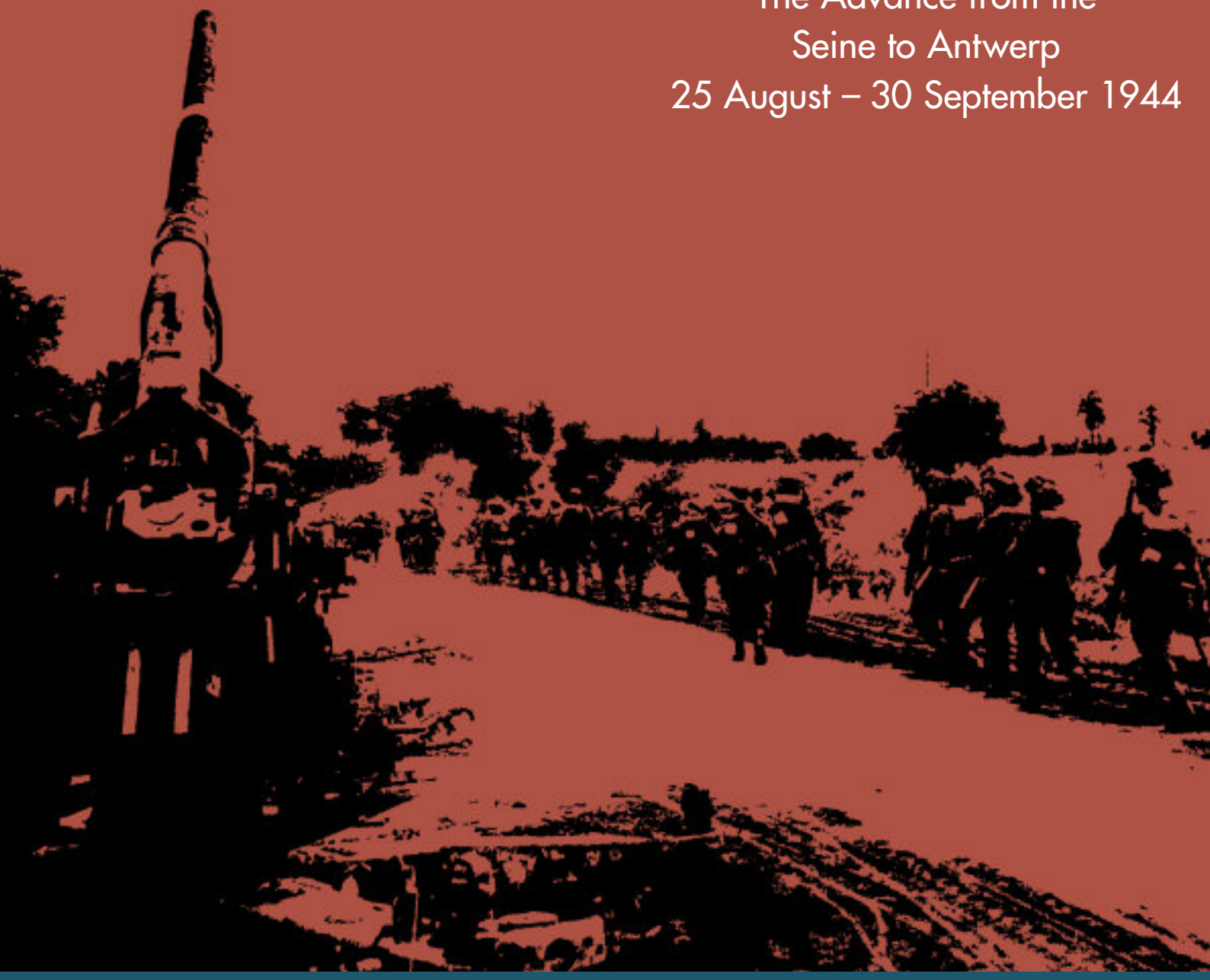
SECOND WORLD WAR

60TH

ANNIVERSARY

The Advance from the Seine to Antwerp 25 August – 30 September 1944

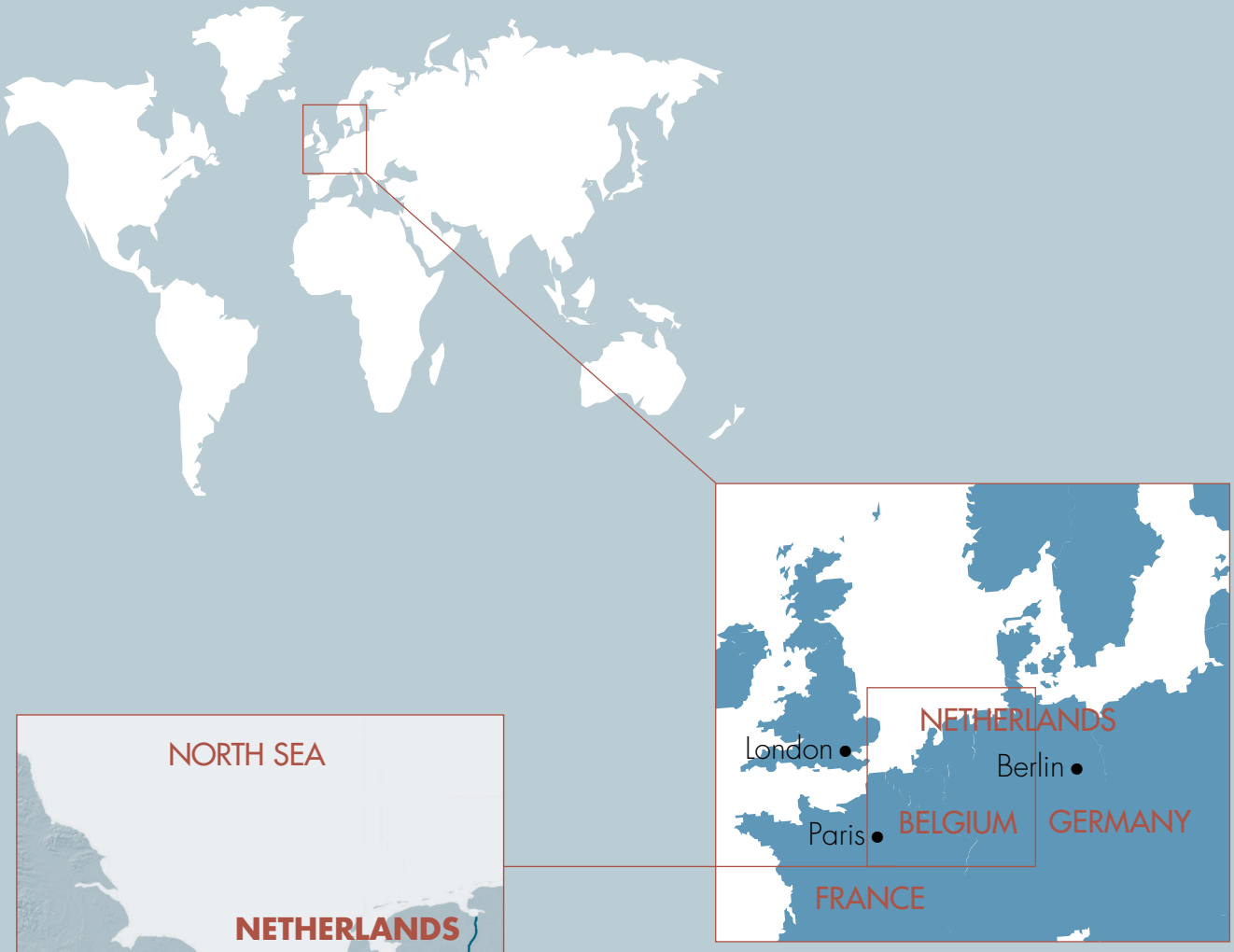


'The days of rapid advance across North West Europe'

No.6

The Advance from the Seine to Antwerp

ANTWERP, BELGIUM



KEY FACTS

Antwerp is:

- The second largest city in Belgium
- The second largest harbour in Europe
- Located at the inner point of the Scheldt estuary
- 69 km (43 miles) from the North Sea

Cover image: British infantry advance past a destroyed 88 mm anti-aircraft gun

IWM B 9982

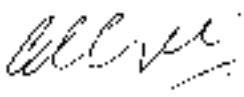
Foreword by the
Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans, Ivor Caplin MP

This series of commemorative booklets is dedicated to those who fought for our freedom in World War Two. The booklets provide a detailed account of key actions of the war for those familiar with the period, as well as serving as an educational tool for younger people less familiar with the heroic actions of Allied Service personnel.

In this, the sixth booklet in the series, we commemorate the way the Royal Navy and the RAF combined so effectively with the 21st Army Group and made such a rapid leap forward from the Seine to Antwerp.

August 1944 presented the Allies with a unique opportunity to lunge like a rapier through German-held Belgium and the Netherlands and end the war in weeks rather than months. To enable such a rapid advance, the well-fortified channel ports had to be cleared of German forces and opened up to Allied ships carrying the hundreds of tons of fuel and ammunition needed to sustain the effectiveness of the rapidly advancing Armour and Infantry. Because the direction of the attack on the ports was clear, commanders had to rely on thorough preparation rather than surprise to achieve their objectives with minimum losses. In contrast, the advance to Antwerp was achieved as a result of daring manoeuvres like the night march through 48 km (30 miles) of enemy-held territory to secure a bridgehead across the River Somme.

Sixty years on, we must take this opportunity to salute the bravery, organisation and ingenuity of our Service personnel. Through commemoration, reflection and education, we can successfully pay tribute to those who served, and I hope we can pass on the baton of remembrance to future generations, so they might understand the sacrifice made for the freedoms we all enjoy today.



The background to the Advance from the Seine to Antwerp

IWM B 9975

General Horrocks and Field Marshal Montgomery view the bridge over the Albert Canal

Following the difficult Operation Overlord landings (6 June 1944) and the slow and costly advance in the enclosed bocage countryside in Normandy, the last week of August and early September 1944 seemed to offer Britain, the United States and their Allies the prospect of crushing the German armies west of the River Rhine and bringing the war to an early end. After the devastating defeat of the German Army in the Falaise Pocket, the Allied advance across north-east France drove the disorganised and scattered remnants of the surviving German forces rapidly eastwards. The River Seine would have formed a natural defensive line for the Germans to stand, reorganise their forces and stop the pursuing Allied forces. Yet, the state of confusion on the German side meant that the strong natural barrier of the Seine was only weakly defended. Thus, the British–Canadian 21st Army Group under General Bernard Montgomery could cross this obstacle with relative ease between 25 and 27 August 1944.

In order to direct the further progress of the 21st Army Group, Montgomery issued a directive on 26 August. He instructed his army commanders Lieutenant-Generals Harry Crerar (First Canadian Army) and Miles Dempsey (Second British Army) to do three things: they were to destroy the German forces in the Pas de Calais area and Flanders, to seize the important port of Antwerp (Belgium), and to continue the advance towards the Ruhr region, Germany's industrial heartland. First Canadian Army would

advance along the coast and Second British Army would advance inland on the axis Amiens–Arras. This parallel advance by two armies was considered advantageous because any German force opposing the progress of the Canadians along the coast would be cut off by the advance of Second Army in their flank and rear. The right (southern) flank of Second Army, in turn, was covered by the First US Army, which was part of General Bradley's 12th Army Group.

Montgomery's directive was confirmed by General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe. He stressed the importance of crossing the River Somme, occupying the Pas de Calais area, capturing Belgian airfields for use by Allied air forces, and taking Antwerp. First Allied Airborne Army was allocated to Montgomery for air landing operations in the enemy's rear, where and when it seemed appropriate. Fighters and fighter-bombers were to hamper enemy movement across the rivers by attacking ferries and bridges over the Somme, Oise and Marne. Heavy bombers of the US Strategic Air Force and British Bomber Command were to render assistance to ground troops as and when required. The French *Résistance*, organised by the FFI (French Forces of the Interior), was asked to help the Allied forces by harassing the retreating Germans, capturing scattered German soldiers, and preventing the Germans from blowing up bridges and railways. It played this role well, as General Adair was to observe in his memoirs:

'The French *Résistance* was an enormous help and contributed much to the speed of our advance. Besides taking over our German prisoners, if for some reason we were held up, they always knew alternative routes and acted as guides.'

IWM B 9836

French *Résistance* fighters organised by the FFI

KEY FACTS

List of commanders mentioned in the text

ALLIED:

Supreme Allied Commander
General Dwight ('Ike') Eisenhower

21st Army Group Commander-in-Chief
General Bernard Montgomery (promoted to Field Marshal on 1 September 1944)

12th Army Group Commander-in-Chief
General Omar Bradley

First Canadian Army
Lieutenant-General Harry Crerar

II Canadian Corps
Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds

Second British Army
Lieutenant-General Miles Dempsey

Guards Armoured Division Commander
Major-General Allan Adair

49th Division Commander
Major-General 'Bubbles' Barker

AXIS:

Commander-in-Chief West
Field Marshal Walter Model

General Officer Commanding Fifth Panzer Army
General Heinrich Eberbach

Liberating the Channel ports (25 August – 30 September 1944)

Situation on the morning of 1 September 1944

After the crossing of the Seine, First Canadian Army moved towards the Channel coast. Its I (British) Corps closed in on Le Havre and St Valéry-en-Caux, and its II Canadian Corps on Dieppe, Le Tréport and Abbeville. German forces in front of First Canadian Army conducted a skilful retreat northwards, stopping and fighting their pursuers from time to time. In early September, 51st (Highland) Division took St Valéry without resistance and then moved west to join 49th Division in the siege of Le Havre. This port, surrounded on three sides by water, was strongly protected by fieldworks, anti-tank ditches, outlying forts, inundations and minefields. About 11,000 German troops, supported by considerable artillery, defended this important port.

IWM B 9686

Crocodile Flame-thrower Tank in action

The 51st and 49th Divisions were reinforced by flail tanks (designed to clear mines), armoured personnel carriers and Crocodile Flame-thrower Tanks to deal with the fortifications. Because the direction of the attack was clear, Major-General 'Bubbles' Barker had to rely on thorough preparation rather than surprise to achieve his objective at little loss. Thus, infantry battalions practised street-fighting. Models of the town and its defences were made and shown to officers and men, and detailed briefings were held. The Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Air Force (RAF) Bomber Command bombarded the town for two days, supplementing the already awesome firepower of 18 artillery regiments. Coordinating the 15-inch guns of the battleship HMS *Warspite* and the monitor HMS *Erebus* with Army artillery and aerial bombardment was a major planning feat in its own right.

The effect was most impressive, as Brigade-Major Paul Crook (147th Brigade) recalled: 'The defences were softened up for two days before the assault by shelling from Royal Navy ships at sea and bombing by the RAF. […] we were able to watch with awe and pleasure the massive raids by the air forces on the defences.

KEY FACTS

Crocodile Flame-thrower Tank

- Churchill Mark VII
- 75 mm gun in the turret
- Armour-piercing shells to use against tanks
- High-explosive rounds to use against infantry
- Hull-mounted flame-thrower
- 100 one-second flame bursts to a distance of 100 metres
- Flame-thrower fuel carried in a trailer behind the tank.

The Crocodile was a fearsome weapon, as effective in terrorising the enemy as in killing troops. The flame-thrower was so detested by the Germans that captured Crocodile crews would be shot rather than taken prisoner. British and Canadian infantry greatly appreciated support by Crocodiles, particularly when attacking German fortified positions.

IWM B 9967

A 7.2-inch Howitzer Artillery gun in action on 2 September 1944

IWM CL 1211

Destruction of the harbour in Le Havre

The bombing raids were accurately carried out and had a heartening effect on the morale of our troops and consequent disheartening effect on the enemy.' No amount of careful planning, however, could prevent the deaths of several thousand French civilians in the ensuing storm of steel. The attack itself required very close cooperation between tanks, engineers and infantry to overcome strongpoints and the minefields protecting them. In the face of heavy fire, the brigade attacks succeeded at moderate loss in the course of three days.

Crook remembered one particular night attack: 'And what a night! There were flail tanks flashing away detonating some mines and missing others. Armoured assault Engineer vehicles were chuntering around and tanks following up. There were the noises and effects of our own supporting fire from a variety of weapons. Finally, of course, there was the din of battle, organised chaos and danger.'

Barker was satisfied. He confided in his diary: 'I feel I put the chaps into battle with a good plan and they had therefore been able to do justice to their efforts and their high morale and courage. The show went through like clockwork in spite of the v. strong defences. Casualties are remarkably light. My tanks of all sorts cooperated superbly and the gunners were quite excellent. […] The cooperation of the infantry and tanks was quite excellent […].' Crook singled out the infantry for praise:

'Although he received plenty of support, in the end it was the British infantry soldier who had to go forward and attack fortified positions in the face of enemy fire. It was due to their dogged courage, determination and skill that such a successful outcome was so rapidly achieved.'

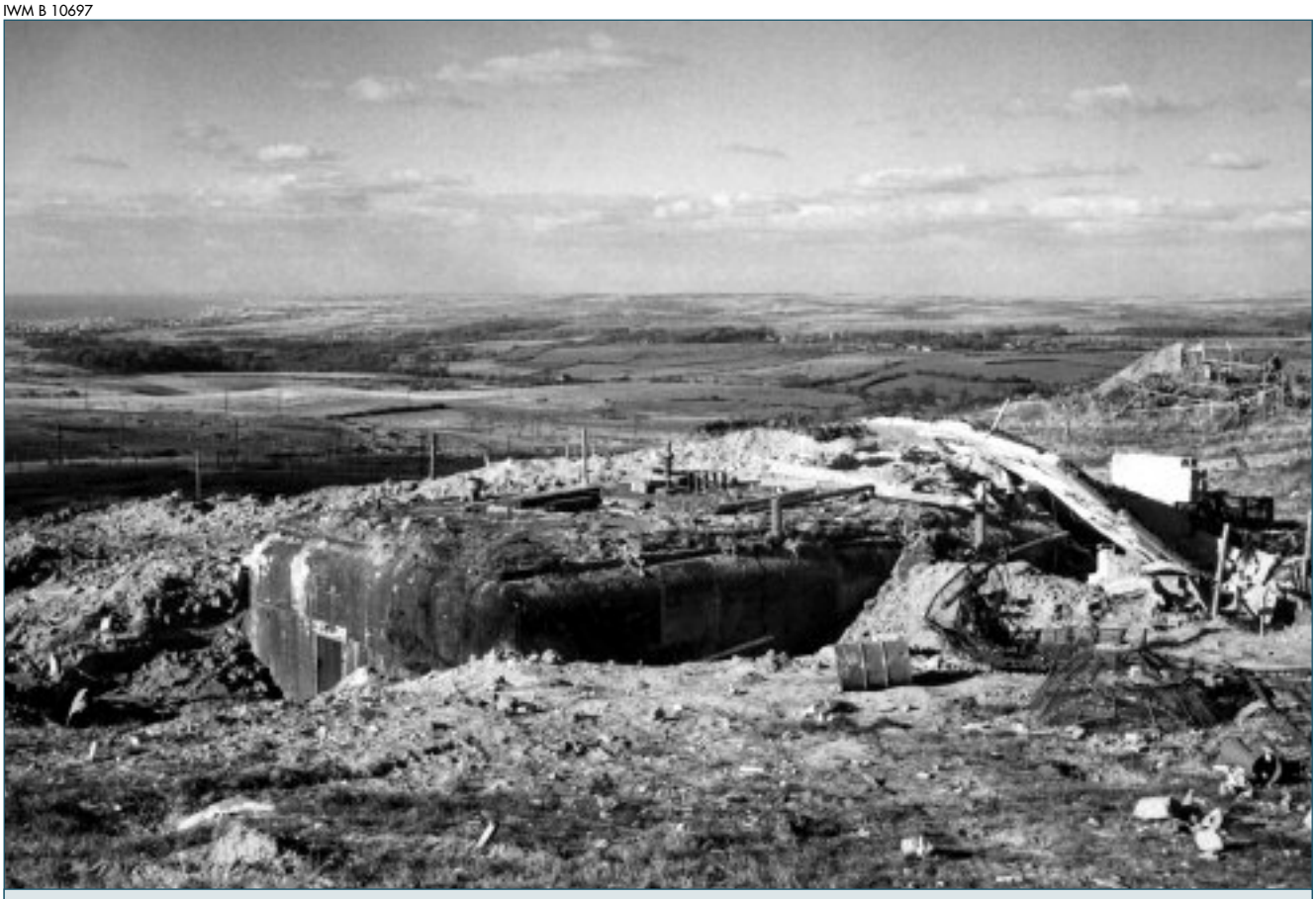
On the same day that Le Havre was liberated, 4th Canadian Armoured Division crossed the Ghent Canal at Bruges and 1st Polish Armoured Division advanced through Ypres and Roulers to Aeltre. Once Le Havre had been taken on 12 September, First Canadian Army moved on to assail Boulogne and Calais. Though Canadian forces had already closed in on these ports, the assault proper could only begin once heavy artillery and bombers were no longer needed at Le Havre.

The ports at the Pas de Calais had been particularly well fortified by the Germans, since Allied landings had been expected in this area rather than in Normandy. Though most of the heavy coastal guns pointed seawards, fear of airborne operations had prompted the Germans to build all-round defences. The 3rd Canadian Division had to take Boulogne, Calais and the batteries at Cap Gris-Nez in rapid succession as the guns of one port could shell the approaches

IWM CL 1248

Calais under aerial bombardment

IWM B 10697



German fortifications on Mont Lambert

to the other. Mont Lambert was the key to Boulogne. It overlooked the approaches to the town and was heavily fortified with pillboxes and gun positions. About 10,000 German troops defended Boulogne, outnumbering the attacking Canadians. In order to even the odds, Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, commanding 3rd Canadian Division, received support from so-called 'Funnies', special armoured vehicles such as flame-throwers, petard- (an explosive) throwing tanks, and flail tanks, which had already proven their worth at Le Havre. Though Montgomery pressed for rapid results, Crerar advised Simonds to take his time and prepare carefully in order to avoid needless losses. On 17 September, after another aerial bombardment involving 721 heavy bombers of Bomber Command as well as artillery counter-battery fire, two brigades launched the attack on Mont Lambert. Though the Canadians suffered from German artillery and mortar fire, the combined efforts of infantry, combat engineers and tanks silenced one pillbox after another. Remarkably effective was the very close cooperation between ground troops and supporting fighter-bombers and medium bombers of the 2nd Tactical Air Force.

However, the initial aerial bombardment had left some of the German defences undamaged: other strong points were subdued only after very heavy fighting, and taking enemy positions in close combat proved necessary again and again. Nevertheless, Boulogne was surrendered on 22 September.

Since the remaining brigade of 3rd Canadian Division was too weak to capture Calais on its own, the attack on the port had to wait until 25 September when the two brigades engaged at Boulogne had completed their task and could be moved forward. With the support of further massive aerial bombardments by Bomber Command, and close air support from the 2nd Tactical Air Force, German strongpoints at Calais were gradually taken

by tank–infantry cooperation. Crocodile Flame-thrower Tanks proved very useful here as elsewhere in demoralising the defenders. Calais fell on 30 September. Meanwhile, the batteries at Cap Gris-Nez, holding the cross-Channel guns that had fired at Dover, were taken by the same combination of air, infantry and armoured attack. While 3rd Canadian Division dealt with Boulogne and Calais, 2nd Canadian Division spent the first two weeks of September in hard fighting for German positions around Dunkirk. Loon-Plage and Bray-Dunes, east and west of Dunkirk respectively, were taken in cooperation with fighter-bombers and the Belgian White Brigade, a unit of resistance fighters. Since Dunkirk's main defences had still not been reached by mid-September, Montgomery finally decided to mask Dunkirk rather than try and take it.

With Boulogne, Calais and Cap Gris-Nez in Canadian hands, two more ports were open to Allied shipping. Alas, as with Le Havre, the captured ports had been so severely damaged during the fighting, as well as by German demolitions, that they were not immediately available for unloading

IWM B 10470

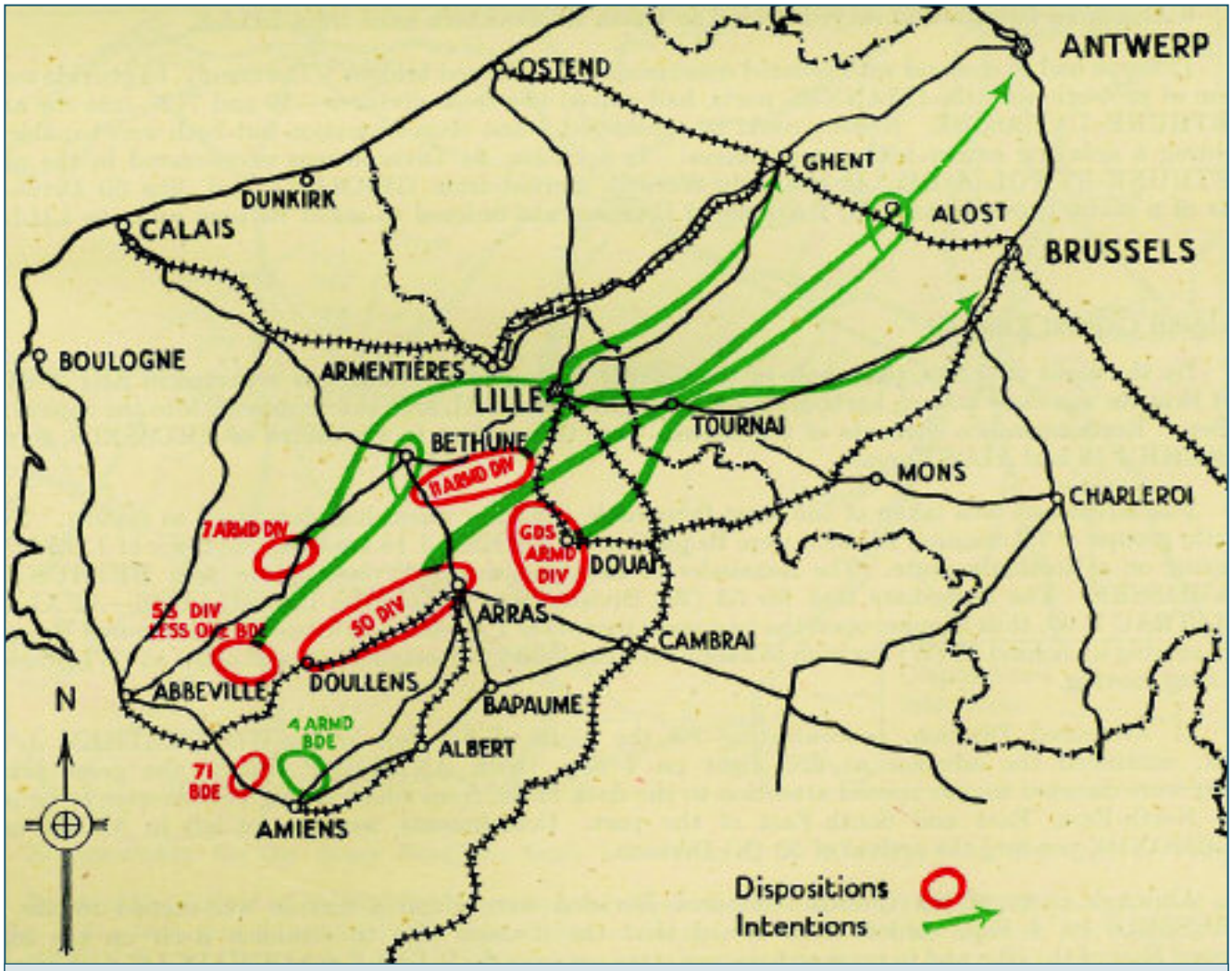
A cross-Channel gun at Cap Gris-Nez

Allied shipping. The destruction of the harbours notwithstanding, an important success was the capture of German V1 batteries from which the flying bombs had been launched against London. With the exception of Dunkirk, the Channel coast up to the Ghent Canal was cleared of German troops by the end of September.

IWM B 10033

Allied infantry on watch after the attack on the village of Hechtel, 12 September 1944

Advance to Antwerp (30 August – 4 September 1944)



Dispositions and intentions of Second Army on 2 September 1944

In late August, Second Army, consisting of British VIII, XII and XXX Corps, progressed north-eastwards as planned at a rapid pace. During the night of 30–31 August, 11th Armoured Division conducted a night march to Amiens, through 48 km (30 miles) of enemy-held territory. This was a considerable risk as a determined enemy with a couple of anti-tank guns or tanks could easily ambush the column and cause havoc. Yet the Germans were so surprised by this daring move that they failed to render effective resistance. In the small hours of the next morning, the Division motored into Amiens and immediately advanced across the River Somme. The night march had paid off. Territory had been gained, confused German units had been destroyed or captured in Amiens, including the Army Commander General Eberbach, and the Somme had been crossed.

The Guards Armoured Division had managed to cross the Somme at the same time further south, subsequently establishing a bridgehead, and holding this position against repeated German counter-attacks. XXX Corps and XII Corps successfully moved up to the Somme, but VIII Corps had to be left behind because its transport was needed to move fuel and ammunition for its two sister corps. The crossing of the Somme was an important success because Field Marshal Walter Model, the German Army Group Commander, had planned to hold the line of the Somme and reorganise German forces behind this obstacle.

Now, with tanks of the 11th Armoured Division already across, Model had to abandon the plan and order further withdrawal.

On 1 September, General Montgomery was promoted to Field Marshal in recognition of his achievements in Normandy. At the same time there was good news of the rapid advance of the Guards Armoured Division to Arras and 11th Armoured Division's advance to Lens. Though pockets of German resistance remained in the areas crossed by the two divisions, these pockets at Doullens, Albert and Bapaume could be bypassed and left to the following 50th Division and 8th Armoured Brigade to clear.

On 3 September there was an important push forward by the Guards Armoured Division, reinforced by 231st Infantry Brigade (50th Division), to Brussels. Organised in two brigade groups, with the 32nd Guards Brigade on the right and the 5th Brigade Group on the left, the Guards raced ahead, competing to reach Brussels first. Adair, the officer commanding the Guards Armoured Division, recalled in his memoirs: 'Rivalry between the two brigades was becoming increasingly keen and I was persuaded to decide on a winning post. I chose the spot where the two routes met, just beyond a railway bridge in Brussels. Both the Grenadiers and Welsh Guards were in turn held up by more enemy pockets, and it was a neck-and-neck race between the two groups. […] The Cromwells [tanks] performed miracles of speed and endurance, a triumph for the manufacturers and fitters and drivers.' Apart from strong German resistance at Pont-à-Marcq, the mostly weak opposition was brushed aside.

National Archive WO 171/1259

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required).

Unit 1st Battalion Welsh Guards

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. J. P. [illegible]

Month and Year [illegible]

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
FRANCE	1		day, all beautifully tended. The SOMME was crossed without accident and the Battalion came to rest in the suburbs of ARRAS, the same town which the Battalion had been the last British troops to leave in 1940.	
	2		A late reveille and a much needed sleep. Coys were in areas round the suburbs of ARRAS and had all been given a tremendous reception. A rifle belonging to No 4 Coy from 1940 was handed to the RSM BAKER by a local inhabitant and Major MILLER found much of the kit he had been forced to leave behind in 1940.	

FRANCE

1 Sept 1944 — The SOMME was crossed without accident and the Battalion came to rest in the suburbs of ARRAS, the same town which the Battalion had been the last British troops to leave in 1940.

2 Sept 1944 — A late reveille and a much needed sleep. Companies were in areas round the suburbs of ARRAS and had all been given a tremendous reception. A rifle belonging to No 4 Company from 1940 was handed to the Regimental Sergeant Major BAKER by a local inhabitant and Major MILLER found much of the kit he had been forced to leave behind in 1940.

Extract from 1st Battalion Welsh Guards war diary, 1 and 2 September 1944

In the evening, the Welsh Guards had won the race, entering Brussels, and were celebrated by the local population. Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis recalled that grateful Belgians could be as distressing as Germans shooting:

'Crowds of joyous, deliriously excited citizens barred the way, swarmed all over our tanks, screamed salutations to us, pressed fruit and drink upon the tired, dusty, hot tank crews. […] one was left wondering which was worse – to be kissed, hugged and screamed at by hysterical women while trying to give orders over the wireless and to control the direction of your tank; or to be free of the crowd and shot at by the Germans.'

During their advance, the Guards had pushed far ahead and covered 112 km (70 miles) through enemy-occupied territory. This was a remarkable feat of daring as a well-organised enemy could have easily cut off and encircled the Guards. The local population was as joyous about its liberation as the Germans were perplexed about the big leap of the Guards. The Guards capped their success with seizing Louvain as well after heavy fighting the following day.

Meanwhile, 11th Armoured Division had had a less easy ride towards Antwerp as German resistance repeatedly stopped the tanks. As a consequence, the Division reached Antwerp on 4 September. In spite of the delay, thanks to close cooperation with the well-organised Belgian resistance movement in the city, the docks of Antwerp fell to the Allies undamaged.

On the left of 11th Armoured Division, XII Corps had approached Ghent after a difficult advance by 4 September. While 53rd Division cleared the Germans from St Pol, 7th Armoured Division moved up the Escaut valley on Ghent, repeatedly outflanking German opposition on the way.

IWM CL 1144

Rail transport destroyed near Louvain

IWM CL 449

Hawker Typhoons taking off to attack targets behind enemy lines

Throughout the advance from the Seine to Antwerp, the RAF rendered important service with the strategic bombers of Bomber Command and, from within 2nd Tactical Air Force, the medium bombers of 2 Group and the tactical fighter-bombers of 84 Group and 83 Group, which supported First Canadian Army and Second British Army respectively. So that assistance was always on time, the aircraft wings (groups) used leapfrog tactics from airfield to airfield to get as close to the frontline as possible. Typhoons used a 'cab rank' system, patrolling near to the battle area and waiting to be called up for a mission by a forward air controller. In some cases, the ground crews of the Typhoons could actually observe targets being attacked by their squadrons from the airfield. When the fighter-bombers were not involved in close support work, they swept over roads and railways to destroy enemy vehicles and forces in transit.

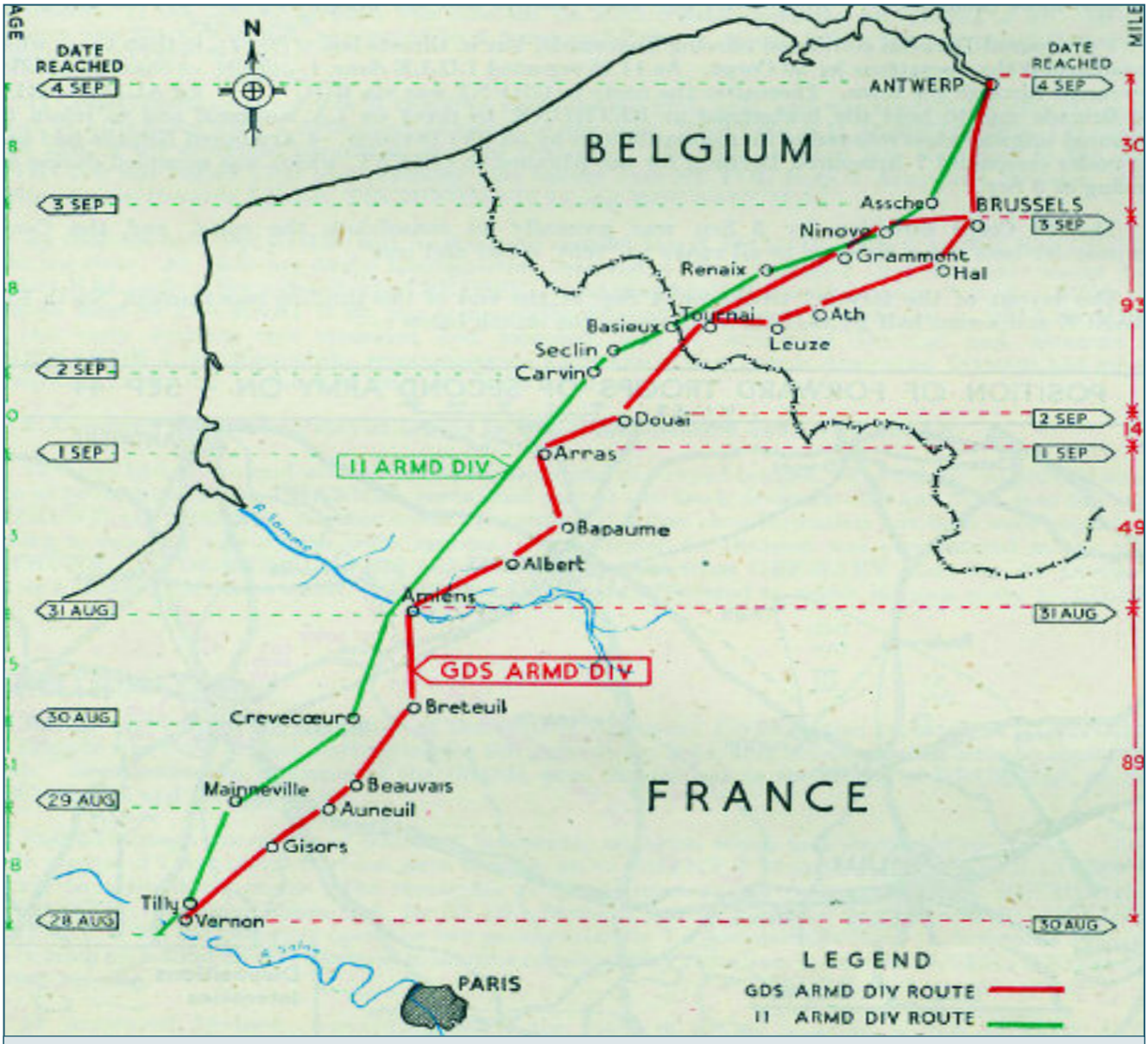
All operations in France, land or air, were completely dependent on their sea communications for deployment, reinforcement and supply. Together with maritime aircraft, ships from the Royal Navy's home commands continued to safeguard shipping in the Channel from the significant but now rarely successful U-Boat threat. Royal Navy port, salvage and minesweeping units were vital in opening harbours as the advance continued.

KEY FACTS

Hawker Typhoon

- Built by Hawker Aircraft Company
- British single-seat fighter-bomber
- Armed with four 20 mm cannon
- Eight armour-piercing or high-explosive 127 mm rockets or two 1000 lb bombs
- Armoured against light ground fire

Narrow Front or Broad Front



Stages of the Advance to Antwerp

In September 1944, Allied forces in Europe were so strong that supplies became a problem. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe, had such numbers of troops, tanks and vehicles on the continent that it became very difficult to supply them with the petrol to move and the ammunition to fight. Between June and August, this problem had not been too serious as Allied ground forces were fighting close to the beaches where the supplies were unloaded. Once the armies had advanced as far as Belgium, however, the supply lines stretching back from the divisions to the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches became too long. The railway system had been bombed by the Allies in order to inhibit the movement of German forces during Operation Overlord. On their retreat, the Germans blew up the remaining lines and bridges. Thus, the railways could not be used for the transport of bulky goods. Instead, thousands of trucks had to pick up fuel and ammunition in the Bayeux area and cart them over hundreds of miles to the frontline units. If one takes into account that an armoured division needed hundreds of tons of fuel and ammunition per day to be effective, the scale of the problem can be appreciated.

Because the Germans were fully aware of Eisenhower's predicament, they decided to defend the Channel ports for as long as possible in order to deny their use to the Allies. Only by wresting major ports such as Le Havre and Antwerp from the Germans could the Allies hope to dramatically shorten their supply lines and increase the flow of fuel and ammunition to the frontline.

Faced with the supply crisis, Eisenhower could not hope to keep all his divisions moving at high speed at the same time. He could either channel most supplies to one of the two Army Groups, Montgomery's 21st or Bradley's 12th, enabling either force to progress rapidly, or he could divide supplies between both forces, enabling both of them to move, but at a slower rate. Throughout September, Montgomery and Eisenhower discussed the most promising approach. Montgomery argued strongly that supply priority should be given to 21st Army Group. He maintained that his command, if well supplied, could lunge like a rapier through German-held Belgium and the Netherlands, through the industrial Ruhr region, across the north German plain, and into Berlin, Germany's heart. This single thrust would enable the Allies to end the war in weeks rather than months.

Eisenhower was willing to give priority to Montgomery's advance towards the Ruhr, by allocating the First Allied Airborne Army to 21st Army Group, for example, but he did not agree to stop Bradley's 12th Army Group in order to channel most of the fuel to Montgomery.

Both Eisenhower and Montgomery, being fixated on crossing the Rhine as soon as possible, had overlooked the importance of the Scheldt estuary. Due to their problematic supply situation, the Allied armies urgently needed to use the port of Antwerp in order to shorten their supply lines. Though Antwerp itself was in Allied hands, the inland port could not be used for shipping unless the Scheldt estuary had been cleared of German troops. To clear the Scheldt, a major military effort was required which neither Eisenhower nor Montgomery allowed for. The optimistic assumption was that only minor forces were required for this task. This was a serious oversight because concentrating on gaining control of the Scheldt as quickly as possible would not only ease supply problems, but would also trap the withdrawing German Fifteenth Army on the south bank of the Scheldt. As it was, the Germans were given a sufficiently broad window of opportunity to evacuate most of this army to Holland.

IWM B 9583

Enemy transport destroyed by Hawker Typhoons

The battlefield today

CWGC

Geel War Cemetery, Belgium

Road construction in the Pas de Calais area and urban sprawl have considerably changed the battlefields. The cemeteries, however, are still mute testimony to the fighting in September 1944. Canadian visitors to the battlefield are particularly well served. There is a Canada Museum in the town of Adegem, dedicated to the history of Belgium in the Second World War, including its liberation. Other interesting museums include the Musée du Mur de l'Atlantique in Audighen and the Musée de la Guerre de Calais in the Calais city park. Close to the Canada Museum is the Adegem Canadian War Cemetery where 845 Canadian and 302 Allied Service personnel are buried. Most of these troops had fought to clear the south bank of the Scheldt. Other Canadian war cemeteries can be found at Calais and Bergen Op Zoom. The Schoonselhof Cemetery in Antwerp contains the graves of 1473 members of the Commonwealth and Allied forces. The Leopoldsburg War Cemetery is the last resting place for 798 Commonwealth and Allied Service personnel. Those Service personnel who fell in the fighting for the Albert Canal and the Meuse-Escaut Canal are buried in the Geel and Kasterlee War Cemeteries.

CWGC

Kasterlee War Cemetery, Belgium

Geel War Cemetery contains 400 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and is located midway between Antwerp 46 km (29 miles), Hasselt 38 km (24 miles) and Louvain (Leuven).

Kasterlee War Cemetery contains 100 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and is located 54 km (34 miles) north of Louvain (Leuven) and 53 km (33 miles) east of Antwerp.

KEY FACTS

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains over 1,147,192 war graves (which does not include the graves of some 40,000 foreign nationals) at 23,203 burial sites in 149 countries around the world. It also commemorates a further 759,597 Commonwealth war dead on memorials to the missing.

Commonwealth governments share the cost of maintenance in proportion to the number of graves of their war dead: UK – 79%; Canada – 10%; Australia – 6%; New Zealand – 2%; South Africa – 2%; India – 1%.

Forces assigned to the Advance from the Seine to Antwerp

Navy

Force T (support to land forces)*
Le Havre Bombarding Force*
Salvage and Port Clearance Parties
Forces 26 and 27 (Anti-Submarine Warfare)*
2nd, 3rd, 4th, 11th, 12th, 14th and 19th Escort Groups
21st Destroyer Flotilla
Coastal Forces
Nos. 41, 45, 46, 47 and 48 (Royal Marine) Commandos

*The 'forces' listed above were very flexible organisations which included the ships appropriate to the task at the time, ranging from battleships to motor launches.

Army

Second British Army

VIII (British) Corps
XII (British) Corps
XXX (British) Corps

Guards Armoured Division

5th Guards Armoured Brigade
32nd Guards Brigade

7th Armoured Division

22nd Armoured Brigade
131st Infantry Brigade

11th Armoured Division

29th Armoured Brigade
159th Infantry Brigade

3rd Infantry Division

8th Infantry Brigade
9th Infantry Brigade
185th Infantry Brigade

15th (Scottish) Infantry Division

44th (Lowland) Infantry Brigade
46th (Highland) Infantry Brigade
227th (Highland) Infantry Brigade

43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division

129th Infantry Brigade
130th Infantry Brigade
214th Infantry Brigade

49th (West Riding) Infantry Division

56th Infantry Brigade
146th Infantry Brigade
147th Infantry Brigade

50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division

69th Infantry Brigade
151st Infantry Brigade
231st Infantry Brigade

51st (Highland) Infantry Division

152nd Infantry Brigade
153rd Infantry Brigade
154th Infantry Brigade

53rd (Welsh) Infantry Division

71st Infantry Brigade
158th Infantry Brigade
160th Infantry Brigade

First Canadian Army

I (British) Corps
II Canadian Corps

2nd Canadian Infantry Division

4th Canadian Infantry Brigade
5th Canadian Infantry Brigade
6th Canadian Infantry Brigade

3rd Canadian Infantry Division

7th Canadian Infantry Brigade
8th Canadian Infantry Brigade
9th Canadian Infantry Brigade

4th Canadian Armoured Division

4th Canadian Armoured Brigade
10th Canadian Infantry Brigade

1st Polish Armoured Division

10th Polish Armoured Brigade
3rd Polish Infantry Brigade

Air

Second Tactical Air Force (RAF) Order of Battle: 2 Group, 83 Group, 84 Group, 85 Group; plus 34 Wing and Air Spotting Pool.

Bomber Command (RAF) Groups participating in operations against the Channel ports: 1 Group, 3 Group, 4 Group, 5 Group, 6 Group and 8 Group.

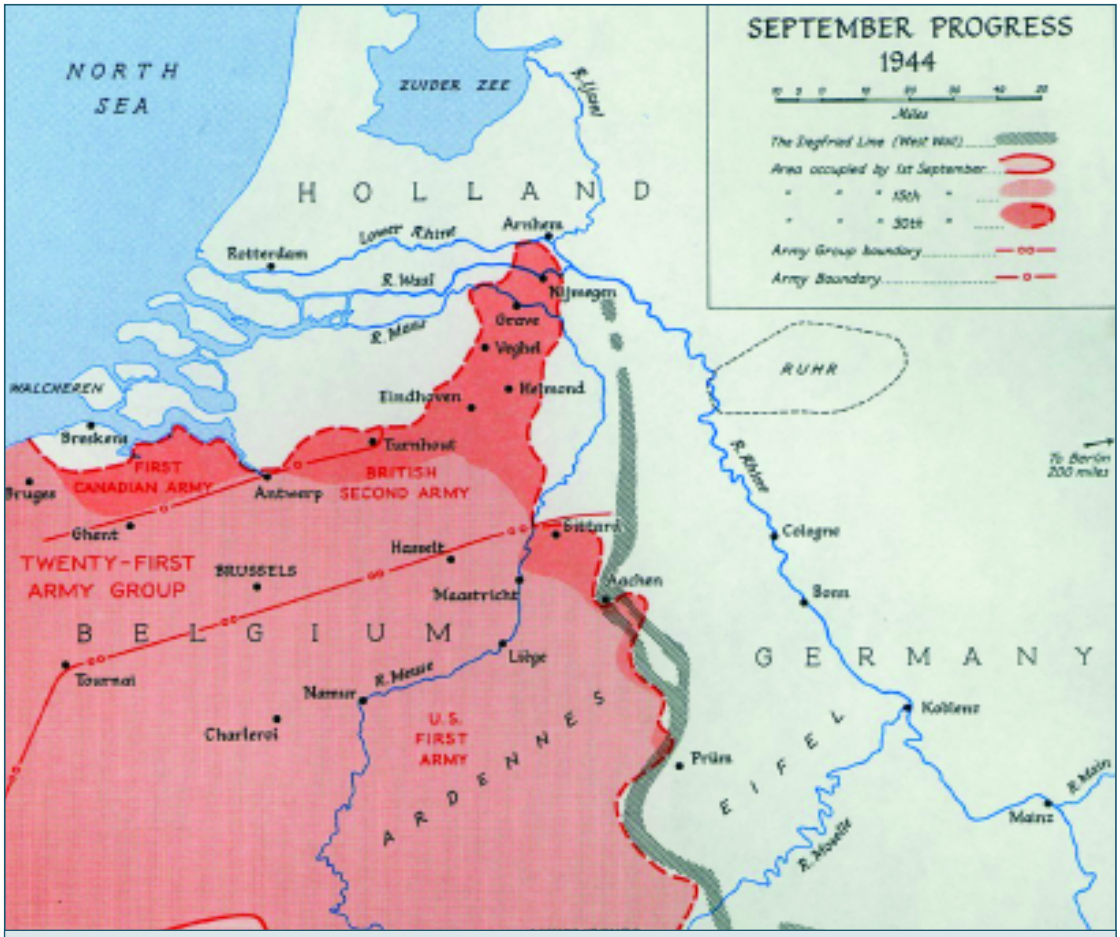
RBL Antwerp

60th Anniversary of the Advance from the Seine to Antwerp

Glossary

This booklet is intended to be of interest to young people as well as veterans. As the former may not be acquainted with basic military terminology, a simple glossary of 1944 British Army terms relating to variously sized commands is included here. These commands are listed in descending order of size with the rank of the commander shown in italics.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Army Group *General or Field Marshal*	The largest military command deployed by the British Army, comprising two or more armies and containing 400,000–600,000 troops.
Army *Lieutenant-General*	A military command controlling several subordinate corps, plus supporting forces, amounting to 100,000–200,000 troops.
Corps *Lieutenant-General*	A military command controlling two or more divisions, as well as other supporting forces, amounting to 50,000–100,000 troops.
Division *Major-General*	The standard 1944 British Army formation, an infantry or armoured division, containing 10,000–20,000 personnel.
Brigade *Brigadier*	A formation that contains several battalions or regiments that amount to 3000–6000 personnel, which exists either independently or else forms part of a division.
Regiment *Lieutenant-Colonel*	A unit typically of armoured or artillery forces, amounting to 500–900 soldiers, that equates in status and size to an infantry battalion.
Battalion *Lieutenant-Colonel*	A unit usually comprising 500–900 soldiers (such as an infantry, engineer or signals battalion).
Squadron *Major*	Typically, a sub-unit of an armoured or reconnaissance regiment that equates in status and size to an infantry company.
Company *Major*	A sub-unit of a battalion. A typical infantry company could contain around 150–180 soldiers.
Battery *Major*	A sub-unit, usually of artillery, that forms part of a regiment.
Unit	A military grouping that ranges in size from a section (of 10 soldiers) up to a battalion or regiment (500–900 personnel).
Formation	A large military grouping that ranges in size from a brigade up to an army group.
Bridgehead	Post held on far side of river or other obstacle facing the enemy's position.
Counter-battery fire	Artillery fire aimed to destroy the enemy's guns.
Masking	Masking a fortress or a town means to observe the garrison from a distance to prevent the garrison from receiving supplies or from leaving the fortress.
Monitor	A specialised shore-bombardment ship armed with a pair of heavy guns.
Pillbox	A small, enclosed fortified emplacement, made of reinforced concrete.
Pocket	When a military unit is encircled, it is considered to be in a 'pocket'.
V1 Flying bomb	Vergeltungswaffe (reprisal weapon), known as the Flying bomb, Buzz bomb or Doodlebug, was the first modern guided missile.



The Advance to Antwerp August – September 1944

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sacrifices, and of the contributions they made to our security
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