

The Seven Seas Tattler Issue 1.13 - June 2018



Good Day members of the Seven Seas Club and welcome to your June edition of Tattler.

Tattler has been going for a year. The initial concept was to produce a monthly news related publication, focusing on club matters with anecdotes about the club, its management and its members. We also offer opportunities for members to utilise the publication for advertising as appropriate. We have not quite fulfilled our intended mission and have increasingly fallen back on historical information for content. There has of course, been the wonderful contributions by members in the "Spotlight" section. All club members are reminded that we would love to receive your anecdotal submissions to increase the "news" component. Such contributions and any other comments and criticisms will be welcome (jonathanagolding@gmail.com).

From The Club manager

Please be advised of the following dates for Club activities in the Month of June 2018:-

Sat 9th – “Big Screen Rugby”. SA vs England at Emirates Airline Park. Kick-off 17.05. Snacks will be available.

Tue 12th – “Happy Hour” from 17.00 to 18.00 followed by Boerewors Rolls at R35 each and attendance prizes.

Sat 16th – “Big Screen Rugby”. SA vs England at Toyota Stadium Bloemfontein. Kick-off 17.05. Following the Rugby, at 19.30, LIVE MUSIC will be provided for you to relax by or to dance the night away to the incredible sound of “SHELLEY & ALAN”. Gourmet Cheese Burgers with Gale’s special

sauce will be available for purchase at R40 each from 19.30.

Please bring along family and friends to what is going to be a great evening and advise the manager of the numbers in your party. Kindly RSVP by Wednesday 14th June. Please remember there is no charge for this function.

Wed 20th – 18.30 for 18.45 Movie night. Soup will be available at intermission at no cost.

Sat 23rd – “Big Screen rugby”. SA vs England at Newlands Rugby Stadium. Kick-off 17.05. Snacks will be available.



June Birthdays

Tattler wishes all of the following the happiest of birthdays and hopes all have a healthy and joyous year ahead.

- 1 June** Lt Cdr J.S. Meyer (Ret)
- 2 June** Mr A.R Bullock
- 3 June** Lt Cdr D.J. Janse van Rensburg
- 3 June** Mr R.M. Beal
- 3 June** Mrs A Opperman
- 10 June** Mr B.M. Malson
- 10 June** Capt (SAN) I. Manning (Ret)
- 14 June** Mr T. Lutz
- 15 June** Mr C.G. Brink
- 15 June** Maj N.R. Neate (Ret)
- 16 June** Mr L.H.M. Dilley
- 18 June** Capt (SAN) C.J. Moon (Ret)
- 19 June** R Adm (JG) A.E. Rudman (Ret)
- 19 June** Mr J.P. van Leeuwen
- 23 June** Cdr R. Strydom
- 26 June** Capt (SAN) J.F. Roux
- 27 June** Lt J.R. Labuschagne
- 29 June** V Adm P. van Zyl Loedolff (Ret)

June in Military History

This month Tattler looks back at just one (very significant) event, the Normandy landings in June 1944.

The Normandy landings were the largest seaborne invasion in history, with nearly 5,000 landing and assault craft, 289 escort vessels, and 277 minesweepers participating. Nearly 160,000 troops crossed the English Channel on D-Day, with 875,000 men disembarking by the end of June.

The Normandy landings were the operations on Tuesday, 6 June 1944 of the Allied invasion of Normandy in Operation Overlord during World War II. Codenamed Operation Neptune and often referred to as D-Day, it was the largest seaborne invasion in history. The operation began the liberation of German-occupied north western Europe from Nazi control and laid the foundations of the Allied victory on the Western Front.

Planning for the operation began in 1943. In the months leading up to the invasion, the Allies conducted a substantial military deception, codenamed Operation Bodyguard, to mislead the Germans as to the date and location of the main Allied landings. The weather on D-Day was far from ideal and the operation had to be delayed 24 hours; a further postponement would have meant a delay of at least two weeks as the invasion planners had requirements for the phase of the moon, the tides, and the time of day that meant only a few days each month were deemed suitable. Adolf Hitler placed German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in command of German forces and of developing fortifications along the Atlantic Wall in anticipation of an Allied invasion.

The amphibious landings were preceded by extensive aerial and naval bombardment and an airborne assault—the landing of 24,000 American, British, and Canadian airborne troops shortly after midnight. Allied infantry and armoured divisions began landing on the coast of France at 06:30. The target 50-mile (80 km) stretch of the Normandy coast was divided into five sectors: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. Strong winds blew the landing craft east of their intended positions, particularly at Utah and Omaha. The men landed under heavy fire from gun emplacements overlooking the beaches, and the shore was mined and covered with obstacles such as wooden stakes, metal tripods, and barbed wire, making the work of the beach-clearing teams difficult and dangerous. Casualties were heaviest at Omaha, with its high cliffs. At Gold, Juno, and Sword, several fortified towns were cleared in house-to-house fighting, and two major gun emplacements at Gold were disabled, using specialised tanks.

The Allies failed to achieve any of their goals on the first day. Carentan, St. Lô, and Bayeux remained in German hands, and Caen, a major objective, was not captured until 21 July. Only two of the beaches (Juno and Gold) were linked on the first day, and all five beachheads were not connected until 12 June; however, the operation gained a foothold which the Allies gradually expanded over the coming months. German casualties on D-Day have been estimated at 4,000 to 9,000 men. Allied casualties were at least 10,000, with 4,414 confirmed dead.

Operations

Operation Overlord was the name assigned to the establishment of a large-scale lodgement on the Continent. The first phase, the amphibious invasion and establishment of a secure foothold, was codenamed Operation Neptune. To gain the air superiority needed to ensure a successful invasion, the Allies undertook a bombing campaign (code named Operation Pointblank) that targeted German aircraft production, fuel supplies, and airfields. Elaborate deceptions, code named Operation Bodyguard, were undertaken in the months leading up to the invasion to prevent the Germans from

learning the timing and location of the invasion.

The landings were to be preceded by airborne operations near Caen on the eastern flank to secure the Orne River bridges and north of Carentan on the western flank. The Americans, assigned to land at Utah Beach and Omaha Beach, were to attempt to capture Carentan and St. Lô the first day, then cut off the Cotentin Peninsula and eventually capture the port facilities at Cherbourg. The British at Sword and Gold Beaches and Canadians at Juno Beach would protect the American flank and attempt to establish airfields near Caen. A secure lodgement would be established and an attempt made to hold all territory north of the Avranches-Falaise line within the first three weeks. Montgomery envisaged a ninety-day battle, lasting until all Allied forces reached the River Seine.

Deception plans

Under the overall umbrella of Operation Bodyguard, the Allies conducted several subsidiary operations designed to mislead the Germans as to the date and location of the Allied landings. Operation Fortitude included Fortitude North, a misinformation campaign using fake radio traffic to lead the Germans into expecting an attack on Norway, and Fortitude South, a major deception involving the creation of a fictitious First United States Army Group under Lieutenant General George S. Patton, supposedly located in Kent and Sussex. Fortitude South was intended to deceive the Germans into believing that the main attack would take place at Calais. Genuine radio messages from 21st Army Group were first routed to Kent via landline and then broadcast, to give the Germans the impression that most of the Allied troops were stationed there. Patton was stationed in England until 6 July, thus continuing to deceive the Germans into believing a second attack would take place at Calais.

Many of the German radar stations on the French coast were destroyed in preparation for the landings. In addition, on the night before the invasion, a small group of Special Air Service (SAS) operators deployed dummy paratroopers over Le Havre and Isigny. These dummies led the Germans to believe that an additional airborne landing had occurred. On that same night, in Operation Taxable, No. 617 Squadron RAF dropped strips of "window", metal foil that caused a radar return which was mistakenly interpreted by German radar operators as a naval convoy near Le Havre. The illusion was bolstered by a group of small vessels towing barrage balloons. A similar deception was undertaken near Boulogne-sur-Mer in the Pas de Calais area by No. 218 Squadron RAF in Operation Glimmer.

Weather

Group Captain James Stagg of the Royal Air Force (RAF) met Eisenhower on the evening of 4 June. He and his meteorological team predicted that the weather would improve enough for the invasion to proceed on 6 June. The next available dates with the required tidal conditions (but without the desirable full moon) would be two weeks later, from 18 to 20 June. Postponement of the invasion would have required recalling men and ships already in position to cross the Channel and would have increased the chance that the invasion plans would be detected. After much discussion with the other senior commanders, Eisenhower decided that the invasion should go ahead on the 6th. A major storm battered the Normandy coast from 19 to 22 June, which would have made the beach landings impossible.

Allied control of the Atlantic meant German meteorologists had less information than the Allies on incoming weather patterns. As the Luftwaffe meteorological centre in Paris was predicting two weeks of stormy weather, many Wehrmacht commanders left their posts to attend war games in

Rennes, and men in many units were given leave. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel returned to Germany for his wife's birthday and to meet with Hitler to try to obtain more Panzers.

Naval activity

In overall command was British Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, who had served as Flag officer at Dover during the Dunkirk evacuation four years earlier. He had also been responsible for the naval planning of the invasion of North Africa in 1942, and one of the two fleets carrying troops for the invasion of Sicily the following year.

The invasion fleet was drawn from eight different navies, comprising 6,939 vessels: 1,213 warships, 4,126 landing craft of various types, 736 ancillary craft, and 864 merchant vessels. The majority of the fleet was supplied by the UK, which provided 892 warships and 3,261 landing craft. There were 195,700 naval personnel involved. The invasion fleet was split into the Western Naval Task Force (under Admiral Alan G Kirk) supporting the American sectors and the Eastern Naval Task Force (under Admiral Sir Philip Vian) in the British and Canadian sectors. Available to the fleet were five battleships, 20 cruisers, 65 destroyers, and two monitors. German ships in the area on D-Day included three torpedo boats, 29 fast attack craft, 36 R boats, and 36 minesweepers and patrol boats. The Germans also had several U-boats available, and all the approaches had been heavily mined.

Naval losses

At 05:10, four German torpedo boats reached the Eastern Task Force and launched fifteen torpedoes, sinking the Norwegian destroyer HNoMS Svenner off Sword beach but missing the battleships HMS Warspite and Ramillies. After attacking, the German vessels turned away and fled east into a smoke screen that had been laid by the RAF to shield the fleet from the long-range battery at Le Havre. Allied losses to mines included USS Corry off Utah and USS PC-1261, a 173-foot patrol craft. In addition, many landing craft were lost.

Bombardment

Bombing of Normandy began around midnight with more than 2,200 British, Canadian, and American bombers attacking targets along the coast and further inland. The coastal bombing attack was largely ineffective at Omaha, because low cloud cover made the assigned targets difficult to see. Concerned about inflicting casualties on their own troops, many bombers delayed their attacks too long and failed to hit the beach defences. The Germans had 570 aircraft stationed in Normandy and the Low Countries on D-Day, and another 964 in Germany.

Minesweepers began clearing channels for the invasion fleet shortly after midnight and finished just after dawn without encountering the enemy. The Western Task Force included the battleships Arkansas, Nevada, and Texas, plus eight cruisers, 28 destroyers, and one monitor. The Eastern Task Force included the battleships Ramillies and Warspite and the monitor Roberts, twelve cruisers, and thirty-seven destroyers. Naval bombardment of areas behind the beach commenced at 05:45, while it was still dark, with the gunners switching to pre-assigned targets on the beach as soon as it was light enough to see, at 05:50. Since troops were scheduled to land at Utah and Omaha starting at 06:30 (an hour earlier than the British beaches), these areas received only about 40 minutes of naval bombardment before the assault troops began to land on the shore.

Landings

Airborne operations

The success of the amphibious landings depended on the establishment of a secure lodgement from which to expand the beachhead to allow the build-up of a well-supplied force capable of breaking out. The amphibious forces were especially vulnerable to strong enemy counter-attacks before the arrival of sufficient forces in the beachhead could be accomplished. To slow or eliminate the enemy's ability to organise and launch counter-attacks during this critical period, airborne operations were used to seize key objectives such as bridges, road crossings, and terrain features, particularly on the eastern and western flanks of the landing areas. The airborne landings some distance behind the beaches were also intended to ease the egress of the amphibious forces off the beaches, and in some cases to neutralise German coastal defence batteries and more quickly expand the area of the beachhead.

The US 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were assigned to objectives west of Utah Beach, where they hoped to capture and control the few narrow causeways through terrain that had been intentionally flooded by the Germans. Reports from Allied intelligence in mid-May of the arrival of the German 91st Infantry Division meant the intended drop zones had to be shifted eastward and to the south. The British 6th Airborne Division, on the eastern flank, was assigned to capture intact the bridges over the Caen Canal and River Orne, destroy five bridges over the Dives 6 miles (9.7 km) to the east, and destroy the Merville Gun Battery overlooking Sword Beach. Free French paratroopers from the British SAS Brigade were assigned to objectives in Brittany from 5 June until August in Operations Dingson, Samwest, and Cooney.

American airborne landings

The American airborne landings began with the arrival of pathfinders at 00:15. Navigation was difficult because of a bank of thick cloud, and as a result only one of the five paratrooper drop zones was accurately marked with radar signals and Aldis lamps. Paratroopers of the US 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, numbering over 13,000 men, were delivered by Douglas C-47 Skytrains of the IX Troop Carrier Command. To avoid flying over the invasion fleet, the planes arrived from the west over the Cotentin Peninsula and exited over Utah Beach.

Paratroops from 101st Airborne were dropped beginning around 01:30, tasked with controlling the causeways behind Utah Beach and destroying road and rail bridges over the Douve River. The C-47s could not fly in a tight formation because of thick cloud cover, and many paratroopers were dropped far from their intended landing zones. Many planes came in so low that they were under fire from both flak and machine gun fire. Some paratroopers were killed on impact when their parachutes did not have time to open, and others drowned in the flooded fields. Gathering together into fighting units was made difficult by a shortage of radios and by the bocage terrain, with its hedgerows, stone walls, and marshes. Some units did not arrive at their targets until afternoon, by which time several of the causeways had already been cleared by members of the 4th Infantry Division moving up from the beach.

Troops of the 82nd Airborne began arriving around 02:30, with the primary objective of capturing two bridges over the River Merderet and destroying two bridges over the Douve. On the east side of the river, 75 per cent of the paratroopers landed in or near their drop zone, and within two hours they captured the important crossroads at Sainte-Mère-Église (the first town liberated in the invasion) and began working to protect the western flank. Because of the failure of the pathfinders to accurately mark their drop zone, the two regiments dropped on the west side of the Merderet

were extremely scattered, with only four per cent landing in the target area. Many landed in nearby swamps, with much loss of life. Paratroopers consolidated into small groups, usually a combination of men of various ranks from different units and attempted to concentrate on nearby objectives. They captured but failed to hold the Merderet River bridge at La Fièrre and fighting for the crossing continued for several days.

Reinforcements arrived by glider around 04:00 (Mission Chicago and Mission Detroit), and 21:00 (Mission Keokuk and Mission Elmira), bringing additional troops and heavy equipment. Like the paratroopers, many landed far from their drop zones. Even those that landed on target experienced difficulty, with heavy cargo such as Jeeps shifting during landing, crashing through the wooden fuselage, and in some cases crushing personnel on board.

After 24 hours, only 2,500 men of the 101st and 2,000 of the 82nd Airborne were under the control of their divisions, approximately a third of the force dropped. This wide dispersal had the effect of confusing the Germans and fragmenting their response. The 7th Army received notification of the parachute drops at 01:20, but Rundstedt did not initially believe that a major invasion was underway. The destruction of radar stations along the Normandy coast in the week before the invasion meant that the Germans did not detect the approaching fleet until 02:00.

British and Canadian airborne landings

The first Allied action of D-Day was Operation Deadstick, a glider assault at 00:16 at Pegasus Bridge over the Caen Canal and the bridge (since renamed Horsa Bridge) over the Orne, half a mile (800 metres) to the east. Both bridges were quickly captured intact, with light casualties, by members of the 5th Parachute Brigade and the 7th (Light Infantry) Parachute Battalion. The five bridges over the Dives were destroyed with minimal difficulty by the 3rd Parachute Brigade. Meanwhile, the pathfinders tasked with setting up radar beacons and lights for further paratroopers (scheduled to begin arriving at 00:50 to clear the landing zone north of Ranville) were blown off course, and had to set up the navigation aids too far east. Many paratroopers, also blown too far east, landed far from their intended drop zones; some took hours or even days to be reunited with their units. Major General Richard Gale arrived in the third wave of gliders at 03:30, along with equipment, such as antitank guns and jeeps, and more troops to help secure the area from counter-attacks, which were initially staged only by troops in the immediate vicinity of the landings. At 02:00, the commander of the German 716th Infantry Division ordered Feuchtinger to move his 21st Panzer Division into position to counter-attack. However, as the division was part of the armoured reserve, Feuchtinger was obliged to seek clearance from OKW before he could commit his formation. Feuchtinger did not receive orders until nearly 09:00, but in the meantime on his own initiative he put together a battle group (including tanks) to fight the British forces east of the Orne.

Only 160 men out of the 600 members of the 9th Battalion tasked with eliminating the enemy battery at Merville arrived at the rendezvous point. Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway, in charge of the operation, decided to proceed regardless, as the emplacement had to be destroyed by 06:00 to prevent it firing on the invasion fleet and the troops arriving on Sword Beach. In the Battle of Merville Gun Battery, Allied forces disabled the guns with plastic explosives at a cost of 75 casualties. The emplacement was found to contain 75 mm guns rather than the expected 150 mm heavy coastal artillery. Otway's remaining force withdrew with the assistance of a few members of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion.

With this action, the last of the D-Day goals of the British 6th Airborne Division was achieved. They were reinforced at 12:00 by commandos of the 1st Special Service Brigade, who landed on Sword Beach, and by the 6th Airlanding Brigade, who arrived in gliders at 21:00 in Operation Mallard.

Tank landings

Some of the landing craft had been modified to provide close support fire, and self-propelled amphibious Duplex-Drive tanks (DD tanks), specially designed for the Normandy landings, were to land shortly before the infantry to provide covering fire. However, few arrived in advance of the infantry, and many sank before reaching the shore, especially at Omaha.

Utah Beach

Utah Beach was in the area defended by two battalions of the 919th Grenadier Regiment. Members of the 8th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division were the first to land, arriving at 06:30. Their landing craft were pushed to the south by strong currents, and they found themselves about 2,000 yards (1.8 km) from their intended landing zone. This site turned out to be better, as there was only one strongpoint nearby rather than two, and bombers of IX Bomber Command had bombed the defences from lower than their prescribed altitude, inflicting considerable damage. In addition, the strong currents had washed ashore many of the underwater obstacles. The assistant commander of the 4th Infantry Division, Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the first senior officer ashore, made the decision to "start the war from right here", and ordered further landings to be re-routed.

The initial assault battalions were quickly followed by 28 DD tanks and several waves of engineer and demolition teams to remove beach obstacles and clear the area directly behind the beach of obstacles and mines. Gaps were blown in the sea wall to allow quicker access for troops and tanks. Combat teams began to exit the beach at around 09:00, with some infantry wading through the flooded fields rather than travelling on the single road. They skirmished throughout the day with elements of the 919th Grenadier Regiment, who were armed with antitank guns and rifles. The main strongpoint in the area and another 1,300 yards (1.2 km) to the south were disabled by noon. The 4th Infantry Division did not meet all of their D-Day objectives at Utah Beach, partly because they had arrived too far to the south, but they landed 21,000 troops at the cost of only 197 casualties.

Pointe du Hoc

Pointe du Hoc, a prominent headland situated between Utah and Omaha, was assigned to two hundred men of 2nd Ranger Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James Rudder. Their task was to scale the 30m (100ft) cliffs with grappling hooks, ropes, and ladders to destroy the coastal gun battery located at the top. The cliffs were defended by the German 352nd Infantry Division and French collaborators firing from above. Allied destroyers Satterlee and Talybont provided fire support. After scaling the cliffs, the Rangers discovered that the guns had already been withdrawn. They located the weapons, unguarded but ready to use, in an orchard some 550 metres (600 yd) south of the point, and disabled them with explosives.

The now-isolated Rangers fended off numerous counter-attacks from the German 914th Grenadier Regiment. The men at the point became isolated and some were captured. By dawn on D+1, Rudder had only 90 men able to fight. Relief did not arrive until D+2, when members of the 743rd Tank Battalion and others arrived. By then, Rudder's men had run out of ammunition and were using captured German weapons. Several men were killed as a result, because the German weapons made a distinctive noise, and the men were mistaken for the enemy. By the end of the battle, the Rangers casualties were 135 dead and wounded, while German casualties were 50 killed and 40 captured. An unknown number of French collaborators were executed.

Omaha Beach

Omaha, the most heavily defended beach, was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division and 29th Infantry Division. They faced the 352nd Infantry Division rather than the expected single regiment. Strong currents forced many landing craft east of their intended position or caused them to be delayed. For fear of hitting the landing craft, American bombers delayed releasing their loads and, as a result, most of the beach obstacles at Omaha remained undamaged when the men came ashore. Many of the landing craft ran aground on sandbars and the men had to wade 50-100m in water up to their necks while under fire to get to the beach. In spite of the rough seas, DD tanks of two companies of the 741st Tank Battalion were dropped 5,000 yards (4,600 m) from shore; however, 27 of the 32 flooded and sank, with the loss of 33 crew. Some tanks, disabled on the beach, continued to provide covering fire until their ammunition ran out or they were swamped by the rising tide.

Casualties were around 2,000, as the men were subjected to fire from the cliffs above. Problems clearing the beach of obstructions led to the beachmaster calling a halt to further landings of vehicles at 08:30. A group of destroyers arrived around this time to provide fire support so landings could resume. Exit from the beach was possible only via five heavily defended gullies, and by late morning barely 600 men had reached the higher ground. By noon, as the artillery fire took its toll and the Germans started to run out of ammunition, the Americans were able to clear some lanes on the beaches. They also started clearing the gullies of enemy defences so that vehicles could move off the beach. The tenuous beachhead was expanded over the following days, and the D-Day objectives for Omaha were accomplished by D+3.

Gold Beach

The first landings on Gold beach were set for 07:25 due to the differences in the tide between there and the American beaches. High winds made conditions difficult for the landing craft, and the amphibious DD tanks were released close to shore or directly on the beach instead of further out as planned. Three of the four guns in a large emplacement at the Longues-sur-Mer battery were disabled by direct hits from the cruisers Ajax and Argonaut at 06:20. The fourth gun resumed firing intermittently in the afternoon, and its garrison surrendered on 7 June. Aerial attacks had failed to hit the Le Hamel strongpoint, which had its embrasure facing east to provide enfilade fire along the beach and had a thick concrete wall on the seaward side. Its 75 mm gun continued to do damage until 16:00, when a modified Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers (AVRE) tank fired a large petard charge into its rear entrance. A second casemated emplacement at La Rivière containing an 88 mm gun was neutralised by a tank at 07:30.

Meanwhile, infantry began clearing the heavily fortified houses along the shore and advanced on targets further inland. The No. 47 (Royal Marine) Commando moved toward the small port at Port-en-Bessin and captured it the following day in the Battle of Port-en-Bessin. Company Sergeant Major Stanley Hollis received the only Victoria Cross awarded on D-Day for his actions while attacking two pillboxes at the Mont Fleury high point. On the western flank, the 1st Battalion, Hampshire Regiment captured Arromanches (future site of Mulberry "B"), and contact was made on the eastern flank with the Canadian forces at Juno. Bayeux was not captured the first day due to stiff resistance from the 352nd Infantry Division. Allied casualties at Gold Beach are estimated at 1,000.

Juno Beach

The landing at Juno was delayed because of choppy seas, and the men arrived ahead of their supporting armour, suffering many casualties while disembarking. Most of the offshore bombardment had missed the German defences. Several exits from the beach were created, but not

without difficulty. At Mike Beach on the western flank, a large crater was filled using an abandoned AVRE tank and several rolls of fascine, which were then covered by a temporary bridge. The tank remained in place until 1972, when it was removed and restored by members of the Royal Engineers. The beach and nearby streets were clogged with traffic for most of the day, making it difficult to move inland.

Major German strongpoints with 75 mm guns, machine-gun nests, concrete fortifications, barbed wire, and mines were located at Courseulles-sur-Mer, St Aubin-sur-Mer, and Bernières-sur-Mer. The towns themselves also had to be cleared in house-to-house fighting. Soldiers on their way to Bény-sur-Mer, 3 miles (5 km) inland, discovered that the road was well covered by machine gun emplacements that had to be outflanked before the advance could proceed. Elements of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade advanced to within sight of the Carpiquet airfield late in the afternoon, but by this time their supporting armour was low on ammunition so the Canadians dug in for the night. The airfield was not captured until a month later as the area became the scene of fierce fighting. By nightfall, the contiguous Juno and Gold beachheads covered an area 12 miles (19 km) wide and 7 miles (10 km) deep. Casualties at Juno were 961 men.

Sword Beach

On Sword, 21 of 25 DD tanks of the first wave were successful in getting safely ashore to provide cover for the infantry, who began disembarking at 07:30. The beach was heavily mined and peppered with obstacles, making the work of the beach clearing teams difficult and dangerous. In the windy conditions, the tide came in more quickly than expected, so manoeuvring the armour was difficult. The beach quickly became congested. Brigadier Simon Fraser, 15th Lord Lovat and his 1st Special Service Brigade arrived in the second wave, piped ashore by Private Bill Millin, Lovat's personal piper. Members of No. 4 Commando moved through Ouistreham to attack from the rear a German gun battery on the shore. A concrete observation and control tower at this emplacement had to be bypassed and was not captured until several days later. French forces under Commander Philippe Kieffer (the first French soldiers to arrive in Normandy) attacked and cleared the heavily fortified strongpoint at the casino at Riva Bella, with the aid of one of the DD tanks.

The 'Morris' strongpoint near Colleville-sur-Mer was captured after about an hour of fighting. The nearby 'Hillman' strongpoint, headquarters of the 736th Infantry Regiment, was a large complex defensive work that had come through the morning's bombardment essentially undamaged. It was not captured until 20:15. The 2nd Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry began advancing to Caen on foot, coming within a few kilometres of the town, but had to withdraw due to lack of armour support. At 16:00, the 21st Panzer Division mounted a counter-attack between Sword and Juno and nearly succeeded in reaching the Channel. It met stiff resistance from the British 3rd Division and was soon recalled to assist in the area between Caen and Bayeux. Estimates of Allied casualties on Sword Beach are as high as 1,000.

Aftermath

The Normandy landings were the largest seaborne invasion in history, with nearly 5,000 landing and assault craft, 289 escort vessels, and 277 minesweepers participating. Nearly 160,000 troops crossed the English Channel on D-Day, with 875,000 men disembarking by the end of June. Allied casualties on the first day were at least 10,000, with 4,414 confirmed dead. The Germans lost 1,000 men. The Allied invasion plans had called for the capture of Carentan, St. Lô, Caen, and Bayeux on the first day, with all the beaches (other than Utah) linked with a front line 10 to 16 kilometres (6 to 10 mi) from the beaches; none of these objectives were achieved. The five bridgeheads were not connected until 12 June, by which time the Allies held a front around 97 kilometres (60 mi) long and 24 kilometres

(15 mi) deep. Caen, a major objective, was still in German hands at the end of D-Day and would not be completely captured until 21 July. The Germans had ordered French civilians other than those deemed essential to the war effort to leave potential combat zones in Normandy. Civilian casualties on D-Day and D+1 are estimated at 3,000 people.

Victory in Normandy stemmed from several factors. German preparations along the Atlantic Wall were only partially finished; shortly before D-Day Rommel reported that construction was only 18 per cent complete in some areas as resources were diverted elsewhere. The deceptions undertaken in Operation Fortitude were successful, leaving the Germans obliged to defend a huge stretch of coastline. The Allies achieved and maintained air supremacy, which meant that the Germans were unable to make observations of the preparations underway in Britain and were unable to interfere via bomber attacks. Infrastructure for transport in France was severely disrupted by Allied bombers and the French Resistance, making it difficult for the Germans to bring up reinforcements and supplies. Some of the opening bombardment was off-target or not concentrated enough to have any impact, but the specialised armour worked well except on Omaha, providing close artillery support for the troops as they disembarked onto the beaches. Indecisiveness and an overly complicated command structure on the part of the German high command were also factors in the Allied success.

Featured Ship - HMS Indomitable



Class and type: Modified Illustrious-class aircraft carrier
Displacement: 23,000 tons standard, 29,730 tons loaded

Length:230.0 m (754 ft 7 in), Beam:29.2 m (95 ft 10 in), Draught:8.8 m (29 ft)

Propulsion: Parsons geared steam turbines, six boilers, three shafts, 83,000 kW

Speed:30.5 knots (56 km/h; 35 mph)

Range:11,000 nautical miles (20,000 km; 13,000 mi) at 14 knots (26 km/h; 16 mph)

Complement: 1,392, 2,100

Armament: 16 × 4.5-inch anti-aircraft (AA) guns, 48 × 2-pounder AA guns, 10 × 20 mm AA guns

Aircraft carried:

1942: 22 Sea Hurricane, 12 Martlet and 16 Albacore

1943: 55 Seafire and Albacore

1945: 45 Hellcat and Avenger

HMS Indomitable (pennant number 92) was a modified Illustrious-class aircraft carrier of the Royal Navy. The Illustrious class was developed in the 1937 Naval Programme. Originally planned to be the fourth of the class, she was redesigned to enable her to operate more aircraft, 48 instead of 36. A second hangar was added above the original, raising the flight deck by 14 feet (4.3 m), although the hangar side armour had to be reduced to compensate. Part of the lower hangar was converted into extra workshops and accommodation to support the added aircraft.

South African connection:

Francis Elton Christopher Judd, a South African was a Lieutenant-Commander who led the air defense of HMS Indomitable (92) during Operation Pedestal, the infamous 'Last Malta Convoy'

After enlisting in the Navy on 15 September 1922, Judd served on the Malaya (May 1926 - October 1927), Effingham (October 1927 to May 1929). On 1 May 1929 and attached to the RAF in May 1931.

Judd was attached to the Royal Air Force as part of the Fleet Air Arm in 1939 as squadron leader for Fleet Air Arm Squadron No. 716 Catapult flight. On board HMS Amphion, Attached to the 6th cruiser squadron, South Africa, 15 July 1936. Based in Simonstown.

On 29 April one of AMPHION's aircraft, Osprey K5751, was attempting a landing on Simonstown Bay when it struck turbulent air. The nose of the port float collapsed and the aircraft overturned causing severe damage. The pilot Flt.Lt. F.Judd survived the incident.

For two years, 1940 - 1942, Lt Cdr Judd was in command of Fleet Air Arm 880 Naval Air Squadron on board HMS Indomitable.

JUDD, F E C, Lieutenant Cmdr, Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm 880 Squadron, HMS Indomitable, died 12 August 1942.

At the time of Lt Cmdr Judd's death, the HMS Indomitable and its fleet of 880 Sea Hurricanes was involved with Operation Pedestal which revolved around securing supplies to Malta in the central Mediterranean. In early August the Royal Navy were engaged in heavy combat with German and Italian aircraft bombing their ships securing these vital supplies to the besieged island of Malta. The date Lt. Cmdr Judd died was a particularly heavy day of combat when 4 waves of German and Italian aircraft attacked the British Fleet, on 12th August the HMS Indomitable's 880 Squadron FAA Sea Hurricane fighters had been in heavy aerial combat with Axis forces, with crew losses and in the evening the HMS Indomitable's defensive screen was breached and she was hit by two 500 kg bombs; a 500 kg bomb penetrated the un-armoured portion of the flight deck, killing 50 and wounding 59 men causing damage that required her to withdraw from the fight.

DID YOU KNOW....?

The first man to land on an aircraft carrier at sea was a South African.

A South African holds a very prestigious place in the world of aviation firsts. Edwin Dunning was the first man to land an aircraft on a moving ship adapted to carry aircraft, a feat that at the time was near impossible, and the practice of landing aircraft even today on an aircraft carrier takes supreme skill and is reserved for the 'best of the best' pilots, such is the hazard. Unfortunately for his pioneering endeavour his efforts were to end in tragedy.

Edwin Harris Dunning was born in South Africa on the 17th July 1892, the second child of Sir Edwin Harris Dunning and was later educated at Royal Navy Collegues in the United Kingdom.

A very skilled aviator, he took to pioneering naval aviation. He rose to a high rank within the Royal Navy's newly born Air Service or RNAS (which was to evolve into their 'Fleet Air Arm'). During World War 1 the Army and the Navy ran separate Air Services under their own Command. During the war the Royal Navy began to look at how aircraft can be operated from fighting ships.

Previously the Royal Navy had used catapults to launch the aircraft from ship decks but landing them was a different matter – early naval aircraft types were fitted with pontoons (sea-plane or 'float' plane) and 'landed in the ocean next to the vessel to be hoisted back on. This posed a number of difficulties, sea conditions and time and manoeuvring of the aircraft and ship for hoisting for starters. Also, they could only operate one aircraft from a ship and it was usually used for one thing – 'spotting' i.e. reconnaissance work.

The solution lay in an adapted fighting ship with a runway from which a number of aircraft could take-off or be catapulted from and could land directly on the ship again, this could then bring the formidable nature of air-power – striking targets anywhere in the world within range completely at will into the realm of sea-power. The concept of the aircraft carrier was born (a concept that to this day divides a super-power from an ordinary country).

However, you needed people with considerable skill and courage to try this idea out, that it was dangerous to land on a ship in high winds and rolling seas is an understatement – think of runway that is always moving around. They found such a man in our hero, one very brave South African aviator.

The Royal Navy decided to convert a Courageous-class Battlecruiser, the from a fighting ship into a fighting aircraft carrier by removing her forward gun and a flight deck was added to the bow in its place. A difficult proposition to land on as the approaching aircraft had to manoeuvre around the superstructure to land (much later on they removed the rear gun and extend the flight deck to compensate for this, but it look a tragic learning).

Squadron Leader Edwin Dunning, aged just 25, flying a Sopwith Pup bi-plane marched into the history books at Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands, Scotland during test exercises in the Flow. He became the first person to land on a moving aircraft carrier at sea. He completed this landmark aviation feat on 2 August 1917.

The landing was extremely perilous – whereas now arrest wires would bring a plane to a halt, Dunning was relying on the deck crew of the Furious to grab the wings of his Sopwith Pup to bring it to a halt.

Five short days later, after completing his milestone, Dunning endeavoured to do it again. However, tragedy struck during his third landing of the day. On approach, his aircraft stalled and he came down on the deck of the Furious at too steep an angle. Dunning was knocked unconscious, his port wing lifted as the plane went over the side of the ship and he drowned in the cockpit.

Why is it called "a shot"?

'A SHOT OF WHISKEY'

In the old west a .45 cartridge for six-gun cost 12 cents, so did a glass of whiskey. If a cowhand was low on cash he would often give the bartender a cartridge in exchange for a drink. This became known as a "shot" of whiskey.

Riff-raff?

The Mississippi River was the main way of traveling from north to south. Riverboats carried passengers and freight but they were expensive so most people used rafts. Everything had the right of way over rafts which were considered cheap. The steering oar on the rafts was called a "riff" and this transposed into riff-raff, meaning low class.

HISTORY OF THE FAMOUS MIDDLE FINGER

Before the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, the French, anticipating victory over the English, proposed to cut off the middle finger of all captured English soldiers. Without the middle finger it would be impossible to draw the renowned English longbow and therefore they would be incapable of fighting in the future. This famous English longbow was made of the native English Yew tree, and the act of drawing the longbow was known as 'plucking the yew' (or 'pluck yew').

Much to the bewilderment of the French, the English won a major upset and they began mocking the French by waving their middle fingers at the defeated French, saying, See, we can still pluck yew! Since 'pluck yew' is rather difficult to say, the difficult consonant cluster at the beginning has gradually changed to a labiodentals fricative F', and thus the words often used in conjunction with the one-finger-salute! It is also because of the pheasant feathers on the arrows used with the longbow that the symbolic gesture is known as 'giving the bird.'

And yew thought yew knew every plucking thing.

A left-wing politician, a TV reporter and a SAS trooper were captured by ISIS. They were sentenced to death by beheading. The ISIS leader said they could have one last wish each before sentence was carried out. The politician asks to hear a rendering of keep the red flag flying. The reporter asked that the beheading be televised so that even when he was dead his face would be on TV. The trooper asked to be kicked three times up the arse. This was carried out. As the last kick landed the trooper pulled a hidden 9mm pistol out of his smock shot three terrorists dead grabbed a fallen AK47 and killed the rest of the terrorists. The other two were amazed and asked why he requested to be kicked three times before drawing the gun. Because, said the trooper, when we get back to the UK I don't want you pair of bastards saying it was an unprovoked attack!!

**That's it for June. Enjoy the rain, the Springbok rugby the tennis,
cricket and anything else happening this month!**