



Grupo de Investigación
Historia Militar



The Assault of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division on Juno Beach, 6 June 1944

Captain AW Gullachsen, RMC History Department, Royal Military College of Canada

The assault on *Juno Beach*, one of the six invasion beaches that were assaulted as part of the larger Operation Overlord on 6 June 1944, the Allied invasion of Europe. Designated by its assigned code name, this amphibious landing is interpreted by military historians as one of the most successful operations within Canada's military history. In doing so, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and attached forces gained a solid foothold on the occupied Europe, which had been under the heel of German occupation since 1940. Further forces landed in June and July would go on to form the 2nd Canadian Corps and eventually the First Canadian Army, which would go on to liberate France, Belgium, parts of the Netherlands and invade Nazi Germany by war's end. Highly rehearsed, the successful Canadian participation in the one-day amphibious phase operation, *Neptune*, a sub-operation within *Overlord*, erased the crushing defeat of the Dieppe Raid in August 1942, the Canadian Army's previous attempt to penetrate the German *Atlantik Wall* defences.¹

The success of the amphibious landing phase of *Neptune*, though well supported by air and naval assets, was largely due to the tactics of Canadian Army units on the objective specifically trained for the assault role, overcoming well defended concrete emplacements of the German *Atlantikwall* defences. This paper will argue that the forces of the 3rd Canadian Infantry

¹ C.P. Stacey, *The Official History of the Second World War. Volume III: The Victory Campaign. The Operations in Northwest Europe 1944-1945* (Ottawa, ON: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1960), 6-7.

Division, specially trained for the amphibious assault role, carried out their mission due to the successful exercise of combined arms warfare on the objective, overcoming strong German defences whose troops were alert and ready to fight. This use of all arms, these being armour, armoured engineer vehicles, artillery, combat engineers and assault infantry, overcame the defensive strong points and the enemy presence within the coastal towns of Saint Aubin-sur-Mer, Bernières-sur-Mer and Courseulles-sur-Mer.

The sector that was to be attacked was roughly three miles across and consisted of flat hard packed sand at low tide for roughly 300 meters in places, which disappeared at high tide, followed by a sea wall that was roughly 2.4 meters high in places. The three seaside previously mentioned were strongholds of German resistance. Tiny sea side towns and villages dotted the Normandy coastline, but none within the assault beaches of Utah, Omaha, Sword, Juno and Gold contained a major port city with large deep water port facilities. Behind this line of villages in the Canadian zone were paved road networks of high-quality pre-war standard French construction. Beyond the beaches was a vast array of topographical features, these being farm fields, wooded areas and large tilled fields of relatively open, flat, terrain broken by the occasional stream or river.²

The specific role of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was to participate in the initial amphibious assault, consolidate its hold on the initial beachhead area for further follow-on forces, and then advance forward in order to enlarge the beachhead, within the limits of what landed forces could adequately defend. With attached Canadian Armoured Corps (CAC), Royal Engineer (RE) specialist armour (AVREs – Armoured vehicle Royal Engineers), Royal Canadian

² Ibid, 17.

Engineer (RCE) combat engineer assault parties and Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) artillery forces in support and ready to land, two infantry brigades of the division would assault the prepared German defences in the seaside towns previously named. Once the towns had been secured and the beach defences cleared, the division would then would land the third infantry brigade of the division and third regiment of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade as well as further engineer, artillery and specialist troops. Elements of four self-propelled (SP) RCA field artillery regiments would also land, and their SP artillery batteries would deploy into the area beside the beaches. Using combat engineer assets to clear the beaches of obstacles, it was planned that routes would be opened to allow the passage of armour and vehicles rapidly off the beaches to support the infantry. Then the paved high quality road network would be utilized in order to move quickly to push inland, rapidly expanding the size of the bridgehead during the first day of its existence.³

The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier H.W. Foster, was to assault the western section of beaches, at the center of which was seaside town of Courselles-sur-Mer and the mouth of the Seulles. The 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier K.G. Blackader, would attack the eastern beaches of *Juno*, these around and in front of the seaside towns of Bernières-sur-Mer and St Aubin-sur-Mer. Both brigade groups would have sizeable amounts of amphibious armour and AVREs, as well as combat engineers and other specialist troops to support them on the objective. One full squadron of amphibious “swimming” Duplex Drive (DD) Sherman III tanks would be employed to support each assaulting one-battalion infantry regiment. These tanks were waterproofed, equipped with propellers mounted on the rear hull near the tracks and a large raised “apron” which stopped the sea from swamping the tanks. Two

³ Ibid, 76-80.

squadrons from each regiment would support the two infantry assault brigades in their landings.⁴ The ARVEs were supplied the 5th Assault Regiment, Royal Engineers, and a number of 95mm howitzer gunned Centaur Tanks would also be present from the 2nd Royal Marine Armoured Support Regiment, present on all beaches but accompanying a Royal Marine unit assigned to support the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade on its left flank.⁵

The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade would land two of its infantry regiments, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles of Canada (RWR), and the Regina Rifle Regiment (RRR), with one company of its third regiment, the 1st Battalion, the Canadian Scottish Regiment (1st Can Scots) in support of the RWR west of Courseulles. This objective area was the *Mike* sector, the beaches being *Mike Green* and *Mike Red*, and one beach of the *Nan* sector, *Nan Green*. In support would be two squadrons of tanks for each battalion area, slated to “swim” in five minutes before the infantry arrived in their landing craft.⁶

The 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade planned to land two of its regiments, the Queens Own Rifles of Canada (QORC), and the North Shore Regiment (NS), against the remaining sectors of *Nan* beach, these being *Nan White* and *Nan Red*. In support and slated to hit the beaches before the infantry were combat engineers and the Sherman DD tanks of two squadrons of the Fort Garry Horse, the 10th Canadian Armoured Regiment.⁷ The reserve regiment of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade was the Francophone Le Régiment de la Chaudière and was ready to land as a second wave.

⁴ Ibid, 77-79.

⁵ Ibid, 102.

⁶ Ibid, 81.

⁷ Ibid, 81.

If all went well, the reserve battalions for each brigade would land a short time after the first two, as well as the self-propelled artillery of the four RCA field regiments, and parts of the 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA and the 4th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RCA. These last two regiments would then stiffen the anti-tank and anti-aircraft defences of the areas captured. Slated to land last after both brigade areas had been secured was a third wave of the division, the reserve 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade and reserve armoured regiment of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment, the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, along with this more specialist beach control parties and other troops.⁸

Pushing past the three mains built up areas of Courselles-sur-Mer, Bernières-sur-Mer, and St Aubin sur-Mer, the assault forces had three specific phase lines to pass, and then were to dig in and prepare defensive positions on the last one. The first phase line was *Yew*, and it was just past the three built up localities on Juno beach. Second was phase line *Elm*, on the line Creully-Pierrepont and Le Frense-Camilly and Solomby-sur-Thaon. The third and most ambitious phase line was phase line *Oak*, with its axis on the line Putot-en-Besson, Carpiquet-Caen, the northern section of this large city being a final objective for D-Day. To reach this line, the infantry regiments would have to utilize all manner of available motor transport and armoured vehicles in order to travel the distance. The utmost in aggression and speed would be needed. A fourth phase for the forces involved would be to reorganize themselves on phase line *Oak* in anticipation of the German counter-attacks that would come.⁹ This final phase line was roughly 10 miles (17km) inland.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid, 80.

⁹ Ibid, 76-77.

¹⁰ Ibid, 77-79.

Part of the German 716th Static Division was in charge of defending the *Juno Beach* objective area. The 716th Static Division's 736th Grenadier Regiment, very much a second-rate formation, manned defences on the seawalls of the three localities of Courselles-sur-Mer, Bernieres-sur-Mer and St Aubin-sur-Mer. The sub-unit of the 736th Grenadier Regiment on the front lines was the 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Regiment 736. Its 7th Company was in the "Mike" Sector, the 6th in Courselles itself, the 5th Company in Bernières-sur-Mer and the 9th Company in the *Nan* sector near St Aubin. Their defences consisted of concrete emplacements with anti-tank guns of the 5, 7.5 and 8.8 cm types, supported by MG 42 machine gun positions and a network of fighting positions and trenches near the seawall, in houses and open fields. In the area of *Juno Beach* there were 11 8.1 cm mortars, one 8.8 cm gun, one 7.5 cm gun and six 5.0 cm guns. There were also command bunkers and some sections of communication trenches that were underground. Each fighting position could be supported by mortar fire, and the positions were designed to support each other through direct fire, be it from anti-tank guns or machine guns. The size of the bunkers varied, but they were placed roughly one every 500 meters. The bunker firing ports were designed to not open out to sea, and thus be vulnerable to direct fire from a warship or landing craft. These opened in lateral fashion, giving the gunners the ability to sweep a section of the beach with enfilade fire, hitting all targets lined up on the beach or held up by obstacles. A belt of Teller anti-tank and antipersonnel mines was laid in a belt 300 to 800 yards wide. Obstacles in the water consisted of wooden posts, *Belgian Gate* anti-tank barriers taken from the Belgian frontier and Tetrahedra made up of logs.¹¹ All of these obstacles were mined. The overall defence ribbon was strong, but it had no depth, as this could not be accomplished by the German over the whole length of the *Atlantikwall*. In reserve 1.6 kilometres to the rear were

¹¹ Ibid, 69-70.

four more grenadier companies of the Grenadier-Regiment 736, and a company of captured French tanks. On the flank of the front-line defences were two battalions of eastern front Polish and Russian troops with German NCOs and officers. On paper the defences looked formidable, and at the very least it was enough to repel a sizeable infantry assault force similar to that of the August 1942 Dieppe Raid.¹²

Air support on D-Day itself consisted of a large RAF Bomber Command raid on several German gun emplacements judged to be capable of bombarding the amphibious assault forces by heavy and medium bombers on the night of 5-6 June. The targets included coastal and inland batteries and the nearby ammunition, barracks and command bunkers. The majority of these had been heavily fortified in the years of German occupation, and were built with reinforced concrete. These emplacements were Houlgate, Fontenay, La Pernelle, Logues, Maisy., Merville, Mont Fleury, Pointe du Hoc, Ouisterham and St Martin-de-Varaville.

All of these targets were obscured by heavy cloud, and the bombing had to be completed using the OBOE blind bombing system technology equipping RAF bombers in 1944. In all 1,012 aircraft took part, and only three were lost.¹³ Many of these aircraft were Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Halifaxes and Lancaster's, and their crews were very accustomed to nighttime bombing. The results of the bombing were as good as could reasonably be expected, considering it was conducted at night and in obscured conditions. The aerial bombing runs went on from 1130 on 5 June until 0515 the next morning.¹⁴

¹² Ibid, 50. Map of German defences.

¹³ Martin Middlebrook, Chris Everitt, *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book, 1939-1945* (London, UK: Viking, 1985), 522-523.

¹⁴ Stacey, *Volume III: The Victory Campaign*, 93.

Several of these artillery emplacements were later attacked either by paratroopers or commandos, and if the initial bombing did not disrupt their operations, the later infantry assault did put the guns out of action. One of the heaviest bombed emplacements was at Pointe du Hoc, the area being made a moonscape. Ironically, this was for naught as the guns had been moved to another location.

The RCN and RN bombardment force in support of the *Juno Beach* landings was Force E, part of the larger overall Naval Force J. Having total naval superiority and having cleared a majority of Germans sea mines from the area of their operation, these forces could manoeuvre as close to the shore as possible in order to obtain the best firing positions. As there was also total air superiority, the naval force had nothing to worry about with regard to Luftwaffe anti-ship attacks. The naval bombardment to directly support the *Juno Beach* landings was very powerful and caused considerable damage to the three defended localities which contained the German defensive positions. This unfortunately, it should be noted, caused heavy French civilian casualties but successfully suppressed and in some cases stunned and demoralized the German defenders. It did not however, destroy the enemy or crush their ability to resist.

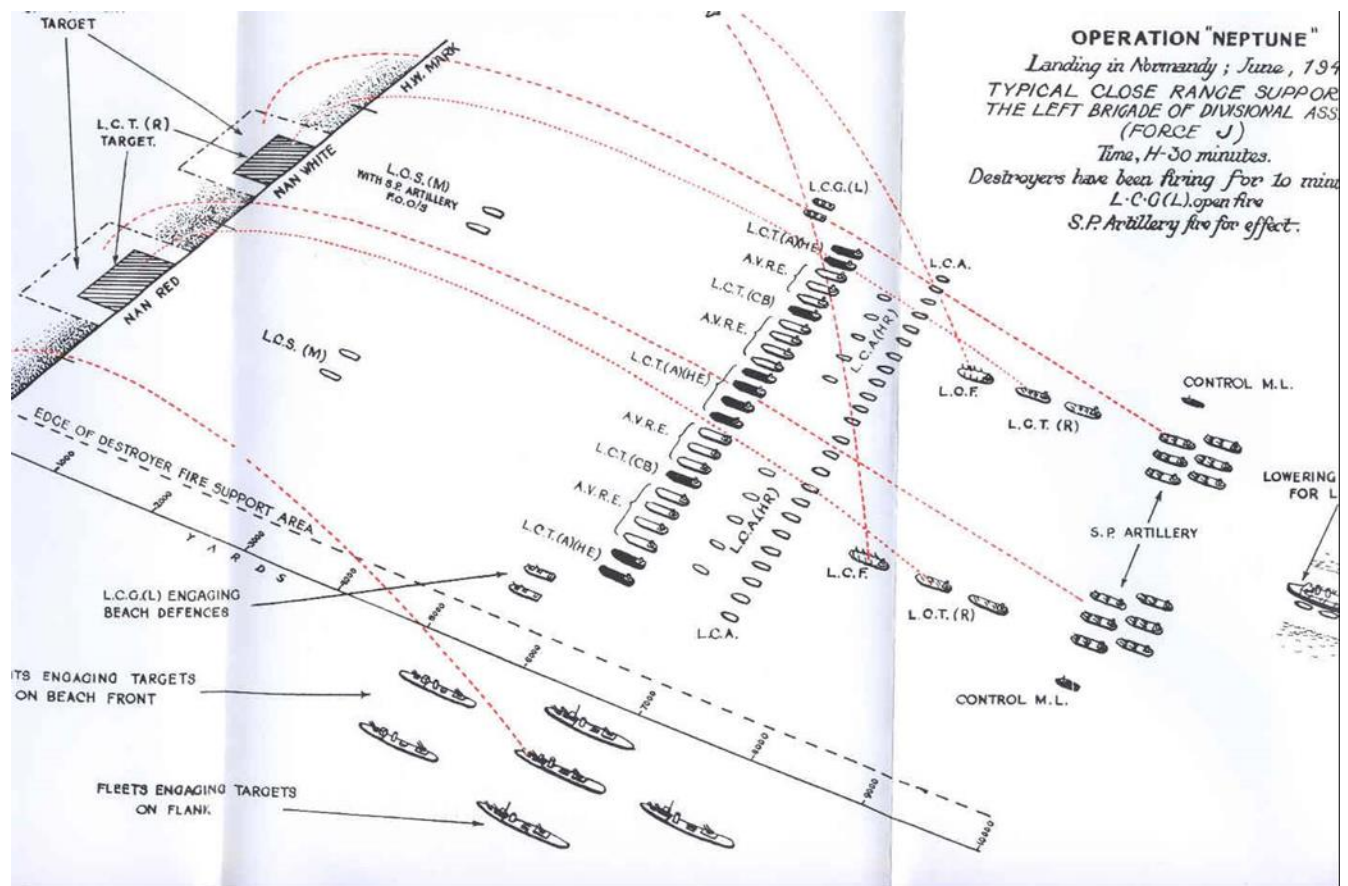
RCN warships in direct support of the assault wave preparing to surge onto the beach targeted the bunker line on or near the seawall and beach areas consisted of a large number of destroyers. Firing directly to targets further inland, the RN cruisers HMS Diadem and Belfast attacked the Beny-sur-Mer and Vers Battery south of the invasion beaches and some German defensive installations to the rear of *Juno Beach*. The destroyer forces bombarding the *Atlantikwall* bunkers with direct "Drenching Fire" consisted of 11 destroyers that would maneuver close to the beaches: HMS Kempenfelt, HMS Faulknor, HMS Venus, HMS Fury, HMS Vigilant, HMS Bleasdale, the Canadian HMCS Algonquin, the Norwegian HNoMS

Glaisdale, the Canadian HMCS Sioux, the HMS Stevenstone, and Free French La Combattante. This bombardment began at 0610 hours and was very accurate in a way that the aerial bombardment could not be, in that the fire was adjusted on target in plain view.¹⁵

Despite their best efforts, only roughly 14 percent of the German *Atlantikwall* positions on *Juno Beach* were damaged or destroyed. At least 90 % of the civilian buildings on the shoreline were damaged or destroyed.¹⁶ The strength of the German pillboxes and bunkers, of very thick concrete construction and reinforced with rebar, stood up to the pounding. The main effect was to stun, concuss or incapacitate the German defenders sheltering in the bunkers. The time of the bombardment was from 0610 hours right until the first landing craft and DD tanks were near the beaches at 0745 hours. This gave the Captains of the Destroyers significant time to expend a large number of shells, doing their utmost to destroy German positions. Some of the inland German artillery batteries were also attacked again for good measure using naval bombardment from the cruisers and also fire from larger battleships further offshore.

¹⁵ Jack Goddard, *D-Day Juno Beach: Canada's 24 Hours of Destiny* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2004), 87.

¹⁶ Stacey, *Volume III: The Victory Campaign*, 99.



Caption: Formation of 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade Assault craft and supporting warships, Operation Neptune 6 June 1944. Source: Author's *Juno Beach* private papers.

The formation of the assault craft as they approached *Juno Beach* on the morning of 6 June as well thought out by the British and Canadian forces prior to the invasion. There were a multitude of different types of smaller craft involved in Neptune and each one had a specific purpose. As an example, looking at the array of craft toward the “Left Brigade” target beaches of *Nan Red* and *Nan White* as they were steaming forward at top speed at H-30 on the morning of 6 June 1944, they were arranged as such: First in close to the beach were the Landing Craft Support (Medium) (L.C.S. (M)) which had forward observation teams from the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA). These spotters would do their best to direct fire from the RCA M7 *Priest* 105mm self-propelled artillery firing as they sailed forward in their Landing Craft (Armoured)

(High Explosive) (L.C.A. (A) (HE)), deployed in the front and rear of the massive flotilla of assault craft. Planning to have their armoured vehicles “swim” forward, next up behind the L.C.S. (M) were the Landing Craft (Tank) (L.C.T.) which carried a variety of armoured vehicles, from the British RE AVREs to Sherman DD swimming tanks to additional M7 Priest 105mm Self Propelled guns in L.C.T. (Armoured) heavier versions in this wave. Within the ranks of the LCT landing craft were also the L.C.T (CB) or “Concrete Buster” carrying three Royal Engineer AVREs armed with the 105mm assault mortars and a number of Sherman DD tanks attached. All of the landing craft armed to engage the beach defences in some manner would engage at specific times as they approached the target beaches, the matrix for this fires support effort called the “Joint Fire Support Plan”.¹⁷

Behind these were the smaller Landing Craft Assault (L.C.A.), each carrying 35 assaulting infantry. In front of the L.C.A. craft were ten L.C.A (HR) for Hedgerow, with 24 British Spigot mortars that could be launched to clear a identified beach obstacle. These infantry craft were the most maneuverable, but also the smallest and flimsiest of the landing craft, and most vulnerable to direct and indirect fire, obstacles or sea mines.¹⁸

Next were Landing Craft Tank (Flak) (L.C.T. (F)), armed with a array of 20 mm Oerlikon and 2 Pounder Oerlikon “Pom-Pom” anti-aircraft guns. Behind these were Landing Craft Tank (Rocket) (L.C.T. (R)) vessels, with the hulls specially built to house and fire large quantities of indirect fire rocket artillery. Fully loaded and ready to fire, it had 1,000 British 60-lb RP-3 rockets ready to fire and 5,000 rockets stowed below decks. There were four of these vessels for *Juno*. Behind this grouping were more L.C.T (HE) carrying M7 105mm self-

¹⁷ Ibid, 74-75.

¹⁸ *Juno Beach* papers, A. Gullachsen. Formation of 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade assault craft and supporting warships, Operation *Neptune* 6 June 1944. A. Gullachsen personal papers.

propelled guns, but the non-armoured variant of the landing craft. Alongside these were RN and RCN Control Motor Launches, controlling the vast array of landing craft moving forward at top speed.

The effects of the bombardments, both aerial and naval, including the SP 105mm M7 Priest fire, did not destroy or incapacitate the defenders for the most part. Though deafened and concussed, the German soldiers were now very alert, still could man their weapons and engage the Canadian assault craft as soon as they landed. While there were some casemates that were demolished and the heavy weapons incapacitated, the majority were still serviceable, and it became a matter of whether the German commanders could summon their troops out of the bomb shelters and lower levels of bunkers to man their positions when the first Canadian assault landing craft neared the coast just before 0800 hours.

Canadian participation within the British 6th Airborne Division airborne operations, though out of the scope of this paper, consisted of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, and though they were successful in their part of the airborne landings near Varaville, fighting a battle against the German defenders near a manor house and successfully accomplishing their objectives, establishing their part of a strong eastern flank against German reinforcements and potential attacks against the flanks of the five beaches.¹⁹

The actual amphibious assault on the beaches was designed to overwhelm the Germans by the sheer amount of personnel, resources and firepower deployed against the defences. The most western portion of the assault beaches were *Mike Red* and *Mike Green*, these being the objectives of The RWR and one company of the 1st Can Scots. The L.C.A of the RCE beach

¹⁹ Ibid, 118.

assault party, the first two RWR companies and 1st Canadian Scottish company landed first at 0735 hours, beating the B Squadron DD Sherman tanks of the 1st Hussars to beach. Following a period of heavy fire in which many RWR soldiers were machine gunned in the chest deep water as they disembarked among the half submerged beach obstacles, the L.C.T with the AVREs and DD tanks came ashore and assisted in engaging the beach defences, some already cleared by the RWR. The 1st Can Scots company encountered little resistance, and a pillbox it was responsible for having been destroyed by naval gunfire.

The German soldiers here were active in their defence measures on the seawall and in fighting positions in Courselles itself, its small harbour and the *Mike Red* beach area as more and more landing craft came ashore. But determined RCE and RWR assault tactics, combined with the Sherman DD fire, silenced the German positions one by one within the town itself. The Canadian infantry immediately began to push into the village and the side streets, the thin crust of defences penetrated at this point. The other two companies of the RWR subsequently landed and overall combat for this town ended by midmorning. Later that afternoon the battaillon pushed forward to the village of Cruelly, and was consolidated by 1700 hours.²⁰

The other beach in front of Courselles and part of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade area responsibility were the *Nan Green* beach on the eastern side of Courselles, the area adjacent to the RWR objective. Here two companies of the RRR assaulted the beaches, supported by A Squadron of the 1st Hussars, with AVRE vehicles and RCE assault parties in support. Here the Sherman DD tanks managed to land at a similar time as the infantry, and immediately began to engage an anti-tank gun in a concrete casemate. The infantry also cleared several trenches and

²⁰ Ibid, 104.

strong points, but the Germans in this sector were determined, and managed to remerge in some cases and try to reinfiltate. However, the infantry with tank support managed to defeat the Germans and the RRR pushed forward south into Pierrepont, a village south of the beaches on line *Elm*, that evening.

The third reserve battalion of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, the 1st Can Scots minus one company, landed by midmorning and pushed forward as the right flank of the brigade, taking up positions in Cainet and Le Fense-Camilly by the end of the day. At 0900 hours that morning the 12th and 13th Field Regiments, RCA, landed and began to offload their vehicles, these setting up battery positions near the beaches. Pushing forward, the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade headquarters established itself in Colombiers-sur-Seulles that evening.

The most western beach of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade area, *Nan White*, encompassed the seawall in front of the village of Bernières-sur-Mer and was the exclusive objective of the QORC infantry regiment. Supporting the QORC was B Squadron of the Fort Garry Horse, the 10th Canadian Armoured regiment, as well as RCE combat engineer assault parties and AVRE vehicles. Due to high seas, and the risk of being swamped, the DD tanks were actually landed very close to the beaches, arriving just a short time after the infantry assault L.C.A. craft had touched down. The German soldiers here were active in their defence measures, with heavy machine gun fire and mines causing heavy casualties among the assaulting troops, the armoured support for the Canadians in this area unfortunately recorded as ineffective. Despite having to run a long distance among mined obstacles to the seawall, and landing right in front of a resistance nest, surviving QORC soldiers managed to successfully assault strongpoints and fighting positions one by one, and by midmorning they were subdued. Once the pillboxes had been cleared of resisting Germans, the infantry immediately began to push into the village

and the side streets. Major combat in this sector also ended by noon Bernières was declared clear.²¹

Also on the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade beaches was the village of St Aubin-sur-Mer, and this village, protected by a seawall, was partly defended by German soldiers determined to fight. The infantry regiment charged with assaulting the beach with two of its infantry companies was the North Shore Regiment (NS). One companies' L.C.A. assault craft landed successfully, but the infantry immediately began to take casualties from machine gun fire from pillboxes. The tanks and AVRE vehicles were landed successfully, just after the infantry, but some vehicles were immediately knocked out by 5 cm anti-tank Pak fire. Intense Sherman tank and AVREs fire did adequately support the infantry, the tanks having to subject the bunkers to heavy fire before they were silenced. The NS recorded the area of western St Aubin clear by midday, but notably, other strongpoints in the village did resist until 2010 hours.²²

On the left flank, in contrast the other NS company made very good progress into the village with minimal difficulty, and the two follow-on companies landed later pushed into the south part of St Aubin and cleared the village of Tailleville to the south.²³ Royal Marine (RM) commandos of 48 RM Commando and the Royal Marine 2nd Armoured Support Regiment 95mm Centaur tanks were also present within this sector of Nan Red, and pushed into neighbouring towns east of St Aubin with little difficulty.

At 1050 hours, seeing that major combat in the three seaside towns was being successfully concluded, Major General Keller, the commander of the 3rd Canadian Infantry

²¹ Ibid, 108.

²² Ibid, 109.

²³ Ibid, 108-109.

Division, ordered the third brigade of the division, the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade of Brigadier D.G. Cunningham, to land on *Nan White*.²⁴ Just before this the remaining landing craft carrying the regiments of SP 105mm M7 Priests deployed to the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade beaches had landed, and shortly afterward the third armoured regiment of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade also landed. The beaches were now becoming clogged with damaged and half-sunk assault craft and the traffic of those leaving and approaching the beach. The German obstacles still present continued to cause problems. Despite the chaos, RCN and RN beach parties and RCE personnel began urgently creating crossing on the seawall for vehicles to cross, and the slow crawl of traffic out of the three seaside towns began, despite more and more vehicles and personnel piling up behind those moving out.

At this stage a huge effort was made to move the units and their equipment inland, and despite continuing pockets of German resistance, Canadian forces attempted to reach their various phase lines. German resistance, never being completely subdued during 6 June, flared up in several locations as the infantry and armour surged down the roads south leading inland. As an example, in the afternoon of 6 June the vanguard of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade began an effort to push through the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade towards Beny-sur-Mer, just inland. This force, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders (NNSH) infantry regiment, with the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment, the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, in support, pushed forward at 1605 hours. The infantry rode forward on the rear deck of the Sherman tanks, and weak resistance was encountered in Villons-Buissons. Not forward in time, the two remaining infantry regiments of the brigade did not accompany this force.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid, 110.

²⁵ Ibid, 111.

At this moment in the early evening as dusk began to fall, British Second Army commander General Sir Miles Dempsey, overall commander of the eastern portion of the new invasion bridgehead, decided that the ability of the Anglo-Canadian forces ashore to establish a strong defence would be impaired if they continued to push forward. Canadian units were thus ordered a cease the advance at roughly 1820 hours and to dig in and establish defensive positions in depth, in anticipation for the very much expected German counterattacks by large armoured forces.²⁶

In conclusion, by the end of the day Canadian forces were consolidated past line phase line *Elm*, and though tremendous progress had been made, they had not reached Line *Oak*. But the forces on *Elm* were able to consolidate and were ready to offer a stiff defence if any serious German counterattack on 6 June materialized. It did not. Stopping somewhat early did allow Canadian forces to also have time to plan to push forward the next day. Extremely heavy fighting would occur on 7 June, and the “early stop” to operations ordered by British Second Army commander General Dempsey arguably allowed for defensive positions to be arranged in depth, effectively absorbing German offensive operations in the following days.

Canadian military operations on 6 June had been remarkably successful, and there were very few serious setbacks apart from a number of Canadian soldiers, mainly paratroopers, being captured. Though the fighting was fierce, it was over on most beaches within the *Juno* sector in under two hours.

²⁶ Ibid., 111.

Sources:

Gullachsen, A. *Juno Beach* papers. Diagram of Formation of 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade assault craft and supporting warships, Operation *Neptune* 6 June 1944.

Goddard, Jack. *D-Day Juno Beach: Canada's 24 Hours of Destiny*. Toronto, ON: The Dundurn Group, 2004.

Middlebrook, Martin, Everitt, C. *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book, 1939-1940*. London, UK: Viking, 1985.

Stacey, C.P. *The Official History of the Second World War. Volume III: The Victory Campaign. The Operations in North West Europe 1944-1945*. Ottawa, ON: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1960.