

THE

D-DAY LANDINGS

HISTORY, TIMELINE AND EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS



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In 1939, the Second World War broke out between the Axis countries led by German Chancellor Adolf Hitler and the Allied nations.

In 1944, France had already been occupied for four years by Nazi Germany. From 1942 onwards, the German Todt labour organisation began building the Atlantic Wall: a coastal defensive system stretching from Norway to Spain. Heavy artillery batteries and anti-aircraft defences were established along the coastline and especially around the ports, to prevent any landing. In 1943, Hitler asked Field Marshal Rommel to inspect this defensive wall from the Netherlands down to the Loire. Rommel felt that the defences were insufficient and ordered that they be reinforced. Anti-tank and antisubmarine obstacles, mines and barbed wire were installed directly on the beach at the high tide level with the goal of destroying landing barges before their men and vehicles had had a chance to disembark.

At the same time, the Allied countries were also drawing up their plans for the liberation of Europe. In January 1943 during the Casablanca conference, Roosevelt and Churchill took the decision to organise landings in France to free Europe from Nazi rule. In December, Gen. Eisenhower took command of the operation which had been codenamed "Overlord". He was assisted by General Montgomery, heading the land troops.

The Allies finally chose Normandy for this operation. Its coast was sufficiently close to England but not as close as the Nord-Pas-De-Calais where the Germans were expecting any landing to take place. This would give the Allies the benefit of surprise. The date and time of landings were chosen based on a number of factors:

The traps and obstacles installed by Rommel were in anticipation of an attack at high tide. The landing should therefore take place in between tides, so that the troops could be offloaded in front of these obstacles.

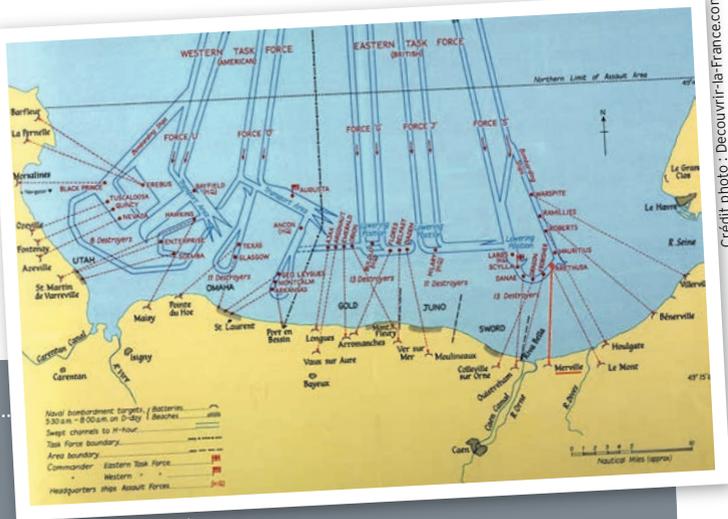
Before the landing on the beaches, airborne troops had the task of destroying German defences and preventing any possible counter-attacks. This operation should ideally take place on the night of a full moon.

The Navy were to bombard the German defences before the troops began their landing, 45 minutes before "H-Hour". The dawn would be the best time to land in order to keep visibility to a minimum while nevertheless benefiting from at least some light to be able to get an aim on the enemy.

All of these conditions were met between June 5th and 7th 1944. The landings had initially been planned for June 5th, 1944. However, the weather was so bad on that day that the landings were postponed until the following day.

THE SECTORS

The Normandy coastline was split up into several landing grounds divided between the American, British and Canadian troops.



DID YOU KNOW ?

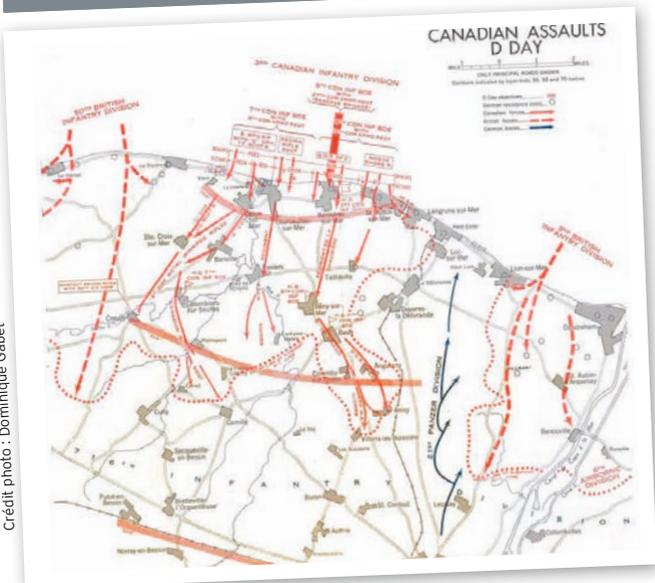
For the British sector, General Montgomery chose the names of fish: Goldfish, Swordfish and the name originally picked for Juno Beach was Jelly Beach. This name was not accepted by the Canadian officers and particularly by wing commander Michael Dawney who thought it inappropriate that families could be informed that their son had been killed on "Jellyfish Beach". He then proposed using a shortened version of his name of his wife Julian Mary Dawney: Juno.

For the sub-sectors, "Mike", "Nan" and "Roger" were chosen. These were derived from the "Joint Army Navy Phonetic Alphabet (JAN)". This alphabet was introduced in 1941 by the Armed Forces of the United States. Before its creation, each branch of the Army used its own alphabet which sometimes lead to misunderstandings. The JAN would be used by all English-speaking troops from 1943 to 1956, the year in which the official NATO alphabet was introduced.

THE JUNO BEACH SECTOR

The Canadian sector stretched for 7 km from Saint-Aubin to Graye (the Western mouth of the Seulles).

It was the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division commanded by General Keller which landed on Juno Beach supported by tanks from the 2nd



Canadian Armoured Brigade. The assault took the form of a triangle with the base forming the spearhead with Bernières in the centre, Courseulles on the right-hand side and Saint-Aubin on the left-hand side.

In the Coeur de Nacre area, the landings took place at Bernières and at Saint-Aubin. Both districts were stormed and liberated by regiments of the Canadian 8th Brigade and 3rd Infantry Division.

Crédit photo : Coeur de Nacre



LE SAVIEZ-VOUS ?

On June 4, 1944, Luc-sur-Mer was not included among the landing grounds. However, it was the first to see British troops landing on its beach. Back in 1941, an initial landing had been organised, known as Operation Chopper. This commando raid carried out on September 28th, 1941 by Lt Gordon Hemming was intended to test the German defences, to gather strategic information for the future choice of landing beaches and possibly to bring back German prisoners for interrogation.

The commando raid was divided into two parts: one part in Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, the other in Courseulles-sur-Mer. However, navigation errors resulted in the soldiers landing on a beach further to the east, that of Luc. On the night of September 28th, the 22 men of the commando group landed on the beach in Luc at 1:30 AM. One group moved quickly to

capture at least one German prisoner while a second group remained on the beach to protect it. They were spotted on arrival and after coming under machine-gun fire were forced to quickly re-board their landing craft. When they left, two men were missing, cut down by German fire. They would never see England again.

“The Germans told us that the noises during the night came from a fight between German troops, almost certainly to avoid giving hope and encouragement to the French” (Mr Flambard). The two British soldiers who died during the operation are buried in the church cemetery. In 1994, the ashes of Lt Gordon Hemming were laid at their side at his request. A square in the village is named after him and a monument was erected on the beach to bear witness to the courage of these brave troops.

A TOWN-BY-TOWN GUIDE TO THE LIBERATION IN THE CŒUR DE NACRE AREA

JUNE 6 THE LANDINGS ALONG THE COAST

BERNIÈRES-SUR-MER

Mr Regnauld, a resident of Bernières, was 19 years old in 1944. He had been requisitioned by the STO (the compulsory labour organisation) to work in the drinking water section. Before June 6th, Mr Regnauld had a feeling that something was about to happen:

« We had suspected for some time that a landing was imminent as reconnaissance aircraft often flew overhead. »

On the morning of June 5th, any suspicions the young man may have had that something was being prepared were quickly confirmed:

« I was heading up to the batteries in the area known as "Tombette" where I was delivering water by horse, travelling along Route de Bény. I heard a faraway droning noise behind me but didn't pay much attention to it. Suddenly though, I turned around and there were around 50 bombers, not very high off the ground, at an altitude of maybe 500 m. They dropped their bombs on the batteries, 200 m in front of me. It was a terrible experience, the horse bucked and I had trouble breathing because of the sulphur in the air. I carried on all the same. I was afraid

of getting in trouble. When I arrived, the officer told me that it was good job that I had, as with all the wounded they needed water. I remained there. I had friends who had also been requisitioned. We recovered four men with the aid of shovels. We managed to revive one of them: Adolphe Boitard. Later in the evening we brought back the three bodies. They were buried at Bernières two or three days later. A farmer from Bény came to collect the injured man with his cart. He died the next day.

On the evening of June 5th, I went back to the farm at Luzerne. The farmer's wife asked me if I would like to stay and eat with them. At first I refused as I knew that my mother was worried (she had come to the farm twice to see if there was any news). In the end though, I stayed for a meal with them. We didn't pay attention to the time and when I looked, the curfew had ended 20 minutes ago. Roughly an hour later we heard droning. We looked out the window and saw hundreds of aircraft bombing the railway track. At that point we were sure that a landing was underway.

On June 6th at dawn, after having heard waves of aircraft flying overhead throughout the night we cut through the chateau to reach a red door known locally as the "great wall door". From there, we could see the whole beach. We had just succeeded in opening the door a little when we saw Germans rushing around with ammunition cases and the sea was

black with boats. We stay there for two minutes. Suddenly, we saw a German shell fly just over our heads heading towards the sea. We also saw a destroyer laying down a smoke screen in front of the Allied boats to create a surprise effect.

We went back to the farm to tell everyone our news. The farmer proposed that we should go into the dovecote but his wife refused because with all the hay in there we risked getting burned. Instead, we took shelter at the high end of the farm behind a wall. The shellfire passed over our heads”.

It was the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada, one of the three infantry regiments comprising the Canadian 8th Infantry Brigade which landed in the first wave and stormed the beach.

8h15: Due to the difficult sea crossing conditions, the troops landed around 15 minutes late. After disembarking, the soldiers crossed the beach, crawling, avoiding the mines and the crossfire from the bunkers located on the seafront. To the west, once the sea wall had been crossed, A Company was cut down by an artillery gun which had not been identified on the maps. They nevertheless quickly reached the small railway line where they came under mortar fire. Their losses totalled around 12 men. For Company B, landing further to the east, the reception was even more hostile. They were supposed to have landed 200 m further west but finally found themselves facing the “Cassine” blockhaus. The Duplex Drive Sherman tanks of the Fort Garry Horse could not be disembarked at the sea as the swell was too strong. The first assault wave lost 65 men, i.e. around a third of its total strength.

Arriving on foot at the bunkers, a handful of men succeeded in destroying them by attacking them with grenades.

8h30/45: the rest of the Queen’s Own Rifles regiment landed. The tide had risen and the landing barges encountered the obstacles installed by Rommel. The troops had to swim to the beach. The Régiment de la Chaudière was the only regiment of French-speaking troops present on the morning of the assault. The soldiers had to wait for the Queen’s Own Rifles to complete their work. They waited for around 30 minutes behind a brick wall. Armoured support gradually arrived on what was now an increasingly narrow strip of sand. Thanks to the progress made by the Régiment de la Chaudière supported by tanks of the Fort Garry Horse and the gunners of the 14th Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery, who had finally landed, Bernières beach was cleared and the town was reached by 9 AM.

The Régiment de la Chaudière then set about liberating Bernières. As they entered the village, the troops were welcomed as heroes by the locals, clearly delighted to see their Canadian cousins.



The “Canadian House” situated on the seafront was the first to be liberated in Bernières.

Crédit photo : Daniel Granotier

A well-organised liberation:

- The HQ of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was set up near the church.
- The German prisoners were grouped together on the railway platform, waiting to be shipped out to England.
- The Hôtel de la Plage became a newsroom set up to broadcast news of the landings to the rest of the world. It became a well-known meeting place for the men from the Régiment de la Chaudière.
- The first temporary cemetery was prepared on the patch of land behind what is today the campsite (34 soldiers of the Queen's Own Rifles would eventually be buried there and then transferred to the Canadian military cemetery of Reviers/Bény).

The next objective was to break out of Bernières. The streets are narrow and very difficult for tank traffic. Arriving in an orchard where they were to regroup, the "Chauds" (the nickname for the soldiers of the Régiment de la Chaudière) came under fire from German 88 mm artillery guns located 1500 m further to the south. The tanks and gunners suffered major losses and the companies took up position to the south of Bernières with the aim of attacking the three batteries situated in the area known as "Tombette" near Bény. The secondary objective of the day was to liberate Basly.

During this time, military organisation was getting underway on Bernières beach: the medical corps did their best to treat the injured and the Stormont Dundas

and Glengarry Highlanders in addition to the Highland Light Infantry had landed in turn. These two regiments were part of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade forming part of the division's reserves for D-Day.



Crédit photo : Daniel Granotier

The main problem was now overcrowding on the beach and in the streets of Bernières, which had not been designed to handle such traffic. In all, almost 500 vehicles landed at Bernières that day.

While all this was going on, Mr Regnaud came out of his shelter and met some of the Canadians:

«The first one who came towards me pointed his machine gun at my chest and said "are you a Kraut?" I told him that I wasn't and asked him if he was French. He told me he was Canadian. Then, the small group of soldiers gave me cigarettes and chocolate.

I stayed until September 15th to help the Canadians, loading and unloading their equipment and dealing with the injured. It was also necessary to bury the dead. There were only three or four of us to do this and the bodies were terribly mangled, which was very traumatic for us all".

SAINT-AUBIN-SUR-MER

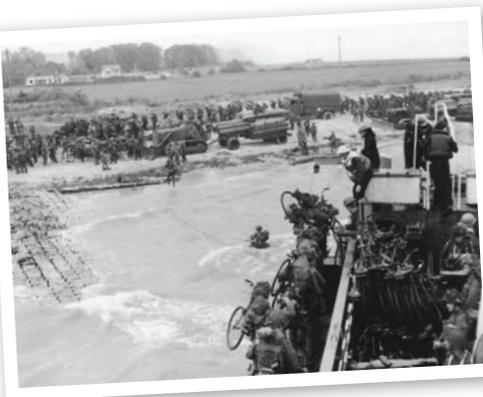
The town of Saint-Aubin was well protected by the Germans. The beach and the sea wall were strewn with mines, barbed wire, machine gun posts and artillery guns. Each house or hotel along the seafront was occupied by snipers accompanied by machine guns and mortar crews. 20 mm guns had also been installed on the rooftops. All of these defences were connected by an extensive network of trenches.

In 1944, Mr Doll was 17 years old and lived with his family in Rue Canet.

«The day before the landings, the noise of aircraft, which was a little more frequent than usual, suggested that something was about to happen. However, it was in the night of June 5th-6th around three or four o'clock in the morning that we began to panic. There was much more noise than usual. Around 15 days before the landings we had dug a hole in the garden to make a shelter. We went and took refuge there. On June 6, most inhabitants of Saint-Aubin remained below ground waiting for the fighting to subside».

The first companies of the North Shore Regiment from New Brunswick landed at 8:10 AM. Company A crossed the beach from the western side, avoiding the many obstacles as best they could (which included mines, barbed wire and machine gun or mortar fire). They then moved towards Rue du Maréchal Foch where they had to deal with an artillery piece situated on the street corner. The company also had to engage in house-to-house fighting which proved very difficult. During this operation, the company lost 29 men (9 dead and 20 wounded). At the

same time, further to the east of Saint-Aubin, Company B were dealing with the blockhaus on the Esplanade du Castel which was equipped with mortars and machine guns and then led an attack against a 75 mm artillery gun which was pointing out to sea. From Rue du 6 Juin they launched 12 shells at the gun but it was only when the Avre and Churchill tanks arrived that it was finally destroyed.



When Companies C and D landed, the enemy fire was still intense. Company C had the task of occupying the south of Saint-Aubin around the railway station and the church. They reached their objective with the loss of three lives. When they reached the town centre and the Rue Principale, going from house to house, the relieved inhabitants came out cheering the Canadian troops.

Company D had been set the objective of moving inland to the east of the town to occupy the main part of the village. The soldiers would prepare the way for the arrival of the British 48th Commando unit which, after having landed in Saint-Aubin, would go on to liberate Langrune.

In the meantime, 19 Duplex Drive Sherman tanks from the Fort Garry Horse out of a total number of 22 had succeeded in landing in good condition. They

significantly contributed to the success of the liberation of Saint-Aubin. After capturing the main defensive positions, the Canadians continued to clear out the enemy from the town, going from house to house to flush out snipers who were positioned just about everywhere.

«We remained hidden in our shelter until 10:30 AM when two Canadian soldiers arrived to tell us what was happening. When they told us that the town was liberated we were immensely relieved and everyone wanted to go out and explore the area to see the damage. Outside, we saw captured Germans. What impressed us the most, was the sheer amount of equipment and organisation deployed for this operation. There were vehicles of all kinds on the beaches and in the town. Everything had been planned out down to the last detail! But I think what struck me the most was to see a soldier dead in our street. He lay there for several hours. Later, as our house had been destroyed, or at least badly damaged, we had to quickly find a bed for the night on the evening of June 6th. We went to the church presbytery where my parents had the keys. Several people were already sheltering there. The priest's servant was very afraid and remain hidden under a table.»

The liberation of Saint-Aubin resulted in a heavy loss of life both for the soldiers and the inhabitants. 19 civilians were killed. To organise emergency assistance, the school was converted into a makeshift hospital. The property damage was also considerable. A number of houses had burned down. On the seafront, it is estimated that 90% of the buildings had been destroyed. The church had been hit by six shells and the facade of the town hall was also damaged.

«Seeing the Canadian soldiers was a big surprise and thanks to the fact that we spoke the same language we were able to establish some contact with our liberators. Later, I met British troops and when I told them my surname, "Doll", they mimed someone cradling a baby!»

MEANWHILE, ON SWORD BEACH

Due to the coastal reefs, any possibility of a landing at Langrune, Luc and Lion was impossible. These districts would therefore be liberated by British troops arriving from inland after having landed in Hermanville in the Sword Beach sector, which was under the command of the British 3rd Infantry Division.

The landings were generally organised in the same way in each of the different sectors. On Sword Beach, the assault was also preceded by an airborne and then naval bombardment, two hours before the start of the landings. 20 minutes before H-Hour, sappers were given task of clearing several access lanes into the breach. They moved or destroyed the defensive structures on the beach in order to facilitate the navigation of the boats which would be arriving behind them.

Although navigation was more complicated than initially planned due to the swell, the Allies reached the beach at the allotted time. There too, German gunfire and the explosion of mortar shells made the troops' progress on the beach very difficult. They had to take shelter behind the sand dunes and the antitank walls and try and regroup to destroy those German defences still



active. The troops then moved inland little by little. Around midday, the beach was completely cleared and breaches had been opened to prepare the arrival of British reinforcements.



Bill Millin

DID YOU KNOW ?

In the Sword Beach sector in Ouistreham, the troops landed to music. Major (Lord) Lovat was accompanied by his piper Bill Millin, a bagpipe player who had been in his service before the war. When he reached the beach, the musician began playing Highland Laddie, a tune well known in Scotland. When the music reached the ears of the Germans they were very surprised and stop firing. Among the units landing on June 6th on Sword Beach was the 4th Commando unit. This unit included 177 French commanded by Major Philippe Kieffer.

MOVING INLAND

TAILLEVILLE

Lying slightly back from the sea in the Juno sector, Tailleville formed a natural link between the coast and the inland area. This hamlet was located 2 km before the heavily fortified strongpoint of Basly, where the Germans had installed a number of formidable bunkers and a telecommunications system (today referred to as the Basly radar station). Tailleville's geographical position therefore made it a strategic location. This is something which did not escape the German army which, since 1942, had been housed in the property belonging to the Mayor, Mr Pierre, a chateau to the north of the village. In order to protect the Basly radar station, the chateau grounds were equipped with 17 blockhouses, 5 machine gun-equipped foxholes, and 2 gun platforms. Trenches had also been dug to connect this with the defences in the area known as "Tombette" situated to the south of Bernières. The strip of land between these two fortified sites was strewn with mines and surrounded with barbed wire.

On the morning of June 6th, the 79 inhabitants of Tailleville awoke to a bombardment and immediately headed for their shelters, for those that had them, or their houses. As far as possible from the windows and doors, which were frequently pierced with bullets and shrapnel.

As 2:30 PM, the soldiers of Company C of the North Shore Regiment which had just liberated Saint-Aubin began moving towards Tailleville. They were supported by tanks from the Fort Garry Horse and were equipped with artillery guns and mortars.

They easily managed to make their way up from the coast avoiding the mines. The fighting caused significant damage (the water reservoir, a school and a barn where 17 civilians were sheltering, with several buildings catching fire including the community hall, a house and a farm. Many roof tiles and windows were also broken.

The town was liberated at 4 PM but the inhabitants were not safe yet. The areas around "Tombette" and the radar station were still under heavy attack. The Mayor of Tailleville headed along the Route de Reviere where he found an officer and asked for instructions to pass on to the people of Tailleville, who would be only too happy to help the Allies in any way they could. The officer told him to gather everyone together and to raise a white flag to inform the combatants not to fire at this area any more. The population of Tailleville gathered together in Mr Lepeltier's pasture. As an improvised white flag, Mrs Barette proposed a linen shirt which would protect the inhabitants over the coming days. During the evening, a German hiding in the property opposite began shooting at the meadow where the inhabitants were gathered. A Canadian immediately arrived on board a tracked vehicle equipped with a machine gun and opened fire on the facade of the building where the shots were coming from. Silence reigned once again.

The next morning, after a night which was much quieter than the previous one, an officer ordered the inhabitants to head to the coast, fearing a counter-attack from the south and the west. The people of Tailleville evacuated the village and headed for Saint-Aubin where they spent the afternoon wandering through the streets and talking to the locals.

On June 8, the farmers from Tailleville were getting worried about what had become of their cattle and tried to find an officer who would authorise them to return to the hamlet. None of the unit commanders could give any information. They therefore decided to return discreetly in small groups. Arriving safe and sound, they once again gathered in Mr Lepeltier's meadow and improved their shelters.

BASLY

The first Canadian soldiers from the Régiment de la Chaudière arrived in the village of Basly in the early afternoon. Most of the Germans fled but when liberating Basly the Canadians had to deal with snipers hidden behind the buildings. After some fighting, Basly was liberated during the afternoon. The Canadians took 15 German prisoners. At number 14 Route de Courseulles, even today you can still see the traces left by a passing tank which damaged a wall while trying to manoeuvre.

In the evening, the headquarters of the 8th Brigade was set up in a field just to the south of the village while the rest of the troops continued towards Anguerny where they spent the night.

Early in the morning of June 7th, the Germans retreating from Tailleville were captured by the Canadians in Basly. They were kept in the church along with prisoners captured the previous day. After the liberation, a climate of suspicion still reigned in the village. The liberators suspected that there were still Germans in the village, in disguise. Consequently, all civilians aged from 16 to 40 years old were gathered together and taken to the

church in Bernières and then to Reviere and to schools in Courseulles until Basly had been completely cleared. For their part, the visitors remained fearful. They were afraid of reprisals if the Germans came back. However, this tension in no way spoiled the pleasure of the children, who were given sweets and chocolate by the Canadian troops.

A few days after the liberation, calm seemed to have returned to Basly when suddenly, near the church, a German machine-gun opened fire on a Canadian jeep. Quickly taking cover with his two companions, Sgt. Bolton took a machine gun and fired towards the bell tower. While this was going on, the gunfire was heard at the headquarters and Lt Col Clarke ordered a tank to take up position on the bend near the butcher's shop. After 3 to 4 shots, the bell tower collapsed. The bodies of five German soldiers were found in the rubble.

ANGUERNY

Early in the morning of June 6th, the inhabitants of Anguerny quickly understood that the landings had begun. The previous day, the bombardments had intensified and the behaviour of the Germans occupying Anguerny clearly showed that something was up. Mr Ripoll relates his memories of that day:

“The day before the landings, my father had his suspicions when he heard noises coming from the sea and the canal. On June 6th, after getting up around six or seven o'clock he came face-to-face with the German captain who was lodged with us. Usually, he would be asleep at that time. This morning though, he was

in the kitchen. He was rubbing his hands and face with the coal from the stove. He told my father "The invasion has started Sir. To victory!" And he went out quickly. Naturally, we never saw him again. He is probably dead now.

My father had a house in Baron-sur-Odon. Believing that it would be better to move away from the coast, we set off by bicycle to go and stay down there. My sister was at the secondary school in Caen at this time and so we went there first, to take her with us. After arriving at La Folie, we found the Germans blocking the road. They allowed my mother to go through to fetch her daughter. While we were waiting (she came back after about two or three hours) my father did some careful thinking. He was worried about leaving the house empty and feared that it may be looted. When my mother came back with my sister, they both talked about this and finally decided to return to Anguerny".

That day, Jean-Louis Ripoll's parents certainly made the right decision. They learned later that the house which they had planned to stay in had been completely destroyed by bombing! After arriving back home in Anguerny, they took shelter in a trench dug the previous day in their garden.

« "Around 4 PM, my father got out of the trench for a while. He came back looking very happy and said "there are tanks coming in from the sea"»

The first troops from the Régiment de la Chaudière arrived on the outskirts of Anguerny and were supported by soldiers from the Queen's Own Rifles at 5:30 PM and later by the North Shore Regiment on its way back from Tailleville.

« "We came out and we saw infantrymen. Everyone was excited and enthusiastic. And they spoke French which was great! My father got a table and served mead to the passing troops. They didn't have time to stop but they drank as they passed. »



On the evening of June 6th, Anguerny was held by the 8th Brigade and parts of the 9th Brigade. The troops settled down for the night, some of them at La Mare and others in the village centre, with a third group setting up defensive positions to the south of Anguerny.

Around two o'clock in the morning, these positions were barely consolidated. A motorised enemy column arriving from Caïron crossed the Mue valley and Colomby-sur Thaon to attack the lines held by Company A. The soldiers from the Régiment de la Chaudière were exhausted but fought valiantly. Grenades were exchanged and prisoners taken on both sides. The haystacks were burned and also the half-tracks, resulting in the explosion the ammunition they were carrying which cracked and burst over the heads of the soldiers.

Around three o'clock in the morning, smoke from the fighting had dissipated and it was possible to see 17 German vehicles including 8 half-tracks destroyed by the anti-tank gun section.

Over the following days, calm was not completely re-established and the safety of the inhabitants, though liberated, was still threatened by the fighting which continued in the area.

Mr Ripoll was almost killed:

«I was in the kitchen when suddenly shrapnel from a shell smashed through the window and ended up embedded in the cupboard just next to me».

A second incident also occurred at his home:

«On June 7th or 8th during the day, a shot was fired from our loft. My parents were in the kitchen. A Canadian who was watching the house said: "someone's opened fire, there's a German in your loft, if we can't find him we'll burn your house down". Fortunately, Capt. Gauvin came down from the loft with his rifle still smoking and said:

"Don't worry, it's me who opened fire! I saw a German in the fields».

The liberation of Caen was delayed by the presence of numerous German defensive units around the town. The Allies therefore remained in Anguerny for a while.

ANISY

In Anisy, the bombardment on the coast could be heard early in the morning. The din was unusual. Inhabitants saw the Germans leaving the village in a hurry and going round the farms looking for bicycles.

Mr Lambert was 11 years old at the time. He lived with his parents and his brothers and sisters in his father's farm:

«My father had a radio hid in the loft so we knew that the landings were about to happen soon but I didn't think it would take place there. Everyone was surprised! It was impressive though! There were loads of balloons in the sky and a loud roar coming from the sea. Many of the local residents fled and there was no one left in Anisy. It was sad to see! After a night without much sleep we got up at six or seven o'clock in the morning and began digging a shelter. There were many of us in the trench and lots of farm labourers with us».

The 8th and 9th Canadian brigades arrived near Anisy in the afternoon of June 6th. The Queen's Own Rifles supported by groups from other regiments attempted an initial incursion to liberate Anisy. Around 4 PM the first Canadian tanks entered the village where everything seemed calm. On the way to the Rue des Ecoles where a branch of the Kommandantur of Colomby-sur-Thaon was located, the Allies came under fire

from Germans hidden in the church tower. After some fighting, Anisy was liberated during the evening. The Régiment de la Chaudière joined the Canadian troops in the Anguerny zone with the soldiers of the Queen's Own Rifles remaining behind to hold the village. The Allied troops camped in the pastures situated on what is today Clos-St-Pierre.

JUNE 7th: THE COMPLETE LIBERATION OF THE COEUR DE NACRE AREA

COLOMBY-SUR-THAON

On the evening of June 6th, the Régiment de la Chaudière reached Colomby-sur-Thaon. Company A took up defensive positions to the south of the village near the water tower, fearing a counter attack during the night.

Crédit photo : Frédéric Jeanne



Crédit photo : Frédéric Jeanne

The district of Anisy was relatively unaffected by the bombing and shelling.

« Nothing was completely destroyed although there was some damage. It was weird not to see a single telegraph pole still up, not a window still intact and not a single roof still in good condition... especially in Rue Principale ».

As you arrive in Anisy from Colomby-sur-Thaon, on the outside wall of number 45 Rue Principale you can still see the traces left by a tank at a height of approximately 2 m.

The soldiers began digging their shelters for the night. It was one o'clock in the morning and they had barely completed their trenches when noises were heard: German vehicles were heading towards them. The convoy stopped and a horde of German troops poured down on the company. This was a group of Panzer Grenadiers from the 21st Panzer division which had succeeded in making its way this far. With its field guns, the company destroyed the German armoured vehicles, and then engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. Despite their fatigue, the Canadians fought like lions and shortly afterwards emerged victorious with the enemy fleeing.

The following day, the Régiment de la Chaudière arrived to liberate Colomby-sur-Thaon. The chateau, where the Kommandantur was located, was surrounded by trenches. Capt. Gauvin's company succeeded in taking the chateau without firing a single shot. The Germans surrendered en masse and the Allies took more than 60 prisoners including a colonel from the 716th German Infantry Division. The rest of the village was liberated soon after without fighting or destruction.



What caught the attention of the inhabitants of Colomby as they saw the troops pass through was the unusual helmets worn by the Canadians. The residents also saw the troops of the Canadian Scottish walk by wearing kilts.

CRESSERONS, PLUMETOT

At the beginning of 1944, the Atlantic Wall was further reinforced: mines, barbed wire, trenches, bunkers and other defensive features were added in the towns situated along the seafont but also further inland.

In the fields around Cresserons and Plumetot, Rommel's obstacles and mines were installed to prevent aircraft landing.

This certainly didn't make life easy for the farmers. From now on, harvesting would be a risky business. In Plumetot, several field guns were installed in the farm belonging to the Ygouf family.

In the night of June 5th-6th, fearing an increase in the bombing, the inhabitants

tried to take shelter as best they could. In Cresserons, around 60 civilians spent the night in the cellar of the school and others in the Chemin des Vallées. Later, the men began digging trenches.

The first shells which fell caused serious damage: two farms were destroyed and other buildings seriously damaged. During the day, four British prisoners passed through Cresserons in the company of their German captors. The enemy was putting up strong resistance to the Allied invasion once they had overcome the initial surprise. However, in Plumetot the Germans fled around 4 PM. During the evening of June 6th, the villagers saw the German 21st Panzer division pass through as it headed towards Luc. The habitants once again sought to protect themselves in the Chemin des Vallées. The Germans wanted to prevent them but shortly afterwards were obliged to leave the village. The troops from the British 6th Airborne had been reinforced, forcing the enemy to pull back to Caen on June 7th. The people of Cresserons headed back to the Chemin des Vallées on the night of June 6th-7th. In all, four Germans surrendered to the inhabitants of Cresserons on that night.

At dawn on June 7th, the bombardment started again. Three residents of Cresserons were killed and two wounded were evacuated to England. In Plumetot, a German incendiary bomb fell on a bar killing its owners and a nine-year-old girl. A German aircraft was shot down and crashed on Mr Gautier's property.

At 8:30 AM the British entered Cresserons via Rue de Lion. They inspected the town hall and then departed along Route de Plumetot and made their way towards



Sainte Marie woods. There, they came under fire from Germans hidden in an underground shelter. The tank fired at the shelter and destroyed it: Cresserons was now totally liberated.



Crédit photo : Frédéric Jeanne

After the landings and until 1948, German prisoners remained in Cresserons. From June 1944 onwards, they were used for mine clearance on the beaches and were then sent out to work on the farms. Mr Corlay, the school headmaster, handled the work allocation. The German prisoners were fairly well integrated in the population. The village of Plumetot was chosen as a rest facility by 3rd class artillery Sgt Reg Eley. He and his men stayed for a week in an orchard. The soldiers received a warm welcome from the inhabitants who sometimes invited them to their homes for meals.

DOUVRES-LA-DÉLIVRANDE

Douvres was only liberated on June 7th. The previous day, early in the morning, when the residents became aware that

D-Day had arrived they took refuge in trenches or cellars. Others preferred to set off for Caen by bicycle.

At 7 o'clock in the morning, a resident of Saint-Aubin who was heading to Douvres told Mr Jung, the baker in Place de la Basilique, that the Allies had landed.

At midday, Douvres was bombarded once again with several houses in the Grande Rue being damaged. Finally, in the early afternoon allied troops arrived at the basilica. A local resident, Mr Ardin, came out of his home. When he saw the troops from the British 48th Commando arriving in single file, he beckoned them to follow him inside a building on the square known as the artisanat. There, the Germans had set up their Kommandantur. The British followed Mr Ardin inside where he pointed out the position of the blockhaus sheltering the enemy troops. The inhabitants then heard the sound of machine gun fire for several minutes. Once everything was quiet again, around 20 Germans came out of the artisanat with their arms in the air and lined up on the car park at the gendarmerie in front of La Sainte Famille. Two Germans were killed and the others surrendered quickly.

Mr Daubert, who was nine years old at the time, witnessed the scene:

« Mr Ardin went into the kommandantur. He came out with a photo of Hitler and smashed it on the ground in front of the English and the locals. It was surprising! »

The British troops then moved off towards Tailleville with the goal of preparing to seize the radar station.

LANGRUNE-SUR-MER

«On June 7, not only was my town liberated but I also smoked my first (and last) cigarette, which was given to me by the British».

The local inhabitants, who had taken refuge in the crypt at the basilica were overjoyed. Their town was finally free. However, during the evening the town came under fire from the British artillery. These shots were probably aimed at the radar station but the results were tragic: the shells fell on Rue du Chemin du Bord and killed seven people. At the same time, a shell fell on the glass roof of the Communauté des Pères Missionnaires, killing a further five people. Countless windows were broken by the shelling. Mr Serard then showed great bravery in heading out by motorcycle to see the Allies and tell them that they were shelling Douvres by mistake. They had thought the area was deserted.

Langrune-sur-mer was the most fortified part of the Côte de Nacre between the sea wall and the parallel street leading to Saint-Aubin with the blocks of houses offering a well-organised defensive area. The fortified buildings were linked by underground corridors to the neighbouring houses whose windows and doors had been walled up. The Rue de la Mer leading towards the town centre was blocked by a reinforced concrete wall 2 m in height and 1 m thick supported by trenches. This fortified strongpoint was equipped with 50 mm field guns and machine guns.

Mr Quinette, a resident of Langrune, told us about this time in his life. He was nine years old when his village was liberated.

«Before June 6th, 1944, all the families were talking about the landings but very few people thought they would take place here and at this particular time. In the early morning of June 6th at around 3 or 4 AM, we were woken by some unusual noises. My father got up to see what was happening. Through the window he could see the boats far away in the distance. He raised the alarm and told us to go and take shelter as he realised that the landings were about to take place today. He got us up to take us to our shelter in a small hut at the bottom of the garden with a few neighbours (mostly elderly people). My father was afraid for his children. He put us on a mattress and then placed another one over us to try and protect us from shrapnel. We remained huddled like that until the morning of June 8th».



Crédit photo : Michel Boulard

Following its liberation, many tanks, including those of the British troops, passed through Douvres:

«On June 8, the Hôtel Notre-Dame was destroyed by the Allies on the orders of General Montgomery to make it easier for the tanks to get through».

After a difficult landing in Saint-Aubin, the 48th commando unit of the Royal Marines moved towards Langrune around midday, arriving via the railway line which is today Avenue de la Libération. One of the companies was making its way near the sea and came under fire from machine guns. It attempted to get closer by taking a semi-circular route inland but soon found that they couldn't go much further without reinforcements.

At the same time, another company liberated the south of Langrune and a great deal of gunfire was heard by the residents. The troops then arrived at the entrance to Rue de la Mer. There, they realised that they would have serious problems taking the part of town situated nearest the sea due to the numerous defences and particularly a buried machine gun post in Place du 6 Juin.

Around 6 PM, tanks arrived to reinforce them.

«A tank drove up Rue de la Mer from south to north pointing its gun firstly to the right and then the left and so on. The tank caused a lot of damage which could have been avoided. Anti-tank barriers had been erected to try and stop it but by firing at them the tank was able to cross them and to continue on to destroy the coastal fortifications».

The company made headway in the east but as the day was getting late and the unit's strength had been greatly reduced, the troops decided to hold the ground they had taken with a small number of men to concentrate the rest of the troops in the far southeast in order to avoid a possible counter-attack from the south.

After rather a calm night, around 9 AM on June 7th two Canadian M 10 anti-tank guns arrived to resume the attack against the strongpoint. The attack began at around 11:30 AM and the Germans held out until 3:30 PM after house-to-house fighting.

«My clearest memory was the sheer abundance of just about everything (food, equipment, etc.). For the local children who were unfamiliar with all of this because during the war they had nothing this was a permanent surprise. Suddenly, we discovered everything. For example, I remember watching many allied troops going past, including Scottish and a regiment of Australians who had strange hats. After the war, there was a party atmosphere. It was like a giant funfair! And for the first time, I saw my father happy whereas I'd always known him sad and worried (Mr Quinette)»

LUC-SUR-MER

Luc had suffered naval bombardment on D-Day but the town was not the scene of landings on that day. The presence of rocks on the beach made such an operation too complicated. The allies' plan was that Luc should be liberated on June 6th by the 41st Commando of the Royal Marines who landed at Hermanville and the 48th Commando who landed at Saint-Aubin, these two units eventually meeting up. However, after a landing under difficult conditions, the two British commando units experienced serious difficulties in getting through Lion and Langrune. Only a few members of the 48th reached Luc on June 6th.

Arriving at the beginning of Rue de la Fontaine, the troops saw that the German 2nd Panzer division had had the time to travel from Caen to Luc. As they were still insufficient in number they decided to postpone the liberation of Luc until the next day.

The people of Luc therefore saw no allied troops that day but were all too aware of what was going on. Mrs Guillou was 16 years old in 1944. She lived with her family in Rue de la Fontaine and perfectly remembers the day:

«My father went to the tower in Luc. He had seen the sea black with boats and told us: "This is it, the landings have started!" He had suspected this since the previous day as just like every evening he had been round to our neighbour's house to listen to the BBC and heard the famous message announcing the allied invasion (The Long sobs of the violins of autumn, wound my heart with a monotonous languour, Verlaine). All through the night we had been deafened by the bombardment. The allied ships were firing at Caen and Falaise and the Germans were shooting out to sea. All of this was going on right over our heads. What's more, the Germans had installed their AA* battery just behind our house so when they fired the noise was incredible. I was so afraid but although I felt like I was losing my mind at the time I will never forget D-Day! The next morning, we took refuge in a cellar and stayed there throughout June for protection. At night, we regularly heard the Germans' tracked vehicles (we recognised them) which made several attempts to drive the allies back.»

(*Editor's note: Anti-aircraft guns).

On June 7th, the Germans had already withdrawn since the previous day. Heading for the coast, they had seen so many aircraft passing overhead that they quickly turned back, realising that they would be no match for the allied forces. The 41st Commando which landed the previous day with the British 3rd Infantry Division at Sword Beach arrived in Luc via Rue du Pont du Jour. A third commando unit, the 46th, took part in the liberation of the town. On the evening of June 7th, Luc was completely liberated by the three British commando groups.

Without having planned to do so, Mrs Guillou and her brother ended up being extremely useful to the British:



Credit photo : Edouard Daubert

«We knew that the British were in Luc, so along with my brother we decided to go and see them but we were afraid because with their branches and their blackened faces they didn't look very reassuring. Nevertheless, we wanted to know what was happening. We listened behind the wall which separated our house from the street but instead we had someone talking German. We went to find the British, and told them

“Boche, Boche!”
to try and make them understand that the Germans were here. They succeeded in capturing them. If we had not shown them the German position, the British could have been killed. As they were very grateful, they gave us heaps of sweets and asked us

if we wanted to go with them on their tank to drive the Germans to Bernières. I refused because I was afraid and our parents didn't know where we were. So we went back home and got a good smack! We had been feeling so pleased with ourselves up until then but that stopped us in our tracks!”

Mr Flambard, a resident of Luc, was eight years old on D-Day. He told us about his adventures from the summer of 1944:

« On the night of June 5th-6th, we heard a terrible racket and my father said: “that's the landings started” and he took me to see the boats. Later in the day, we hid in the shed and my mother was hit by a shell splinter near the legs. Some 45 years later, when we replaced the roof we found the end of the shell. In view of its size, I said to myself that if she'd copped that on the head that would have been the last of her. From our trench, on June 6th or 7th I saw a burning aircraft pass overhead. It crashed 800 m ahead of us.



Crédit photo : Jules Flambard

« Shortly before the landings, when Rommel came to inspect Luc the Germans positioned artillery pieces on the high ground between Luc and Cresserons to show him that the area was well defended. On D-Day, the British bombarded this area intensely in vain because the guns had been moved after Rommel's visit! (Mr Flambard).

On the evening of June 7th, all of the districts throughout the Coeur de Nacre had been liberated. Fighting was continuing in the surrounding area. With Caen still in German hands, the allies camping out in the pastures had to remain alert and be ready to face a counter-attack at any time. For safety's sake, many of the local residents chose to continue sleeping in their emergency shelters. Fearing bombing or shelling or counter-attacks, or simply because their bedroom windows were broken, many did not return to their beds until the late summer.

LIFE DURING THE LIBERATION

In the liberated districts, a whole organisational structure swung into place, whether it was to treat the wounded, to keep the troops supplied or to bury the dead. Whether soldier or civilian, everyone participated as best he could in life after D-Day.

THE ORGANISATION OF FIRST AID

THE ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

Among the 2nd Canadian Division was the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC) comprised of field ambulance units, a sanitation unit and field dressing units. The 2nd Infantry Division landed in Normandy during the first week of July but some of its units had landed on June 6th. In all, almost 35,000 people served the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps.

First aid posts and triage stations were set up under enemy fire. These enabled the doctors and nurses to be closer to the troops and to intervene quickly. However, it was vital to evacuate the wounded to the rear, firstly to a Field Dressing Station where they were given intermediate treatment and then to a triage station where surgical treatment was administered. Finally, the wounded were transferred to general hospitals. There were around 20 of these in the Canadian sector. At the start of the Battle of Normandy, these hospitals

were based in England with the wounded being taken back by plane or more often by boat. In early July, the hospitals moved to the front line with several being concentrated in Bayeux. Hospital No.6 set up in Douvres (near the basilica). Next, following the Allied advance, the hospitals moved forward towards Rouen, Dieppe or Antwerp and into Germany.

THE FIRST ANGLO-CANADIAN HOSPITAL IN BERNIERES-SUR-MER

On the road leading from Bernières to Bény lies the Fief Pelloquin, a chateau inhabited by the Hettier de Bois Lambert family. When they saw that the landings were underway, Mr and Mrs Hettier de Bois Lambert couldn't decide whether to take shelter in the house or in a trench in the garden. Finally they opted for the underground shelter. They had barely come out when a shell from the coast smashed through their door. When the French Canadians from the Régiment de la Chaudière arrived at the property they established contact right away. Mr Hettier de Bois Lambert gave them precise information about the location of a field gun located further to the south. This information made it easier for the allies to destroy it.

Later in the morning, Col. Paul Mathieu arrived, accompanied by other Canadian officers. Around 10 AM, British troops converted the ground floor of the

chateau into a hospital and two surgical units were set up in the grounds. The civilian wounded were processed in the small lounge, the Canadian troops in the large one, all on stretchers. Twice a day, the wounded were taken to the beach, the wounded were taken to the beach to be shipped to England while others were transferred to Bayeux. The Canadians prepared a cemetery in the meadow behind the chateau. Approximately 500 Canadians and 80 Germans were given a temporary grave there. Thanks to the participation of the Hettier de Boislambert family the hospital operated for around two weeks before being transferred to Douvres.

After the armistice the troops of the Régiment de la Chaudière returned to Bernières. Major Yves Gosselin gave Mrs Hettier de Boislambert a gold maple leaf and officially proclaimed her patron of the Régiment de la Chaudière.

THE BASLY HOSPITAL

On June 6th, the school in Basly was converted into a field hospital by the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Army nurse Bud Hannam of the 13th ambulance unit arrived on the evening of D-Day. He stayed there for 52 days. The only civilian victim in Basly died in his arms: on the afternoon of June 6th around 5 PM, a young girl aged 13 years of age and her big sister were bringing the cows back from a field near Basly. A German was nearby, heading back from the front line at Juno Beach and was seriously wounded. Before dying, he fired one last time with his 20 mm gun. He opened fire on the cattle and the two young girls were injured, the older girl slightly but the younger girl



Crédit photo : Michel Boulard

had lost an arm and a shell splinter had pierced her chest. She was brought to the field post by the residents, where Bud Hannam began treating her but she died in his arms. Until late August, the soldier continued to provide assistance to the population and to the troops. He transported the injured from the front line to Basly where they could be treated safely.

THE FIRST AID STATIONS

AT DOUVRES-LA-DÉLIVRANDE

Some of the residents in Douvres had been awaiting the landings since the spring of 1944. On May 15th at 2:45 PM, a bombardment caused the death of three conscript workers in the Todt company which was working at the entrenched camp on Route de Basly. The residents then took the initiative to set up a first aid post in case other attacks followed. Several people were summoned by the Mayor, Mr Saliou, including Dr Audigé, the dentist Mr Levesque and Mr Letellier who turned his van into an ambulance. The first

aid stations were located in the cellars of La Baronnie and those of the La Sainte Famille. Everyone lent a hand to fit out and equip these stations. Children went from house to house collecting cloth to make compresses and metal boxes to store the dressings. The items were sterilised in the oven belonging to the baker, Mr David. The first aid stations were also equipped with six vials of tetanus vaccine and reasonably sturdy stretchers. Finally, volunteer groups were organised to transport the wounded.

On June 6th, the hospital turned out to be extremely useful. Around 11 AM, Mr Letellier made his first trip with the ambulance which only had 3 litres of fuel: he had to go and fetch a little girl in Mathieu whose arm had been torn off (she would later be evacuated to England). In the afternoon, the first wounded were already arriving at the first aid stations.

On June 7th, more and more wounded were arriving. The night had been a busy one and Dr Audigé was overwhelmed at La Sainte Famille. He had to operate under very basic conditions using a butcher's knife as a bistoury.

A German Major, a doctor, arrived at La Baronnie with his ambulance and two nurses. Mr Levesque proposed that they stay with him and help to treat the wounded. The Major was very helpful while the stretcher bearers and doctors at the field stations did not want to surrender to the British who wanted to take them prisoner. After some negotiations, Mr Levesque agreed to keep the German doctor with him, who gave him his identity card to show that

he was now operating under his orders.

On June 8th, the two medical posts were merged. Until the liberation of Caen, this improvised hospital was doing the job of a front-line medical station. The seriously wounded were sent to Bayeux. A room at the technical school was converted into a maternity unit and 17 children were born between June 10th and September 7th. A tent hospital was also set up by the British behind La Vierge Fidèle: this was the first military hospital in the whole landing zone. The ambulances were constantly bringing in injured people and those too seriously wounded were sent back to Britain.

INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE:

THE "VOICE OF THE ALLIES"

From June 23rd 1944 onwards, it was possible to read a free daily newspaper called "La Voix des Alliés" (the Voice of the Allies). This newspaper was written by the British troops and the first six editions were duplicated. From June 29th onwards, it was printed by Bernard Gazeau in Douvres. Every morning, the British officers would bring in texts which had been written during the night.



Crédit photo : Edouard Daubert

À gauche, M. Bernard Gazeau

LA VOIX DES ALLIÉS

COMMUNIQUÉ DES VOITURES-RADIO CANADIENNES

SAMEDI 26 AOUT 1944

N° 54 de la Campagne de France

“ La France rentre à Paris, chez elle ” de GAULLE.

Voici un résumé des nouvelles de France :

A Paris, les Allemands se rendent. Le général de Gaulle entre dans la Cité où il est reçu avec un enthousiasme délirant. Il a déclaré que les forces françaises n'auront de repos que lorsqu'elles entreront en Allemagne en vainqueurs.

Les Alliés s'emploient maintenant à réduire la poche allemande à l'ouest de la Seine. Au sud-est de Paris, les patrouilles américaines atteignent Troyes.

Dans le midi, les Alliés sont à plus de 64 k. au nord de Marseille. Cannes et Grasse sont libérées.

LES NOUVELLES EN REVUE.

De Gaulle à Paris. — Le général allemand commandant des forces ennemies à Paris s'est rendu, hier, au général Leclerc, avec hommes et bagages. La lutte a donc cessé. A 19 heures, le général de Gaulle est entré à Paris où il a été reçu par les représentants des F.F.I. et acclamé par la foule parisienne. « La France rentre à Paris, chez elle », a-t-il déclaré dans une allocution faite à l'Hôtel de Ville. La libération de la France doit se poursuivre et s'achever de façon telle qu'aucun Français n'appréhende plus le lendemain ; tel est en somme l'accent prédominant du discours du général de Gaulle. « A la radio de Paris un commentateur disait : « Paris n'a jamais été, ne sera jamais plus ce qu'il a été aujourd'hui, un Paris de flamme et de colère... un Paris de délire et de délivrance ». Au milieu de cette joie, des milliers de soldats allemands traversaient Paris en direction des camps d'internement.

L'encerclement. — Les troupes de l'Armée canadienne et celles de l'Armée américaine ont opéré leur jonction à Elbeuf, complétant ainsi l'encerclement de six divisions allemandes. Elles tiennent maintenant la ligne de la Risle et elles ont libéré toutes les villes côtières jusqu'à la Seine. Beuzeville a de même été libérée. On annonce aussi que certaines unités américaines sont entrées dans Paris. D'autres ont presque rejoint Troyes.

Aux abords de Lyon. — Lyon, déjà maîtrisée par les F.F.I., est maintenant en vue des colonnes américaines qui s'avancent de Grenoble. L'aile droite de cette armée américaine arrivait hier dans une ville sur la frontière suisse. La liquidation de l'ennemi se poursuit à Marseille. Les F.F.I. y ont capturé un général et son état-major. Au nord de Marseille, les Alliés s'approchent de Tarascon et d'Arles.

Paix et guerre en Roumanie. — Les Roumains après avoir fait la paix avec les Alliés, se mettent en guerre contre les Allemands, leurs alliés d'hier. Les Roumains disent avoir libéré Bucarest.

Les Russes ont pénétré plus avant en Roumanie ; ils ont encerclé 12 divisions allemandes au sud-ouest de Kishinev.

A l'est de Florence. — Les troupes de la huitième Armée sont arrivées à 16 k. de la Ligne Gothique.

L'offensive aérienne. — Elle continue avec intensité. Russelsheim, près de Francfort, était, la nuit dernière, l'objectif principal des bombardiers anglais. Berlin reçut aussi

la visite de nos « Mosquitos ». Les bombardiers américains, de leur côté, se rendaient au-dessus de Peenemünde en nombre imposant.

La R.A.F. a repris ses attaques contre les rampes à bombes volantes. La nuit dernière, aucune de ces bombes n'a été lancée contre l'Angleterre.

Dans le sud du Pacifique, les avions alliés ont coulé 5 cargos japonais et mis le feu à un contre-torpilleur.

Faits divers. — On annonçait, avant-hier, la mort du Cardinal Maglione.

M. Churchill a discuté avec le Pape d'importantes questions.

L'ACTUALITÉ

Un poème dont l'actualité est actée.

PARIS
Paris à froid, Paris a faim,
Paris ne mange plus de marrons dans la rue,
Paris a mis de vieux vêtements de vieille,
Paris dort tout debout, sans air, dans le métro.
Plus de malheur encore est imposé aux pauvres,
Et la sagesse et la folie
De Paris malheureux
C'est l'air pur, c'est le feu,
C'est la beauté, c'est la bonté
De ses travailleurs affamés,
Ne crie pas au secours, Paris !
Tu es vivant d'une vie sans égale
Et derrière la nudité
De ta pâleur, de ta maigreur,
Tout ce qui est humain se révèle en tes yeux.
Paris, ma belle ville,
Fine, comme une aiguille, forte comme une épée,
Ingénue et savante,
Tu ne supportes pas l'injustice,
— Pour toi, c'est le seul désordre. —
Tu vas te libérer, Paris,
Paris tremblant comme une étoile,
Notre espoir survivant,
Tu vas te libérer de la fatigue et de la boue.
Frères, ayons du courage !
Nous qui ne sommes pas casqués,
Ni bottés, ni gantés, ni bien élevés,
Un rayon s'allume en nos veines,
Notre lumière nous revient.
Les meilleurs d'entre nous sont morts pour nous.
Et voici que leur sang retrouve notre cœur
Et c'est de nouveau le matin, un matin de Paris,
La pointe de la délivrance,
L'espace du printemps naissant,
La force idiote a le dessous,
Ces esclaves, nos ennemis,
S'ils ont compris,
S'ils sont capables de comprendre,
Vont se lever.

Maurice HERVÉ.

La Délivrance — Imp. B. GAZEAU & C

The newspaper provided news about the landings to those people who were unable to hear this from the radio. The first issue printed in Douvres contained a message addressed to the local populations by the British: "We ask that you clearly display this newspaper in the windows of shops or in cafes to allow all citizens to read the latest news as the low print run of our issues means that we are only able to distribute them in small numbers".

Initially, the newspaper was printed at a rate of 400 copies per day. Later, faced with demand from a population keen to learn how the liberation was going each day this rose to 2000 daily copies in August. It was also distributed further afield depending on how far the troops had advanced. The last copy of *La Voix des Alliés* was published on August 26th, 1944.

THE LANDINGS CONTINUE

THE LANDING PORTS

To keep the troops supplied with weapons, food and other equipment, some towns located on the seafront became landing ports. In Langrune, the troops handling resupply via the boats often shared the day-to-day lives of the inhabitants. The children discovered the military environment and stayed with the British as often as they could. For nine-year-old Jacques Quinette, this was a year of constant surprises:

«The cargo ships were off the coast and the landing barges operated a constant shuttle service between them and the beach according to the times of the tides. Once the tide had gone out, trucks came to load and then left again when high tide returned. For us kids, it was entertaining to watch and we played between the barges (each of the children had "his" barge) where they gave us food. The crews, who had not been on land for a long time (several months) and who had only been eating tinned food, were invited for meals by the local people in Langrune. Every evening we had guests at table. The troops were able to eat fresh products from the kitchen garden. It was here that they first discovered Calvados and cider. There really was a festive atmosphere with these British troops and I continued to exchange letters with a number of them for several years».

AIRFIELDS

Once a bridgehead was established on the northern coast, the Allies' main concern was to build aerodromes or landing strips. As the seizure of Caen and Carpiquet aerodrome had been delayed, the construction of these airfields now became even more urgent.

Around 30 American aerodromes were built in Normandy. You can recognise them by the letter A followed by a number. The British built roughly 20 aerodromes and about a dozen airstrips, identified by the letter B. One of these aerodromes was based in Plumetot: airfield B10.

Crédit photo : Michel Boulard



The hard-packed soil runway was accompanied by a parallel runway covered with a tarmac surface. This would be the only one among the 19 British military aerodromes to have a surface of this kind offering protection against dust, which can be devastating for aircraft engines.

On June 18th, a double landing strip with a length of 1200 m was built. From June 14th onwards, the Allies began levelling at the ground and laying steel mesh sheets to stabilise the ground surface.

Crédit photo : Michel Boulard



Crédit photo : Michel Boulard

AN ALLIED SUPERHIGHWAY

In the days following D-Day, traffic was intense. The existing roads were too narrow for armoured vehicles and other heavy equipment. The British headquarters ordered the construction of a new road which would make it possible to avoid the district of Douvres. This would branch off from the Route de Langrune to join the Route de Cresserons. It was built in record time. Today, only the western part of this road remains.

TROOPS AT REST. LIFE WITH THE LOCALS...

While awaiting the fall of Caen and the continuation of the Battle of Normandy, the Allies took up position in the region to hold the front line and to wear down the German defences blocking their progress. Many villages became rest areas where the troops set up their camps. From the moment they entered the liberated towns and villages they found the locals coming up to them spontaneously. The atmosphere was happy and friendly. The troops gave out chocolate, cigarettes or sweets. For their part, the Normans gave them drinks: Calvados was especially popular!

In the days following the liberation, the troops paused for a while and set up camp near the liberated towns. However, even in the rest areas the troops were always obliged to wear their combat clothes and a

steel helmet and to ensure that their rifles and machine guns were always at hand.

The Canadians and British stored their ammunition, supplies and equipment on the plain between Luc and Cresserons. On June 9th, Lt Col. Ian Hammerton of the 22nd Dragoons chose Cresserons as the site for his rest area and equipment distribution



Credit photo : Frédéric Jeanne

centre. His regiment remained there until August 8th. Platoon B moved into the camp behind the Protestant church. The troops lived in or under tanks and bartered with the locals. A woman from Cresserons who lived near the camp saw more than 2500 troops in front of her well. To this should be added the constant comings and goings of troops arriving from the coast. In all, more than 6,000 British and Canadian troops passed through Cresserons. The British established 21 batteries of 220 mm guns in the Chemin de la Haie-Pendue and frequently fired on Caen.



The district of Basly became a rest area where troops from the front would generally spend a week, during which they had the time to write to their families, to obtain treatment if necessary and to tend to the wounded and the dead. They also discovered the Normandy countryside.

For the children in the villages, after years of occupation it was a real joy to spend time with the Allies and to see so many amazing machines. In Anguerny, Mr Ripoll remembers the good times he spent in the summer with the Canadian troops:

« The Régiment de la Chaudière and the North Shore Regiment who were camped at La Mare for around 10 days were like long lost cousins for the people of Normandy. It was a joy to see. And the kids loved it too. The Canadians were very generous, giving us sweets and chocolate. I spent lots of time with the troops (who were camped out just opposite) and my parents were always looking for me everywhere! One day, I fell asleep in a shelter they had dug in the garden. Another time they took me to the front in an armoured vehicle as far as La Folie. My parents were not very reassured when the troops told them that I had gone down there! »

During this summer of 1944, solid friendships were forged between the French and their liberators. Some soldiers were invited to come and eat or sleep at the homes of the local residents. In Luc, Mr Flambard recalls how he and his family became good friends with an English soldier:

« The most striking event for us was certainly the arrival on June 6th of Mr Round, a British soldier and his companions who had to fall back after landing at Ouistreham. Mr Round arrived at our place on a motorcycle. He greeted my father in French:
 -"Hello dad!"
 -"Hello, you're English but you can speak French?" He could speak good French because his father had married a woman from northern France. The soldier then asked for a room



explaining: "I don't mind dying but in a bed and not in a hole". And so it was that he stayed with us for five weeks in June 1944 along with three other soldiers. One of them often went to Caen to clear mines. For his part, Mr Round was involved in mine clearance around the beaches of the Côte de Nacre.

I got on really well with the English in 1944 and they took me everywhere with them.

Mr Round came back to Luc several times with his wife Barbara. They remained good friends with Mr Flambard and his wife.



Crédit photo : Jules Flambard

In 1994 during an exhibition of the vintage motorcycle club in Luc, Mr Round found a motorbike identical to that with which he arrived in Luc in 1944.



Crédit photo : Jules Flambard

« In 2004 he came for a week. He didn't want to attend the June 6th ceremony. He stayed on the sofa and cried in front of the TV". Mr Round passed away on October 6th, 2004. »

Mr Regnauld from Bernières made four trips to Canada: each was a great opportunity to strengthen his friendship with the soldiers he met during landings. During the 50th anniversary of D-Day the district of Bernières invited the Canadian Michel Gauvin to come over. When he arrived in the room where the ceremony was to be held he immediately recognised his friend Mr Regnauld:

« "He didn't even wait to greet the mayor. He came over to me straight away and we hugged one another and cried. It was a very moving experience". »

DID YOU KNOW ?

Army nurse Bud Hannam who remained in Basly throughout the summer of 1944 came back several times to the village which held so many memories for him. His first stay there was in 1994. He came back in 2010 when the former school, which was now a library, was being named after him: the Espace Bud Hannam. During his visit he was accompanied by his new girlfriend Rosy and wanted to get married in Basly. Family and friends were all invited. There were also the residents of Basly, for whom this Canadian couple were no strangers. In all, more than 150 people attended the ceremony in a small church in Basly. During one of his stays, Bud Hannam even met up with the sister of the young girl who died in his arms in 1944.

THE RADAR STATION

In 1941, the Luftwaffe (the German air force) set about building a radar station in Douvres. Once completed in autumn 1943, the station was divided into two areas by the Douvres to Bény Road. It was fortified with bunkers, machine guns and minefields and was run by Oberleutnant Kurt Egle.

The camp was given the name "Distelfink" (goldfinch) and just like all German camps it bore the name of an animal whose first letter was also that of the town in which it was based.

The site covered a total of 35 hectares and included trenches and blockhouses. Some 150,000 bags of cement were used for the main blockhouse and it took almost 2 months to build. The station was equipped with five radar systems with a range of between 80 and 400 km, a two-storey telephone exchange including radio command rooms, gas-tight air locks, an equipment and tooling storage room and a tower of more than 65 m in height with an experimental "Wassermann" radar system at the top capable of detecting any aircraft taking off from southern England, as well as mortars, flamethrowers and anti-tank guns, an infirmary and garages, etc. Approximately 230 people were based in this area including electricians, engineers and air traffic controllers. Public works companies and large numbers of local inhabitants were also requisitioned to work there, particularly farmers who transferred equipment from the railway station to the camp with their tractors.

At 11 PM on the night of June 5th 1944, the Allies scrambled the frequencies, effectively blinding the whole German radar system from Cherbourg to Le Havre. On the morning of June 6th, 1944, the



Crédit photo : Edouard Daubert

antennae at Douvres were out of action due to bombardment from the Allied naval guns. The Germans destroyed the radar system themselves to prevent the Allies from using it later.

The North Shore Regiment arriving from Tailleville launched several attacks against this fortified site. The Germans held out for 11 days, hoping for a counter-attack from their reinforcements. During the day they took refuge in their entrenched camp and came out at night to pick up food parachuted in by air. With their underground hospital in a fortified bunker they could hold out for two or three months.

However, on June 17th a massive offensive by the British 41st Royal Marine commando group preceded by an artillery bombardment and supported by mine clearance vehicles and anti-bunker tanks from the 79th Armoured Division forced the garrison to surrender. The storming of the radar station claimed approximately 10 lives and 50 wounded. The other soldiers were taken to Bernières where they were shipped out to England.

THE TRACES OF D-DAY

REMAINS OF THE GERMAN DEFENCES

STILL VISIBLE TODAY

Bernières-sur-mer

- Blockhaus and foxhole from the Atlantic Wall (centre, on the seafront).
- The Maison de la Presse et du Débarquement – D-Day and Press Centre – (the former Belle Plage hotel in rue de la Chaudière).
- The Maison des Canadiens (Canadian house): since 1943 it had been occupied by German troops who had installed a watchtower there equipped with an anti-aircraft machine gun.

Douvres-la-Délivrande The radar station (shelters, bunkers and holes). Please note: there is a Radar Museum (open from June to September).

Langrune-sur-mer Blockhaus (at No. 28 Rue de Luc on the seafront).

Luc-sur-mer Foxhole (opposite the fishermen's jetty).

Saint-Aubin-sur-mer Blockhaus housing an anti-tank gun (on the seafront near the tourist office)

Tailleville (in the area known as "Gefosse"): a series of concrete structures used as shelters, storage areas and garages.

DID YOU KNOW ?

In the tourist offices and/or town halls of the districts throughout the Cœur de Nacre you can find other documents about D-Day to accompany this in addition to details of D-Day themed discovery trails.

THE BRITISH CEMETERY

IN DOUVRES-LA-DELIVRANDE

One of the 17 British cemeteries in Calvados was built at the entrance to Douvres on the Route de Caen. Like the others, it is the property of the French state but granted on a permanent concession to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, who handle its upkeep. Its construction was completed in 1947. Previously, the troops were buried in Rue d'Anguerny. The cemetery contains the graves of 927 British soldiers, 180 Germans, 11 Canadians, 3 Australians, 1 Pole and 1 unidentified soldier.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also regularly tends the graves in the local cemetery. These are those of two pilots (a New Zealander and a Pole) shot dead on April 12th, 1943. The British prefer that in the Commonwealth cemeteries the mineral and plant aspects blend in perfectly to give these memorial sites a peaceful and quiet atmosphere. The Commission also prefers that urns containing the ashes of soldiers' widows may be buried next to their husbands. Authorisation is always given by the mayor.

THE CANADIAN CEMETERY

IN BENY-SUR-MER

As with the other military cemeteries in Normandy, France has granted a permanent concession to Canada for the land occupied by the cemetery. Most of the Canadian troops buried there perished during the first weeks of the Battle of Normandy. The cemetery contains 2049 graves. Many are those of the soldiers of the 3rd Canadian division. The cemetery also contains four British soldiers and one French resistance fighter.

CONCLUSION

The Allied landings in Normandy marked the start of a long year of bitter fighting to free Europe from Nazi rule. After countless unsuccessful assaults, the Allies eventually succeeded in completely liberating the city of Caen on July 19th, 1944. Paris was liberated a month later, on August 25th. Later still, with the landings in Provence in August 1944 and the advance

of the Russian tanks in Central Europe, the Allies succeeded in defeating Germany, which finally surrendered on May 8th, 1945.

Each year on June 6th, memorial events are organised to commemorate the anniversary of D-Day and to pay tribute to the liberators of Normandy, France and Europe as a whole.

THANKS TO,

CARAL Claude, Villons-les-Buisson
DAUBERT Edouard, Douvres-la-Délivrande
DOLL Jacques, Saint-Aubin-sur-mer
FERRAND Yvette, Langrune-sur-mer
FLAMBART Jules, Luc-sur-mer
GEFFROY André, Douves-la-Délivrande
GUILLOU Denise, Luc-sur-mer
HALLOT Françoise, Plumetot
LAMBERT Maurice, Anisy
Madame MOUCHEL, Anisy
Monsieur QUINETTE, Langrune-sur-mer
REGNAULD Georges, Bernières-sur-mer
RIPOLL Jean-Louis, Anguerny

FOR THEIR TESTIMONY

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BRAC DE LA PERRIERE
Christian
CARVILLE Hélène
CURET Fabienne
DELEAND Jacques
GABET Dominique
GAUQUELIN Yves
GUINGOUAIN Jean-Luc
GRANOTIER Daniel
JEANNE Frederick
LEGOUX Anne
MOTTIN Maryvonne
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THE
D-DAY LANDINGS
HISTORY, TIMELINE AND EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Anguerny

Anisy

Basly

Bernières-sur-mer

Colomby-sur-Thaon

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Luc-sur-mer

Plumetot

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