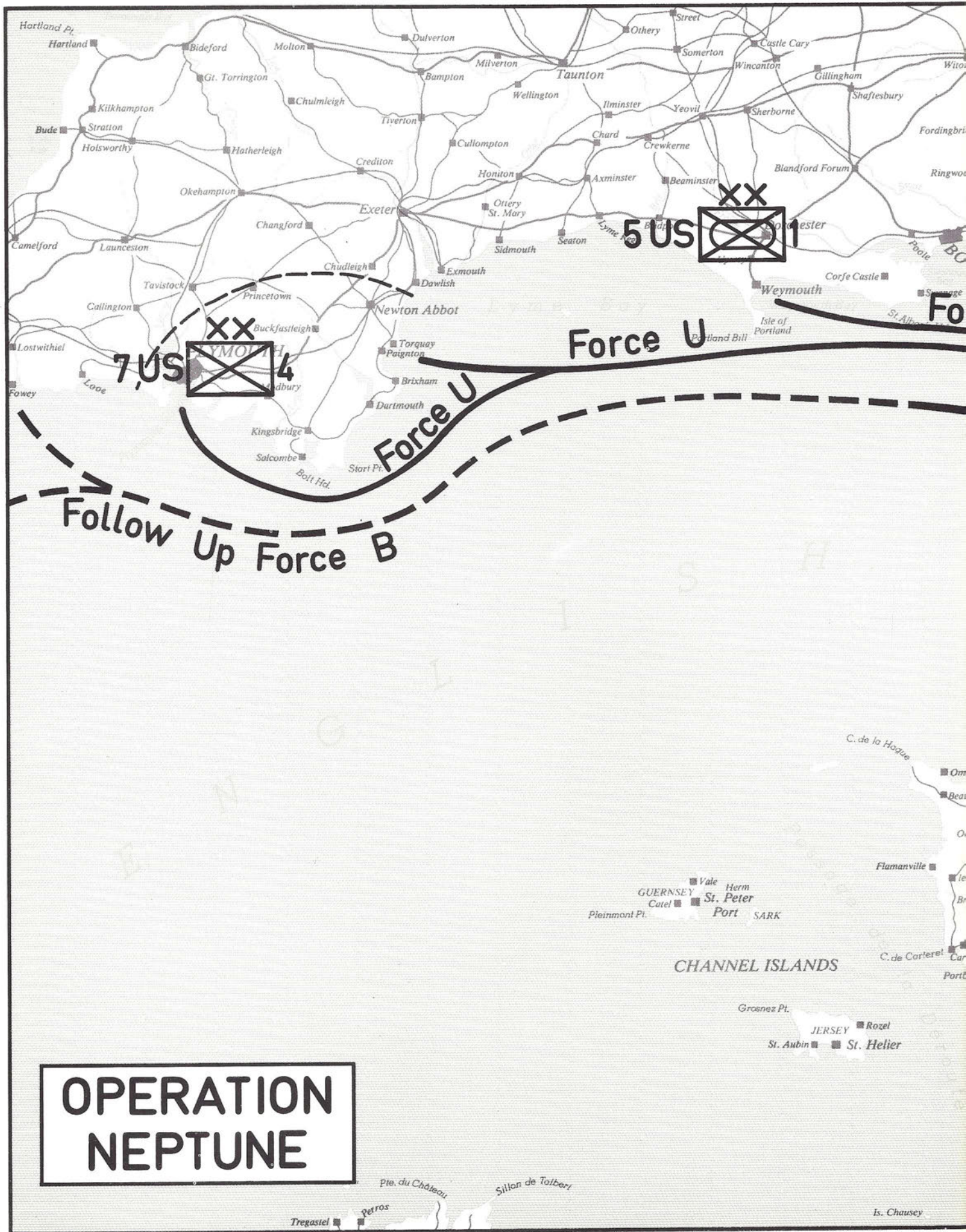
4,126 Landing Ships and Craft; 736 Ancillary Ships and Craft; 864 Merchant Ships.

ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE  
Royal Air Force, Second Tactical Air Force  
Royal Air Force, Air Defence of Great Britain  
Royal Air Force, Airborne and Transport Forces  
United States Ninth Air Force

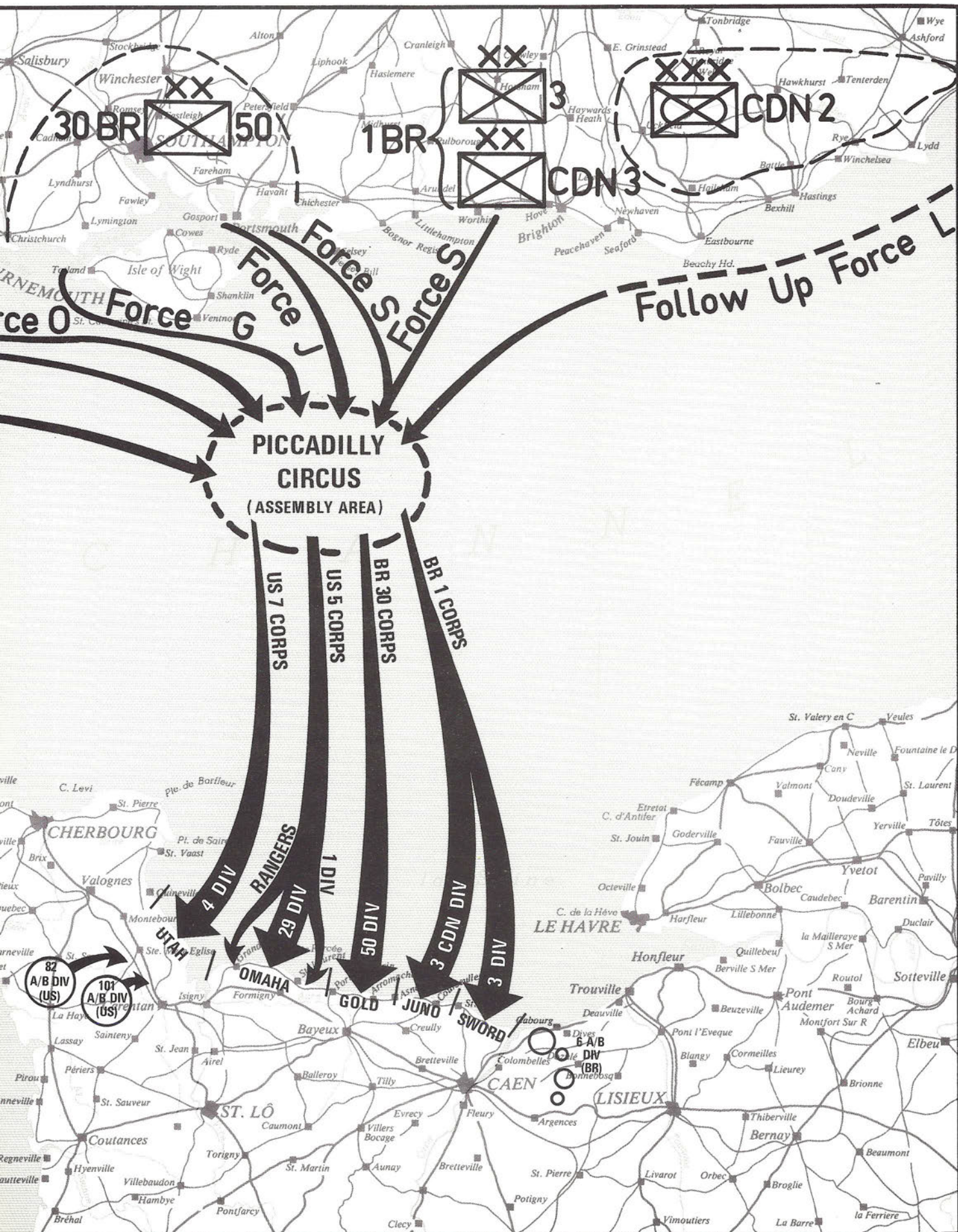
ALLIED STRATEGIC AIR FORCE  
Royal Air Force, Bomber Command  
United States Eighth Air Force

ROYAL AIR FORCE COASTAL COMMAND











## **AFTERMATH OF BATTLE**

HERE DEAD LIE WE BECAUSE WE DID NOT CHOOSE,  
TO LIVE AND SHAME THE LAND FROM WHICH WE SPRUNG,  
LIFE TO BE SURE IS NOTHING MUCH TO LOSE,  
BUT YOUNG MEN THINK IT IS, AND WE WERE YOUNG.

The above was engraved on a memorial in the Old Naval  
Cemetery at Vis in the Adriatic in 1944.  
A different area from Normandy, but the sentiment is  
the same.



## **POSTSCRIPT**

As the Allied forces moved inland, the invasion fleet continued in support, transferring supplies and equipment, bombarding enemy positions and evacuating the wounded.

On 12 June, whilst working close inshore, the 'little ship' came under fire from an enemy unit which had penetrated the Allies' 'Ring of Steel'. To make matters worse, the tide had dropped and the ship became entangled on an underwater obstruction. The MTB took a direct hit amidships. Douglas Reeman was hit by splinters and seriously injured in both legs. Amidst the smoke, flames and shouting he remembers vividly the feelings of pain and despair as he was dragged from the sea and up the rain-soaked beach by bloodstained army medics. After emergency treatment, and drugged against the pain, he was put aboard a landing-craft for the passage home.

Douglas spent the next few weeks in hospital, then returned to the war. This time he went to Icelandic waters on anti-submarine patrol. The MTBs then re-grouped in the English Channel and 'were in at the kill' during the last weeks of the war.

When the guns fell silent for the first time in six years, Douglas was in Kiel Harbour. There were a lot of faces missing who should have been there on that bright day in May 1945. Men 'killed in action', who paid the supreme price of victory; men like Douglas, seriously injured, who remembered the battle as if it were yesterday; and men unscathed who could only say 'Thank God, I survived!' For them and for all the men and women who fought and won World

War II, the spirit of D-Day, 6 June 1944, must always be kept alive.



**If this invasion failed, there would be no more chances. No Dunkirk, no second attempt, no Allied victory. It was an operation involving millions of men and thousands of pieces of equipment from every sector of the Allied armed forces, and it was planned with a fanatical precision matched only by its secrecy. No matter what happened, when it was over the world would never be the same...**

**THE D-DAY INVASION**

**Douglas Reeman was there. Now he is the undisputed master of the modern sea story, but then he was a young naval officer – and he knew, as his comrades knew, that death was more certain than triumph. In this uniquely personal book, he vividly recreates not only the events of that momentous day but the thoughts and feelings of the men who made it work.**

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