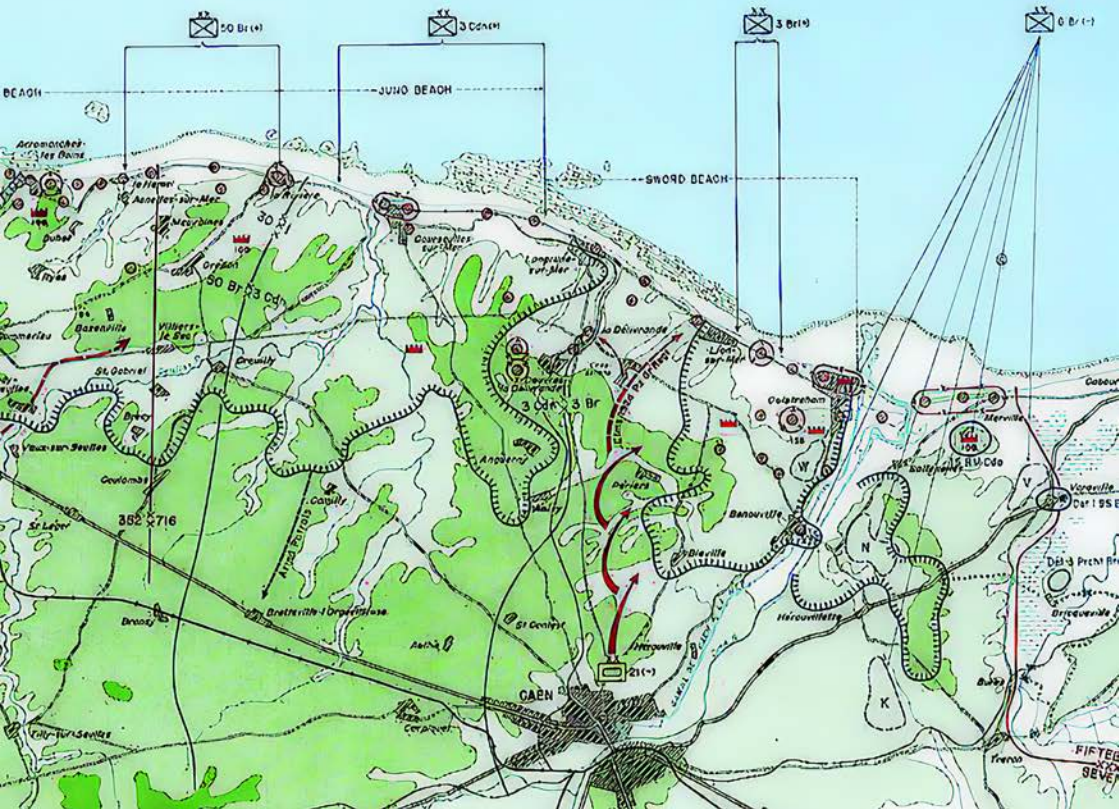


Royal Engineers **Historical Society**

REHS Normandy 80 Battlefield Tour Programme



26 - 29 September 2024



The real way to get value out of the study of military history is to take particular situations, and as far as possible get inside the skin of the man who made the decision, realise the conditions in which the decision was made and then see in what way you could have improved upon it, if at all.

... Study the human side of military history, which is not a matter of cold-blooded formulas of diagrams or nursery-book principles such as: Be mobile and you will be victorious. Interior lines at night are the general's delight. Exterior lines in the morning are the general's warning. And so on.

Field Marshal Earl Wavell
Lecture to officers at Aldershot in 1930

CONTENTS

Programme	2
Day One – Arrival, Thursday 26 September 2024	2
Day Two – Friday 27 September 2024	2
Day Three – Saturday 28 September 2024	4
Day Four – Departure, Sunday 29 September 2024	5
Strategic and Operational Context	8
Emergency Contact Details	9



REHS NORMANDY 80 BATTLEFIELD TOUR ITINERARY

Day One Thursday 26 September 2024

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks Feeding Arrangements
1800 – 1810	Campanile Hotel Conference Suite	Tour Welcome and Admin by Don Bigger	
1810 – 1840	Campanile Hotel Conference Suite	Normandy – Setting the Scene by Mungo Melvin	Includes questions
1840 – 1900	Campanile Hotel Conference Suite	Briefing for Day Two by Don Bigger	
1900	Campanile Hotel Conference Suite	Communal Ice Breaker Dinner	Dinner included in cost of tour – three course dinner pre-ordered, includes wine and cidre and selection of Normandy cheeses List of tour members choices will be available on the night

Day Two Friday 27 September 2024

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks Feeding Arrangements
0815 – 0900		Coach journey from Bayeux to Troarn	
0900 – 0930	Stand One Bridge over River Dives East of Troarn	Introduction by Mungo Melvin Brief on the actions of 3 Para Sqn RE on the morning of D- Day by Don Bigger	Input from Andrew Roseveare
0930 – 0950		Coach journey from Troarn to Pegasus Bridge Memorial Museum	Toilets available
0950 – 1025	Stand Two A Benouville Bridge	Introduction by Mungo Melvin. Brief on Coup de Main operations at Benouville and Ranville bridges by Don Bigger	
1025 – 1030		Walk from Benouville Bridge to Pegasus Memorial Museum	

Day Two Friday 27 September 2024 (Cont)

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks and Feeding Arrangements
1030 – 1130	Stand Two B Pegasus Bridge Memorial Museum	Museum Guided Tour	
1130 – 1145		Walk from Pegasus Bridge Memorial Museum to 17 Fd Coy RE Memorial	
1145 – 1205	Stand Two C 17 Fd Coy RE Memorial	Bridging the River Orne and the Caen Canal by Don Bigger	
1205 – 1215		Walk from 17 Fd Coy RE Memorial to Les 3 Planeurs Brasserie	Toilets available
1215 – 1315	Les 3 Planeurs Brasserie	Lunch	Packed lunch provided by the hotel, tea, coffee or soft drink along with a patisserie covered in the cost of the tour. Brasserie is content we can eat our packed lunch on the premises as we are purchasing food and drink
1315 – 1330		Coach journey from Pegasus Bridge Memorial Museum Car Park to Merville Battery	Toilets available
1330 – 1445	Stand Three Merville Battery	Introduction by Mungo Melvin. Brief on the assault on Merville Battery by 9th Para Bn and elements of 591 (Antrim) Para Sqn RE by Don Bigger followed by self-guided tour of the battery	Programme includes time for tour members to visit casemate displays
1445 – 1500		Coach from Merville Battery to Ranville CWGC	
1500 – 1530	Stand Four Ranville CWGC	Brief on the CWGC, the experiences of 591 (Antrim) Para Sqn RE and 1st Bn RUR on D-Day by Don Bigger	Programme includes time for tour members to look at gravestones and tour the cemetery
1530 – 1600		Coach journey to Le Ferme De Billy, Cidre House	
1600 – 1700	Le Ferme De Billy	Cidre tasting – a true Normandy experience!	Included in the cost of the tour, Toilets available
1700 – 1730		Coach journey from Le Ferme de Billy to Premier Classe Hotel, Bayeux	
1800 – 1830	Campanile Hotel Conference Suite	Tour Party brief for day three	

Day Three Saturday 28 September 2024

	Location	Activity	Remarks and Feeding Arrangements
0820 – 0900		Coach journey from Bayeux to Hermanville	
0900 – 0940	Stand Five SWORD Beach, QUEEN WHITE Sector	Introduction on the German perspective and 3rd BR Div plan by Mungo Melvin. SWORD Beach, QUEEN WHITE Sector – 1st South Lancs Regt and 77 Asslt Sqn RE by Don Bigger	
0940 – 0950		Coach journey from Hermanville to AVRE Memorial in Lion sur Mer	
1000 – 1020	Stand Six AVRE Memorial, Lion sur Mer	The story of Capt McLennan, 77 Asslt Sqn RE supporting 41 RM Commando assault into Strongpoint TROUT. Experiences of Heer STUG Troop on D-Day by Don Bigger	
1020 – 1050		Coach journey from Lion sur Mer to Juno Centre, Courselles sur Mer	Toilets available
1050 – 1215	Stand Seven Juno Centre	JUNO Centre – 3rd CAN Div MIKE RED / GREEN Sector – initial brief by Don Bigger followed by guided tour of German fortifications and JUNO Centre audio visual presentation	Tour Party will need to split into two groups
1215 – 1345	Courselles sur Mer	Lunch Break	Packed lunch provided by hotel. Opportunity to walk into Courselles sur Mer town centre and use the cafes and shops
1345 – 1355		Coach journey from Juno Centre car park to AVRE 1C	Brief on Charles de Gaulle Memorial enroute
1355 – 1415	Stand Eight AVRE 1C	The experiences of the crew of AVRE 1C on D-Day by Don Bigger	
1415 – 1435		Coach journey from AVRE 1C to Arromanches	
1435 – 1505	Stand Nine A Arromanches	Arromanches – MULBERRY Harbour, PLUTO and support to the RAF by Don Bigger	

Day Three Saturday 28 September 2024 (Cont)

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks and Feeding Arrangements
1505 – 1540	Stand Nine B Arromanches 360 Degrees Cinema	Arromanches 360 Degrees Cinema	
1540 – 1600	Stand Nine C Corps Memorial	Corps Memorial Wreath laying Service	Wreath laid by Mungo Melvin
1600 – 1615		Coach Journey from Arromanches to Vers Sur Mer	
1615 – 1725	Stand Ten British Normandy Memorial	British Normandy Memorial, Vers Sur Mer, Wreath Laying Service, wreath laid by Nick Cavanagh	Timings allow ten minutes each for walking to and from the Memorial, ten minutes for the Wreath Laying Service and forty minutes to view the Memorial
1725 – 1800		Coach journey from Vers sur Mer to Premier Classe Hotel, Bayeux	
1815 – 1845	Campanile Hotel Conference Suite	Tour Party brief for day four	
2000 – 2200	Bayeux	Communal End of Tour Dinner	Hôtel Lion d'Or Bayeux

Day Four Sunday 29 September 2024

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks and Feeding Arrangements
0800 – 0850		Coach journey from Bayeux to Pointe du Hoc	
0850 – 0950	Stand Eleven Pointe du Hoc	Brief on US 2nd Ranger Bn (-) assault on German battery at Pointe du Hoc by Don Bigger	Toilets available. Concern over access and distance for those less able – alternative is the small display in the visitor centre and the display board outside this centre
0950 – 1010		Coach journey from Pointe du Hoc to Vierville sur Mer	
1010 - 1040	Stand Twelve OMAHA Beach West	MULBERRY Harbour A, the German defences and the experiences of 29th Inf Div (US National Guard) on D- Day by Mungo Melvin	
1040 – 1110		Coffee stop at Vierville sur Mer	At tour members own expense
1110 – 1130		Coach journey from Vierville sur Mer to Coleville sur Mer	

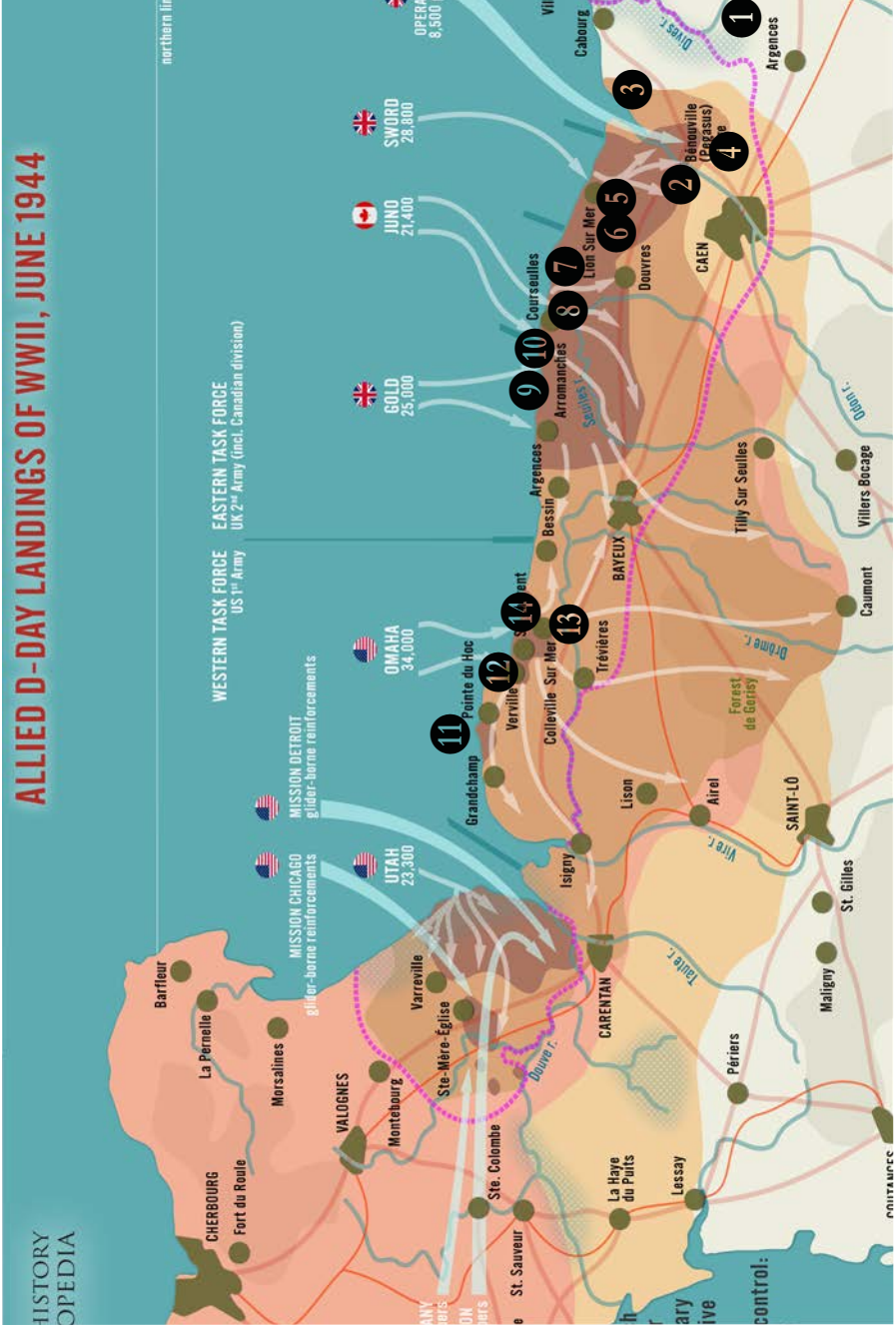
Day Four Sunday 29 September 2024 (Cont)

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks and Feeding Arrangements
1130 – 1230	Stand Thirteen German Strongpoint WN 62	WN62 OMAHA Beach – US 1st Inf Div and 5th Special Engr Bde – FOX GREEN Sector by Don Bigger	Concern over access and distance for those less able, option to stay on coach and walk down to WN62 rather than up to WN62 from the shoreline
1230 – 1310	US War Cemetery OMAHA Beach Coach Park	Lunch break	Packed lunch provided by hotel. Note that there are limited café facilities at the locations on Sunday morning. Tour members may wish to buy snacks to supplement their packed meals in Bayeux on Saturday
1310 – 1410	Stand Fourteen US War Cemetery OMAHA Beach	Guided tour of US War Cemetery to include BGen Roosevelt and the story of the Niland brothers (Band of Brothers)	Toilets available.
1410 – 1425	US War Cemetery OMAHA Beach	Tour Summary by Mungo Melvin	
1425		Tour disperses – Coach proceeds to drop off at Cherbourg Ferry Terminal	Stop at Service Station enroute to Cherbourg

Key to map on facing page

- 1** Approximate location of stands

Map of the Calvados Department of Normandy showing the Allied D-D Landing in June 1944



STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

- 1944 a year of decision for the Germans. The Wehrmacht had lost the strategic initiative in Russia following its failed summer offensive at Kursk and the Allied offensive in Italy was making slow but steady progress – Rome was liberated on 4 Jun 44. Between June and August 1944, the Soviet Army launched Operation *Bagration*, strategic offensive operations in Belorussia. German Army Group Centre was completely destroyed and the German front line ruptured. Hitler believed that a robust defence in France would lead to cracks in the Allied coalition thus allowing the Wehrmacht to go on the offensive again.
- German Divisions on the ‘Atlantic Wall’ were being whittled away to support the the Eastern Front – often to be replaced by old men and conscripted foreigners. The German order of battle whilst impressive on paper had become increasingly fanciful in the last year of the war.
- Allied Strategic Objective – form a second front to comply with Soviet demands, defeat Germany in the West.
- Allied strategic deception plan: Operation *Bodyguard*, importance of *Ultra*, double agents, initial deception for an assault on Norway, then moved to Pas de Calais – hugely effective.
- C-in-C 21st Army Group operational objective – his plan provided for a bridgehead in Normandy and the isolation of Cherbourg, followed by a major offensive against Caen designed to commit the major part of the German defensive effort in the British sector and so pave the way for an American breakout in the western sector and a subsequent encirclement of the German 7th Army. His only specifically dated objective was that the Allies would be lined up along the Seine by D+90
- Operation *Goodwood* a thrust by three British Armoured Divisions to the SE of CAEN to fix the German Panzer formations in the east thus allowing the Americans to break out in the West. Certainly, worked but very high casualties on the Allied side
- Constant meddling of Hitler is a major strategic and operational impediment. Delay in releasing the Panzer Divisions because he still believed that the main invasion would come in the Pas de Calais. 7th Army was ordered to fight to the last man rather than try and escape the Falaise pocket.
- Conflicting German operational concept for defence – FM Von Rundstedt commanding four armies in France totally 58 Divs. Army Group B consisting of 7th Army in Normandy and Brittany (16 Divs) and 15th Army covering the Channel Coast from the Seine Valley to Holland (25 Divs) commanded by Rommel. Rommel favoured repulsing the enemy whilst they were on the beaches, Von Rundstedt favoured the ‘crust-cushion-hammer’ method – static defences, cushion of Infantry Divisions and a hammer of Armoured Divisions. All German General except Rommel underestimated the overwhelmingly superior power of the Allied Air Forces.

- Command of Panzer Divisions in Army Gp B was the worst of all compromises; three held in strategic reserve under OKW – Hitler’s personal HQ and three allocated to Von Rundstedt’s command with approval for tasking having to be sought through OKW; in essence Rommel was left panzer-less.
- Lack of one clear German military HQ for Normandy operations – each service reporting to its respective HQ in Berlin added to these separate chains of command for the Waffen SS and the Organization Todt paramilitary construction service.

Key Reference Books:

Major General David Belchem, *Victory in Normandy*

Holger Eckhertz, *D-Day Through German Eyes*

The Story of the 79th Armd Div

Jonathan Trigg, *D-Day Through German Eyes – How the Wehrmacht Lost France*

Relevant Parts of Volume VIII of the Corps History

77 Asslt Sqn RE History – Part IV

Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour 1946, Normandy to the Seine

Peter Caddick-Adams, *Sand & Steel*

EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Accidents can happen when we least expect it and it is good to know what the emergency numbers in Malta are, just in case.

General Emergency Line (Pan Europe Number:112

This covers police, ambulance or fire emergencies and the operators speak English.

The UK Consulate-General in Paris with jurisdiction over Normandy is contactable for services such as replacing lost or stolen passports via the website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-consulate-paris/office/british-consulate-paris>

The emergency contact number is:

Tel: +33 (0) 1 44 51 31 00

Healthcare:

You should get a free UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) before leaving the UK. If you already have an European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), it will still be valid as long as it remains in date. If you don’t have your EHIC with you or you’ve lost it, you can call the NHS Overseas Healthcare Team on +44 191 218 1999 to get a Provisional Replacement Certificate.

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This Battlefield Tour has been organized by the Royal Engineers Historical Society (REHS), with the support of the Institution of Royal Engineers and is led jointly by Major General Mungo Melvin and Colonel Don Bigger