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Directorate of History
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July 1986

RESTRICTED

AMENDMENT TO
REPORT NO. 139
HISTORICAL SECTION
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3

by See for DHist NDHQ

Date: AUG 11 1985
ADUT

1. The following amendment, dealing with the casualties suffered by the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion on 6 Jun 44 should be read in conjunction with para 40 of Report No. 139.

2. This breakdown of casualty figures has been compiled by the Officer i/c War Diaries, Historical Section, C.M.H.Q., from information contained on the "battle casualty statistics cards" maintained by the Casualty Section, Overseas Canadian Records Office.

3. Casualties for 6 Jun were as follows:

Presumed Killed	2
Killed	18
Missing	91
Wounded	6
Total	117

This figure 'Missing' 91, includes 10 listed as "now safe" and 81 listed as "P.O.W. now repatriated."

(C.P. Stacey) Colonel
Director Historical Section

5 Oct 46

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R E P O R T NO. 139

HISTORICAL OFFICER

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3

by 722 AUG for DHist NDHQ
Date: ADUT 11 1986

THE 1ST CANADIAN PARACHUTE BATTALION IN FRANCE
(6 JUNE - 6 SEPTEMBER 1944)

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JUL 7 1945

SECRET

REPORT NO. 139

HISTORICAL OFFICER

JUL 7 1945

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in France
(6 June - 6 September 1944)

1. This report is the story in outline of the participation of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in the Allied Invasion of France. The period covered is from D-day, 6 Jun 44, to the unit's return to England on 6 Sep 44. The formation of this unit, and the problems arising out of its early training in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, have been briefly discussed in an earlier report (No. 138).

2. After its arrival in the United Kingdom on 28 Jul 43, under the command of Lt.-Col. G.F.P. Bradbrooke, the Battalion had ten months' extensive training in preparation for the airborne phase of the Allied assault. During this period of training, and subsequently during action in France, the unit formed part of the 3rd Parachute Brigade of the British 6th Airborne Division. The latter formation was included in 21 Army Group which, under the command of General Sir Bernard Montgomery, comprised the British and Canadian component of the Allied forces that invaded France. The following brief account will inevitably make frequent reference to the activities of the British formations under whose command 1 Cdn Para Bn served, in order that the relationship of the unit to the operation as a whole may be clearly established.

3. Material for this report has been drawn from the unit War Diary, substantially supplemented by the War Diary of 3 Para Bde (Brit), and from sitreps and the statements of officers who participated in the airborne assault. Map references throughout this report refer to: FRANCE, 1:100,000, CAEN-FALAISE, Sheet 7F; LE HAVRE - PONT-AUDEMER, Sheet 8E; and LISIEUX - BERNAY, Sheet 8F.

GENERAL PLAN OF THE INVASION

4. The general plan of the Allied invasion of France in Operation "OVERLORD" is described in the report, -- "Canadian Participation in the Operations in North West Europe, 1944. Part 1: The Assault and Subsequent Operations of 3 Cdn Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde".# In very condensed form the initial Joint Plan visualized a night attack by bombers, in very great strength, followed by a large-scale attack by airborne troops. The latter would precede and prepare for the main seaborne invasion, which would take place under the cover of further air support and a tremendous naval bombardment. The general area of the attack was that portion of the north-eastern coast of NORMANDY in the vicinity of CARENTAN, BAYEUX and CAEN.

FORMATION AND UNIT COMPOSITIONS

5. The airborne attack comprised two major operations. In the western sector, on the right of the Allied landing, near CARENTAN and VARREVILLE beaches, two American divisions, 82 and 101 Airborne Divs, were to make a descent in preparation for the seaborne landings in that area. In the eastern sector, allotted

Still in preparation.

to British and Canadian forces, 6 Airborne Div, forming part of 1 Corps of the Second British Army, was given the important task of protecting the left flank of 3 (Brit) Inf Div, which was to land on the beach west of OUISTREHAM and to capture CAEN by H-plus-12 hrs. 6 Airborne Div was to deny the enemy use of the area between the River ORNE and the River DIVES north of the road TROARN (1667) - SANNERVILLE (1368) - COLOMBELLES (0770), and to hold this bridgehead until seaborne reinforcements arrived. During the period of planning, the code name "NEPTUNE" was given to the assault phase of the projected operations in the British sector. (An explanation of the relationship of the code name "NEPTUNE" to "OVERLORD" is given in the report "Canadian Participation in the Operations in North West Europe, Part I".)

6. Formations of 6 Airborne Div, which was commanded by Maj.-Gen. R. N. Gale, O.B.E., M.C., were 3 Para Bde Gp (which included 1 Cdn Para Bn), 5 Para Bde Gp, 6 Airlanding Bde Gp, and 1 Airlanding Recce Regt. Brought under command for operation "NEPTUNE" was 1 S.S. Bde. Each of these five forces was assigned important tasks within the divisional area. 5 Para Bde (7, 12 and 13 Para Bns), in the role of securing a link with 3 (Brit) Inf Div was ordered to seize and hold the two bridges that crossed the CANAL DE CAEN A LA MER (0974) and the ORNE River (1074) near BÉNOUVILLE, and to establish a bridgehead in the RANVILLE area (1073). Immediately to the south, 6 Airlanding Bde Gp (1 R.U.R., 2 Oxf Bucks) was to come down on a landing zone west of AMFREVILLE (1174) and to secure a firm base area between ESCOVILLE (1271) and the ORNE River. Making a glider landing east of RANVILLE (1174) late on D-day, the Airlanding Recce Regt was to strike southwards beyond the divisional boundary, with the intention of establishing a base at CAGNY (1064) from which further offensive operations east and southeast could be carried out. To the north the Commandos of the seaborne 1 S.S. Bde (3, 4 and 6 Commandos, and 45 (RM) Command), landing on the OUISTREHAM beaches, were assigned the task of mopping up the coastal area between the ORNE and DIVES Rivers as far south as LE PLEIN (1275) - VARAVILLE (1875). The job of preventing the entrance into the area of enemy reinforcements from the east, by demolishing six bridges across the DIVES and one of its tributaries, the DIVETTE, and by denying the use of all main roads within the divisional area, was given to 3 Para Bde (under the command of Brig. S.J.L. Hill, D.S.O., M.C.). In addition the brigade was made responsible for silencing an enemy coast defence battery at MERVILLE (155776). (W.D., 3 Para Bde O.O. No.1, 19 May 44. Copy placed in W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, May 1944.)

7. Division of the objectives of 3 Para Bde between its component units saw 9 Para Bn being given the road-denial tasks in the north (including the destruction of the MERVILLE battery), 8 Para Bn receiving the bridge-blowing assignments in the southeast part of the area, and 1 Cdn Para Bn (commanded by Lt.-Col. G.F.P. Bradbrooke) being allotted to operations in the eastern and central sector, in the ROBEHOMME (1972) - VARAVILLE (1875) - LE MESNIL (1372) triangle. The specific tasks of the Canadian unit as enumerated in the 3 Para Bde Operation Order were as follows:

- (i) "Secure and protect DZ (1775) during landing of the Bde Gp by destruction of enemy HQ area VARAVILLE and neutralization of enemy if occupying houses area 167753.
- (ii) "Destroy bridge at VARAVILLE 186758 by H plus 2 hours and cover demolitions until relieved by 1 SS Bde NOT before H plus 5 hours.

trailers, loaded with ammunition and signals equipment. Each parachutist carried normal equipment, including fighting knife, toggle rope, escape kit, with French currency, and two 24-hour rations. -3-

(iii) "Destroy bridges at ROBEHOMME 195727 and 199739 by H plus 2 hours and cover demolitions." (But there is no indication on the 1:25,000 map of the area of the existence of any bridge, or need for one, at 199739. Nor does the account of the operation in 1 Cdn Para Bn's War Diary make any reference to the destruction of such a bridge. It may be assumed that this was one of a number of small bridges over ditches within "B" Company's area.)

(iv) "Cover move to and assault on battery (MERVILLE) by 9 Para Bn from interference from south.

(v) "Seize and hold the area around the road junction 141728."

(ibid; para 8)

This road junction topped the narrow LE PLEIN - BOIS DE BAVENT ridge, a strategic feature, 180 feet high, dividing the ORNE and DIVES valleys. Possession of this thickly wooded ridge would protect the BÉNOUVILLE bridges (See para 3), and prevent enemy observation of the RANVILLE bridgehead. (W.D. 1 Cdn Para Bn, Jun 44, "Appreciation of Situation by Brig. S.J.L. Hill, D.S.O., M.C., 14 Apr 44".) Because of these factors the vicinity of the cross-roads was selected as the site of the 3 Para Bde Command Post, with headquarters of the three battalions grouped around it. Of the above tasks for 1 Cdn Para Bn, (i) and (ii) were assigned to "C" Coy, (iii) and (v) to "B" Coy, and (iv) to "A" Coy (Hist Sec file, AEF/1 Cdn Para Bn/C/I, Folio No. III (c): 1 Cdn Para Bn O.O. No. 1, 28 May 44).

THE ASSAULT (6 JUN 44)

8. After a postponement of 24 hours because of unfavourable weather, the Allied invasion of FRANCE began in the early hours of 6 Jun 44. 1 Cdn Para Bn had emplaned late on 5 June, in two sections. "C" Company, moving with Adv Bde HQ to neutralize opposition on the Dropping Zone, took off in twelve Albemarle from HARWELL airfield, between OXFORD and READING, at 2230 hrs. The remainder of the battalion left from DOWN AMPNEY, between SWINDON and CIRENCESTER, at 2325 hrs, travelling in 38 Douglas C-47 Dakotas, three of which towed gliders, carrying jeeps and trailers loaded with ammunition and signals equipment. Each parachutist carried normal equipment, including fighting knife, toggle rope, escape kit, with French currency, and two 24-hour rations. In all a man's load amounted to approximately 70 pounds. A special duty party from the 1st Canadian Parachute Training Company attended the battalion to the concentration area, and relieved it of various administrative tasks during the final stages of preparation for the assault.

9. The Canadian descent from the skies upon the fields and woods of NORMANDY was made between 0100 hrs and 0130 hrs on D-day (6 Jun 44). Comparatively few of the men hit the designated Dropping Zone. Although flying conditions were good, and landmarks clearly visible, the dispersion was very bad, and the actual dropping zone extended over a general area (eastings 12-19, northings 72-76) ten times the size of that originally projected. This apparently faulty air navigation might have had far more unfortunate results than actually ensued. Its result

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was seen in the large number of prisoners captured from the battalion on the first day. Two platoons of "B" Company landed in the marshy ground south and west of ROBEHOMME, two miles from their prescribed D.Z. One stick of ten men from "C" Company dropped west of the ORNE River, below OUISTREHAM, more than four miles from its intended target. These parachutists were fortunate in making their way to rejoin the battalion on the following day. That so many did return safely to their unit speaks well for their individual initiative and the thoroughness of the briefing given all ranks prior to departure from England. Among the Vickers and Mortar Platoons there was an unexpectedly heavy wastage in weapons. Machine guns and mortars were carried in special kit bags, many of which tore loose during the jump and were lost (W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, 6 Jun 44).

PROGRESS DURING D-DAY

10. In spite of its initial dispersion the battalion achieved surprise, and all objectives were speedily attained. "C" Company, having secured the Dropping Zone, demolished the bridge across the DIVETTE River at VARAVILLE, and engaged a German strong point just west of the town. This position, which had to be cleared in order to secure the Dropping Zone, proved much more strongly held than had been expected. By 1030 hrs the enemy pill-box had surrendered, but not before a large number of Canadian casualties had been sustained. Its capitulation was largely brought about by the effect of our P.I.A.T. bombs, according to the evidence of a Canadian mortar detachment commander, who had landed on top of the enemy position and temporarily been held prisoner. The reduction of this post, and the destruction of the MERVILLE battery by 9 Para Bn, removed the two strongest local enemy threats to the security of the brigade area. At 1500 hours cycle troops of 6 Commando arrived, and "C" Company proceeded to the battalion area at LE MESNIL. Meanwhile the other Companies had had little difficulty in achieving their objectives. "A" Company, having covered the flank of 9 Para Bn in its successful assault on the bomb-shattered MERVILLE battery (86 Halifaxes and 13 Lancasters of 6 Group, R.C.A.F. formed the major part of a force which dropped a full bombload on the target prior to the assault) and its subsequent withdrawal to LE PLEIN, rejoined its own battalion at the LE MESNIL - BAVENT crossroads at 1530 hrs. Blowing its bridge across the DIVES River, at ROBEHOMME, "B" Coy established a defence position and observation post on ROBEHOMME HILL (1873). It remained there for a day and a half, after which the withdrawal, under German pressure, of 6 Commando from VARAVILLE compelled the removal of the company from its exposed forward site. It was called back under cover of darkness on the night 7/8 June, and reached Bn H.Q. at 0330 hrs on the morning of 8 June.

11. The Canadian battalion's initial success was characteristic of that achieved by 3 Para Bde and by the Division as a whole. All bridges from TROARN to VARAVILLE had been blown by the 3 Para Bde units. By 1200 hrs on D-day the important bridges over the CANAL DE CAEN A LA MER and the ORNE River west of RANVILLE had been captured intact by 5 Para Bde, and by 2100 hrs the two airborne battalions of 6 Airlanding Bde (1 R.U.R. and 2 Oxf Bucks) had made successful glider landings. 1 Airlanding Recce Regt was reported to have probed to the outskirts of CAEN before rejoining 6 Airborne Div. Divisional F.D.Ls. had been established through LONGUEVAL (0872), ESCOVILLE (1271) and along the main road running south-east to, but excluding, TROARN (1667). Continual

attacks from the south had all been held (Hist Sec file, AEF/1 Cdn Para Bn/C/H, 6 Airborne Div Sitrep No. 3, 7 Jun 44). The first round had been won, and now it was a question of holding on until seaborne reinforcements should arrive. The aerial phase of their initial assault behind them, the members of 1 Cdn Para Bn were destined to operate solely as infantry troops for the remainder of their stay in France. Nine months were to elapse before they again used parachutes to drop into action. In the meantime they put into practice the lessons learnt during months of preparation in Southern England. And in the difficult weeks that followed D-day, when enemy infantry and sometimes tank and S.P. attack had to be met with an inferior weight of fire power, the insistence that had been placed upon intensive weapon-training at BULFORD proved itself a worth-while investment (see Report No. 138).

THE LE MESNIL CROSSROADS (7 - 17 JUN)

12. The morning of D-plus-1 found 1 Cdn Para Bn (less the "B" Company party still at ROBEHOMME) concentrated astride the LE MESNIL crossroads protecting Brigade Headquarters. Three mortars that had arrived by sea, replacing to some extent those lost during the parachute descent, were set up in position in the brickworks near the crossroads and manned by the mortar platoon. The expected counter-attack materialized in the early morning hours, when German infantry of the 857 and 858 Grenadier Regiments of 346 Div, supported by S.P. guns and a number of Mk. IV tanks, attacked the forward companies' positions. A surprise effect was achieved by the mortars, which found an ideal target in the infantry grouped along the road, and the heavy casualties inflicted upon the enemy considerably exceeded the Canadian losses in the engagement. With the support that this mortar fire gave to the battalion's infantry sections the attack was repulsed, and the rest of the day was quiet save for activity by enemy snipers. This reverse inflicted upon enemy armour by lightly armed airborne forces is a decidedly notable incident.

13. For the next ten days events followed a fairly regular and unchanging pattern. Small-scale attacks of one or two-platoon strength on our part secured points of vantage on the edge of the defended area, and helped to stabilize the brigade front. In these operations artillery support was given by naval bombardment (the cruiser "Arethusa" and one destroyer were allotted to 3 Para Bde for fire support - Appx "A" to 3 Para Bde O.O. No. 1), and from field batteries of 3 Brit Div Arty, which came in support of 6 Airborne Div early on D-day (302 Fd Bty came under command - Trace "X" to 3 Para Bde O.O. No. 1). Constant patrolling, twenty-four hours of the day, was maintained by the battalion in attempts to obtain information about enemy dispositions and movements. In general these patrols were unable to probe very deeply into the opposing defences before they found themselves pinned down by superior numbers, and were forced to return to their own lines. During the whole of this period sporadic shelling and mortaring of the battalion and brigade positions continued without inflicting many casualties, and enemy snipers in trees and hedgerows proved a nuisance factor until they were "winkled out". More unpleasant was the shooting up of Brigade H.Q. and the Main Dressing Station by Typhoons on 13 Jun, when two Canadian officers were wounded and a French female civilian killed (W.D., 3 Para Bde, 13 Jun 44).

14. Generally speaking, the opposition encountered by the Canadian battalion during its first ten days in France had not been severe. The enemy appeared to have few troops in the areas attacked. Most of the prisoners taken by 3 Para Bde on D-day were Poles and Russians (*ibid*: 7 Jun 44). Later in the fighting interrogation of Polish deserters disclosed that 857 and 858 Gren Regts of 346 Inf Div, the formations facing the 3 Para Bde front, were reinforced early in July by drafts from a coast defence regiment near BOULOGNE. Enemy sections were reported as being so arranged that to each Pole there were about eight Germans. The latter handled all automatic weapons (W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, Aug 44, Appx No. 3, Interrogation Report, 11 Aug 44). But the Germans took full advantage of cover, and used their infantry weapons with persistence and skill during their frequent attacks upon the Canadian position. A British War Correspondent gives a graphic account of the force of the enemy's counter-attacks in the early days of the assault:

While operations proceeded on the beaches and on the other side of the river and canal, the Germans came at us with tanks and men, again and again. At night he pushed patrols forward, probing and seeking out our weak spots. Every day men died, men were wounded, and our ranks thinned. But the Germans got nowhere: his dead were to be found in the woods along the lines, in the cornfields.... everywhere. He left burnt-out tanks and smashed mortars. Sometimes we were shelled for long periods, and the blast stripped the trees and splattered into slit trenches where it killed men.

(Guy Byam, B.B.C. War Correspondent:
"A Great Feat of Arms", Radio Times,
Vol. 84, No. 1086, 21 Jul 44.)

15. Maintenance of formations of 6 Airborne Div with supplies and ammunition was effectively carried out, after the first day's fighting, from the Divisional Maintenance Area at RANVILLE. When the parachutists jumped on D-day, all personnel carried rations for 48 hours and ammunition for 36 hours. A brigade dump of ammunition **dropped from aircraft** at the time of the initial assault was formed by B.R.A.S.C.O. at Brigade Headquarters (W.D. 1 Cdn Para Bn, June 1944: Adm Order No. 1, 29 May 44). On the night of 6/7 Jun a resupply drop from 50 planes took place at the Divisional Maintenance Area, two miles to the rear of the Canadian position, and for the next two weeks maintenance air missions, without meeting serious opposition from enemy fighter planes, effectively handled the matter of resupply for 6 Airborne Div (Hist Sec file, AEF/1 Cdn Para Bn/C/H, 6 Airborne Div Sitreps 2-27).

IN AND OUT OF THE LINE (20 JUN - 21 JUL)

16. Within a week from D-day, defences in the 3 Para Bde area had been strengthened by the arrival of seaborne reinforcements (the 3 Para Bde War Diary notes the arrival on 10 Jun of units of 153 Bde of 51 (H) Div, --5/7 Gordons and 1 Gordons in the 8 Para Bn area, and 5 Black Watch in the area of 9 Para Bn). To the north of the Canadian position German resistance at BREVILLE (1374) had been overcome, and the whole Brigade front from LE PLEIN to the BOIS DE BREVILLE stabilized. General Montgomery had reported: "We have won the battle of the beaches", and in the British sector Operation "OVERLORD" had entered its second phase -

the defence of the Normandy bridgehead. On 17 Jun 3 Para Bde was relieved in the line by 5 Para Bde, which had been defending the southern approaches to the RANVILLE bridgehead.

17. For three days the brigade remained in the RANVILLE - HEROUVILLE area, 1 Cdn Para Bn occupying positions just outside the village of RANVILLE (115734). The only enemy activity was occasional shelling of the main road that ran through the village, and the Canadians enjoyed their first relaxation since D-day. Then, on 20 Jun, they moved to a rest area by the ORNE River, near ECARDE (1176). During their five days' stay they were blessed with fine, warm weather, and parties were daily organized for bathing in the ORNE. An Army cinema at LUC-SUR-MER provided welcome entertainment. Sight-seeing tours were arranged to enable all ranks to visit the beaches at OUISTREHAM, the scene of the landing of 3 (Brit) Inf Div, where they might learn something more of the vast scale on which "OVERLORD" was patterned.

18. On 25 Jun 3 Para Bde returned to the LE MESNIL cross-roads, the Canadian Battalion relieving 13 Para Bn at its former position. The week that followed saw an intensifying of enemy fire upon the brigade area, and the Canadian casualty list mounted as a result of long range artillery shells, harassing mortar fire and sniping, and, on at least two occasions, close-range bursts from 75-mm anti-tank guns. Because the closely wooded country did not allow long vision O.P.s., it was difficult to observe fire, and ranging by the battalion mortars in their counter-fire had to be effected by sound and map reference. Vigorous patrolling continued in an attempt to pin-point enemy positions, but the results gained were generally meagre and unsatisfactory (W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, 27 Jun 44). Both sides had developed strong defensive positions, supplemented by wiring and road blocks. By the first week of July, when 3 Para Bde was again relieved by 5 Para Bde, the situation on the ridge had become one of completely static warfare.

19. From 4 Jul to 21 Jul the battalion again enjoyed a respite from fighting when it moved to the Divisional Rest Area on the River ORNE. The first week was spent in cleaning up and resting after the tour of duty in the line. "Progress towards a complete mental and physical recovery was aided by rumours that the Division was shortly to return to England to reform and refit" (ibid: 12 Jul 44). The cheering news of the fall of CAEN (9 Jul) and the American success at ST. LO (18 Jul) suggested that the period of static warfare was ending, and from their battalion area the Canadians saw, pouring across the ORNE on newly constructed pontoon bridges, the huge masses of armour and troops that were taking part in the big push southwards. During this period the unit was reinforced by the arrival of seven officers and 100 other ranks from a Canadian Base Reinforcement Battalion. This was a welcome addition to the fighting strength of the Parachute Battalion, which had sustained three hundred casualties since D-day (see para. 40). The fact that these reinforcements were not trained parachutists mattered little. Indeed, for the role in which the battalion was to be engaged during the remainder of its stay in France, well-trained and equipped infantrymen provided the most valuable acquisition that could have been supplied.

BOIS DE BAVENT - BOIS DE BURES
(21 JUL - 17 AUG)

20. The battalion's hopes for an early return to England were not to be realized. On 21 Jul 3 Para Bde returned to the line, moving to an area immediately south of 5 Para Bde, which continued to man the LE MESNIL position. The new brigade area extended along the western edge of the thickly timbered BOIS DE BAVENT, 1 Cdn Para Bn relieving 12 Devons in their position astride the LE MESNIL - TROARN road at 136707. The weather had broken, and heavy rain had flooded the country-side, necessitating the immediate digging of new slit trenches at the end of the wood. That night the battalion was issued with its first rum ration.

21. After an uneventful week in the line the Canadians were relieved by 8 Para Bn, on 27 Jul, and returned to the ORNE River for a further short rest period. On the last day of July the Battalion rejoined 3 Para Bde, taking over the positions of 7 Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, of 51 Highland Div, west of the BOIS DE BURES (triangle 140705) (The Battalion War Diary gives a map reference 1,000 metres to the east, but such a position is not borne out by current patrol reports appended to the August War Diary). 3 Para Bde still held its place in the centre of the eastern line. To its left the other formations of 6 Airborne Div extended in order to the mouth of the ORNE - units of 1 S.S. Bde along the ridge north to the LE MESNIL crossroads; 6 Airlanding Bde between them and BREVILLE (1374); and 4 S.S. Bde completing the line from LE PLEIN (1375) to SALLENELLES (1376). On its right 6 Airborne Div was flanked by 146 Bde and other formations of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div, bending south and west through DEMOUVILLE (1067) towards CAEN. The remaining divisions of 1 Brit Corps - 3 (Brit) Inf Div and 51 Highland Div - were in the rear, west of the ORNE (W.D., G.S., S.D., First Cdn Army, Aug 44: Location Statement First Cdn Army, 1 Aug 44.) Since 23 Jul, when First Cdn Army took over the Eastern NORMANDY sector, 1 Brit Corps had been under Canadian operational command (W.D., G.S. Ops 1st Cdn Army, Appx 79.) and on the day on which 1 Cdn Para Bn returned to the line at the BOIS DE BURES (31 Jul 44), First Cdn Army assumed command of 2 Cdn Corps in the CAEN area. Thus 1 Cdn Para Bn, while still part of a British brigade, a British Division and a British Corps, came for the first time under command of First Cdn Army.

22. For the first half of August the situation on 6 Airborne Div's front saw little change. The Canadian battalion continued to send out patrols, but only meagre information about the enemy was obtained (W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, 6 Aug 44). Propaganda broadcasts by means of amplifiers were arranged by Brigade Headquarters, to encourage deserters, from whom identifications of enemy units might be made. (Polish deserters later stated that the Germans dismissed the general contents of these broadcasts as incorrect in view of a few inaccuracies which were contained in the remarks about their own positions and strengths - W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, Aug 44, Appx 3, Interrogation Report, 15 Aug 44.) Daily exchanges of artillery and mortar fire took place, the German shells and bombs usually landing accurately upon the battalion positions. On 15 Aug enemy aircraft bombed the area to the south of the Canadian position. The tempo of the German artillery fire increased. Patrols probing into the BOIS DE BURES that night and the next day encountered no enemy. It looked as though the long period of static warfare were over. On the evening of 16 Aug the unit received orders to advance the next day.

THE EASTWARD ADVANCE (17 - 26 AUG)

23. The forward move which all ranks of 1 Cdn Para Bn had been awaiting for ten weeks, and which in ten days thereafter was to carry them forty miles onwards to the mouth of the River SEINE (thirty miles as the crow flies), began early on the morning of 17 Aug, as part of an operation that set in motion the whole line held by 1 Brit Corps. On the right flank of First Cdn Army FAL-AISE (1436) had fallen (16 Aug); the pivot of the enemy's whole position in NORMANDY had been smashed, and a large part of his army was encircled and being destroyed, while the remainder retreated eastward. As its share of the general Allied offensive 1 Brit Corps, whose boundary with 2 Cdn Corps ran approximately along the line northing 50, through ST. PIERRE-SUR-DIVES (2649), was directed to advance on LISIEUX (5387) (W.D., G.S.Ops, H.Q. First Cdn Army, Appx 66, G.S. Memo, 16 Aug 44).

24. The corps front stretched from the mouth of the ORNE River to ST. PIERRE-SUR-DIVES, and was held by 51 (H) Div and 7 (Brit) Armd Div in the south, 49 (Brit) Div in the centre, and 6 Airborne Div in the north. 6 Airborne Div was practically in the same positions it had seized on D-day, from SALLENELLES (1376) to the outskirts of TROARN (1667). 1 Belgian Group (Light Brigade) and Royal Netherlands Brigade (Prinses Irene) had come under command in the AMFREVILLE - BREVILLE area (1374), while southwards along the LE PLEIN - BOIS DE BAVENT ridge were stationed in order 6 Airlanding Bde, 1 S.S. Bde, 3 Para Bde, and 4 S.S. Bde. In reserve at RANVILLE was 5 Para Bde. (For a note on the employment of the Dutch and Belgian contingents and their organization see First Cdn Army Instr. No. 9 d. 2 Aug 44. W.D., G.S., Ops H.Q. First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 7.) In the plan for the Division's advance 4 S.S. Bde was to form a firm base north of TOUFFREVILLE (134696); on the left flank 6 Airlanding Bde was to push towards CABOURG (2179), at the mouth of the DIVES River; in the centre 1 S.S. Bde was directed on BAVENT (1673) - VARAVILLE (1875); while on the right 3 Para Bde was ordered to seize and hold BURES (1769) (W.D., 3 Para Bde, Aug 44, 3 Para Bde O.O. Exercise "PADDLE", 9 Aug 44).

25. 1 Cdn Para Bn was given initially a reserve role in Operation "PADDLE" (the name given to 3 Para Bde's advance on 17 Aug). The operation commenced at 0300 hrs. While 9 Para Bn and 8 Para Bn completed the occupation of BURES by 0700 hrs, without encountering opposition, the Canadian Battalion took over a larger section of the Brigade front (139706 - 147695), and at 0800 hrs began a sweep through the BOIS DE BAVENT (shown as BOIS DE BURES on 1:25,000 sheets). The enemy, who for ten weeks had held the wood so tenaciously, had now withdrawn, but not without leaving behind him mines and booby traps that delayed "B" Coy in their advance, and cost the Canadians ten casualties. Bridges across the River DIVES at BURES had been demolished, but by the late afternoon a passable route had been constructed by 3 Para Sqn R.E., and all units of the brigade crossed before nightfall. By 2100 hrs 1 Cdn Para Bn, having advanced three miles along the railway running north-east from BURES, had made contact with the enemy at PLAIN LUGAN (2072), and taken up positions for the night there. 8 Para Bn was at GOUSTRANVILLE (2271), 9 Para Bn in reserve at 2171, and Bde H.Q. at ST. RICHER (2069).

26. The lack or comparative lightness of enemy resistance encountered by 3 Para Bde on the first day, and in general during the whole period, of the advance to the SEINE, underlines the instructions of the G.O.C., 6 Airborne Div, given to the Brigade prior to the commencement of Operation "PADDLE", "to advance if

and when it is certain that the enemy were withdrawing" (*ibid*: Appx A2, Report on 3 Para Bde Operation "PADDLE"). The lightly equipped formations of 6 Airborne Div, which had very little armour at its disposal (see para 46), were not intended to drive against heavily armed enemy forces nor to storm strongly held positions. Their part in the general eastward advance now beginning was rather to keep contact with a retreating enemy, driving his rearguards back, and mopping up isolated pockets of resistance as these were encountered.

27. Further progress of 3 Para Bde was halted by the enemy's destruction of the bridge (237720) across the ST. SAMSON - DIVES-SUR-MER Canal. This canal parallels the DIVES River in a general north-easterly direction, swinging north to cut across the TROARN - DOZULE road 1,000 yards east of GOUSTRANVILLE. But the map showed four bridges crossing the canal at 400-yard intervals in squares 2372 and 2371, the northernmost one carrying the railway line from TROARN just west of its junction with the main line running south from DIVES-SUR-MER. 1 Cdn Para Bn was ordered to seize the four bridge positions, and to ascertain whether any were passable to infantry or vehicles.

28. Zero hour was set at 2145 hrs (18 Aug). At 2030 hrs the unit left PLAIN LUGAN to form up at the crossroads (2271) west of GOUSTRANVILLE. The attack went in on schedule, and by 2220 hrs "C" Coy had seized the railway bridge. The southernmost bridge was taken by "A" Coy, who named it "CANADA BRIDGE". By 2350 hrs all bridges were in the hands of the Canadians, who continued to hold them throughout the night. 150 prisoners were taken, and the Brigade report on the operation refers to "the Canadian battalion as having successfully liquidated two enemy companies in well fortified positions" (*ibid*: Appx. A2, Report on 3 Para Bde Operation "PADDLE II"). Considering the nature of the task casualties were surprisingly light.

29. The railway bridge, though partially demolished, was found to be passable to infantry. Shortly after midnight 9 Para Bn crossed, in four feet of water, and by 0245 hrs had seized the railway line and routed the balance of the enemy battalion. Heavy German shelling and mortaring came from dominating high ground further east, but in the course of the morning 5 Para Bde went through, crossing by CANADA BRIDGE to the south, and followed by 4 S.S. Bde and 1 S.S. Bde. That night the G.O.C. 6 Airborne Div congratulated the units of 3 Para Bde on their exploits in Operations "PADDLE" and "PADDLE II". The Brigade had indeed made a good showing. In the first three days of its advance it had successfully driven enemy rearguards from the "island" enclosed by the DIVES River and the Canal, and it had overcome difficult obstacles with a loss to the Germans of a full battalion (of 744 Gren Regt of 711 Inf Div).

30. While 1 S.S. Bde and 4 S.S. Bde pushed forward to clear the DOZULE (2673) area of the enemy, units of 3 Para Bde remained for two days in the GOUSTRANVILLE area, the Canadians holding their defensive positions at the four bridges they had captured. Enemy shelling on both days (19 and 20 Aug) caused a few casualties, and enemy aircraft dropped some bombs on the first night, without however causing damage. On the morning of 21 Aug the Brigade started to move forward on foot towards ANNE-BAULT (4201), passing through the two S.S. Brigades at DOZULE.

Their role as infantry must have been unpleasantly driven home to the parachute troops as they proceeded through pouring rain along a road that was being shelled heavily. No contact was made with the retreating enemy until the evening. While the Brigade administrative area was established at LE BOURG (3174) at 1800 hrs, 8 Para Bn pushed forward to capture ANNEBAULT, and 1 Cdn Para Bn swung north to engage a resistance point on high ground at LA VALLEE TANTOT (4001). The Canadians encountered fire from 81-mm mortars and S.P. guns, and, unable to make further progress, dug in for the night. By morning the enemy had retreated, and the Battalion returned to the main road at ANNEBAULT, rejoining the other brigade units half-a-mile west of LA HAIE TONDUE (4501) at 1000 hrs (22 Aug).

31. It was now 3 Para Bde's turn to halt while 5 Para Bde pushed through to PONT-L'ÉVÊQUE. For 48 hours 1 Cdn Para Bn rested, while all personnel took advantage of the respite to do their washing and generally prepare themselves for further action. On 23 Aug Lt.-Gen. K. Stuart, Chief of Staff, visited the unit, and Lt.-Col. Bradbrooke relinquished command, to take a staff appointment (C.S.O. I, (Air) 38 Group R.A.F.). For a short period Maj. (now Lt.-Col.) G. F. Eadie acted as Officer Commanding, and on 8 Sep 44, Lt.-Col. J. A. Nicklin assumed the command.

32. On 24 Aug First Cdn Army sent the following warning order to 1 Brit Corps:

S.D. 45, Warning Order. 6 Airborne Div will be prepared to move into 21 Army Gp res afternoon 30 Aug. Further instr follow later date. All infm.

(W.D., G.S., S.D., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 275.)

The message is significant in pointing to the approaching end of 6 Airborne Div's role in First Cdn Army's rapid drive eastwards across NORMANDY. The Army's main axis of advance was swinging more and more sharply towards the north, as First U.S. Army came up from the south, moving in upon the enemy's last precarious foothold on the left bank of the SEINE at ELBEUF (1298). As the narrowing front moved forward, 6 Airborne Div's sector on the left flank of 1 Brit Corps, and therefore on the extreme left of the entire 21 Army Gp, had developed into a diminishing triangle whose forward apex ran into the sea at the mouth of the SEINE. It seemed that only a few more days would be required for the airborne units to complete their task.

33. While the units of 3 Para Bde rested between ANNEBAULT and LA HAIE TONDUE, other formations of 6 Airborne Div had forced their way across the TOUQUES River in two places. 5 Para Bde, after overcoming stiff opposition at PONT-L'ÉVÊQUE, was, on the morning of 24 Aug, well along the road to ST. BENOIT-D'HÉBERTOT (5806), while 6 Airlanding Bde, which since 17 Aug had been making its way steadily along the coastal flank, followed closely by the Belgian Group, was now over the river and into BONNEVILLE-SUR-TOUQUES (4810). It was time for further leap-frogging.

34. At 1000 hrs on 22 Aug 1 Cdn Para Bn took to the road again, as 3 Para Bde swung north to make a wide sweep around PONT-L'ÉVÊQUE and to follow 6 Airlanding Bde across the TOUQUES River at BONNEVILLE-SUR-TOUQUES. For the first five miles the unit had a welcome relief from marching as lorries carried them as far as VAUVILLE (4207). Then the Canadians marched on east-

ward in the rain to ST GATIEN (5210). There was an hour's halt at TOURGEVILLE (4308) for the mid-day meal, and a further delay at TOUQUES where the Canadian Battalion had to cross the river by ferry, but the day's objective was reached by 1830 hrs. The only enemy opposition encountered during the day was at the outskirts of ST. GATIEN, when a German S.P. gun fired eight rounds, without however inflicting any casualties. The Battalion spent the night in the town, having advanced fourteen miles that day. On the morning of 25 Aug they were on the road again by 0800 hrs, and two hours later, after passing through ST. BENOIT - D'HEBERTOT, had reached LA MODERIE (621080) on the outskirts of BEUZEVILLE. Here they halted.

35. A strong enemy position in BEUZEVILLE was holding up the Brigade's advance. 8 Para Bn attacked on the south side of the town, while 9 Para Bn moved in from the north-west. Both battalions were successful in dislodging the enemy by late afternoon. At 1900 hrs 1 Cdn Para Bn was called on to move forward, and to push on to MON MAUGHER (6612). Skirting BEUZEVILLE on the west side, the Canadians, now off the main road, and travelling by track and footpath through woods and across open fields, by 2300 hrs had got no further than 622103, a point still four miles from MON MAUGHER. Here they stopped for four hours, at first light pushing on again to their destination, which they reached at 0740 hrs. Companies took up defensive positions, but no enemy was seen. Nor were any more enemy elements encountered by the Canadians during the remainder of their stay in France.

36. Nightfall of 26 Aug found the units of 3 Para Bde resting in the BEUZEVILLE area. The remaining formations of 6 Airborne Div - 5 Para Bde, Royal Netherlands Brigade, 4 S.S. Bde, 1 S.S. Bde, 1 Belgian Group and 6 Airlanding Bde - were grouped in that order along the left bank of the RISLE River from PONT-AUDEMER (7608) to its junction with the SEINE at BERVILLE-SUR-MER (6618) (W.D., S.D. First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 324, Location Statement). On the Division's right brigades of 49 (W.R.) Inf Div were closed in around PONT-AUDEMER, ready to take over or pass through the positions of the airborne formations. On 28 Aug orders were given for 6 Airborne Div, less 1 and 4 S.S. Bdes, to move into 21 Army Gp Reserve on the afternoon of 30 Aug.

37. It was no mean feat that the units of 6 Airborne Div had accomplished since the beginning of their campaign in the early hours of D-day. In all phases of the operation -- the initial assault, when in spite of dispersal they had speedily gained all their objectives; the long and trying period of holding the area between the ORNE and the DIVES in the face of frequent and determined attacks by a more heavily armed opponent; and the final rapid advance to the RISLE River, during which a very inadequate scale of transport had failed to keep them from maintaining contact with the retreating enemy -- in all these phases they had borne themselves well.

38. For a week, 1 Cdn Para Bn rested at MON MAUGHER. Personnel were allowed to visit BEUZEVILLE, twenty-five percent of the unit strength at a time. On 4 Sep, T.C.Vs. carried the battalion to Concentration Area No. 60 near ARROMANCHES, and embarkation took place two days later. By late afternoon on 7 Sep, all ranks were back at BULFORD, in the barracks they had left three months before. From 12 to 24 Sep the entire battalion was on leave. On its return general training became the order of the day, a role that was to continue for 1 Cdn Para Bn until a Christmas Day embarkation at FOLKESTONE marked the beginning of another chapter in the unit's history.

CASUALTIES AND DECORATIONS

39. The casualty toll exacted of 1 Cdn Para Bn during its stay in France was heavy, but not much heavier than had been anticipated. The War Office forecast of invasion activity for 6 Airborne Div had estimated that the wastage for the first month would be at the double intense rate, i.e., 50 percent of War Establishment for officers, and 40 percent for other ranks. (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Para Tps/1: Col. J.G.K. Strathy to D.A.G., C.M.H.Q., 15 May 44). As was to be expected, the number of casualties sustained during the early days of the operation far exceeded losses for the remaining time that the unit was in France. During the first twelve days of fighting, up to the time of the battalion's first removal from the line, officer casualties amounted to 59 percent of War Establishment, other ranks 39 percent (W.E. strength was 31 officers and 587 other ranks). Subsequent losses were on a considerably lower scale.

40. The following table, compiled from Records Office Casualty Reports, shows casualties suffered by 1 Cdn Para Bn for three significant periods of the total operation. The P.W. losses in the first period were all sustained on D-Day.

Cdn Para Bn Casualties, 6 Jun - 6 Sep 44

		<u>Killed & D. of wounds</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Missing</u>	<u>P.W.</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
6-17 Jun	Offrs	5	10	-	3	18
	O.Rs.	43	103	3	82	231
18 Jun - 4 Jul	Offrs	-	4	-	-	4
	O.Rs.	13	32	-	-	45
5 Jul - 6 Sep	Offrs	-	2	-	-	2
	O.Rs.	10	49	7	1	67
TOTALS	Offrs	5	16	-	3	24
	O.Rs.	66	184	10	83	343

41. The deficiencies in 1 Cdn Para Bn's strength caused by these casualties were successfully met from unit reinforcements for the first three weeks of fighting. But during July the source of supply dwindled, and the difficulty of obtaining replacements is reflected in the battalion's diminishing strength returns. On 5 Aug the unit's strength reached its lowest figure of the campaign, -- 17 officers and 315 other ranks. There was little improvement during the month, and when the battalion returned to England at the beginning of September there was a strength deficiency of 5 officers and 242 other ranks (C.M.H.Q. file 24/AEF/1/5, A.G. Stats letter, 5 May 45).

42. Of 60 officers and men of 6 Airborne Div decorated in the field by General (later Field-Marshal) Sir Bernard Montgomery shortly after D-Day, five were members of 1 Cdn Para Bn. Two officers, Capt. (later Major) J. P. Hanson and Capt. (later Major) P. R. Griffin, received the Military Cross. # Three N.C.Os., Sgt. G.H. Morgan, Cpl. Wm. Noval and L/Cpl. R. A. Geddes, were awarded the Military Medal. (The Canadian Press News, 22 Jul 44, p.2). # The Military Medal was also won by Sgt. J. A. Lacasse and Pte. W.B. Ducker, both of whom died of wounds received in the action that earned them the decoration, and by Sgt. W. P. Minard.

D.136859 Sgt. G.H. Morgan, B.28910 Cpl. Wm. Noval, B.146477 L/Cpl. R. A. Geddes, B.101038 Sgt. J.A. Lacasse, B.3047 Pte. W.S. Ducker and F.25506 Sgt. W. P. Minard

43. These awards were earned in two actions -- "C" Coy's attack on the enemy position at VARAVILLE on D-Day (see para 10) and an assault by "B" Coy east of the LE MESNIL crossroads on 8 Jun. In the VARAVILLE engagement Capt. Hanson, 2 i/c "C" Coy, took command of the company when its Commander, Maj. H. M. McLeod was killed. Although he himself was wounded, he successfully led the action that resulted in the taking of the German pillbox and the enemy headquarters, inflicting many casualties and taking 40 prisoners. Pte. Ducker, a medical orderly attached to "C" Coy, under heavy mortar and machine gun fire gave medical assistance to the Company Commander and three others fatally injured when a German 75 mm shell detonated the Canadian P.I.A.T. ammunition, caring for them until certain that they were beyond aid (W.D., 1 Cdn Para Bn, 6 Jun 44). In the same action Sgt. Minard displayed exceptional qualities of leadership and initiative in commanding his platoon when its officer was killed. On 13 Jun he again distinguished himself when he exercised a steadying influence on his platoon during the relief by his company of part of 5 Black Watch, who were being strongly attacked at a chateau south of BRÉVILLE (see para. 16).

44. On the morning of 8 Jun, after his company's return from ROBEHOMME, Capt. Griffin led one and a half platoons of "B" Coy to assault a group of strongly held buildings in the BOIS DE BAVENT (at 144730) east of the LE MESNIL crossroads. The enemy was driven out with heavy casualties, and a counter attack with superior forces was successfully held off. Sgt. Lacasse and Sgt. Morgan won their decorations at the same time. The former, though thrice wounded, led his section across an open field swept by fire, to knock out an enemy L.M.G. position; the latter displayed skill, initiative and complete disregard of his own personal safety as he conducted his platoon's successful assault upon the occupied buildings. In the same action Cpl. Noval and L/Cpl Geddes (at that time both private soldiers), operating as a Bren gun and sniper team to give covering fire, accounted between them for no less than 25 Germans (C.M.H.Q. File 21/Gen/8, Citations, FRANCE).

45. Two major awards were won by personnel of 1 Cdn Para Bn during the operation at GOUSTRAVILLE on 18 Aug 44 (see para 28). Capt. (later Major) J. A. Clancy was awarded the Military Cross, the citation noting his behaviour on that day as but one example of "his devotion to duty and outstanding gallantry" throughout the entire campaign in Normandy. As acting 2 i/c of "A" Coy he led a platoon in the assault against the southern bridge. By the momentum of his attack in the face of strong machine gun fire the bridge, which was vital to this Brigade, was captured before the enemy could demolish it. In the same engagement Sgt. G. W. Green, # an acting platoon commander in "A" Coy, reorganized his platoon when it suffered heavy casualties and led his men in two attacks that resulted in the killing and capture of more than 25 Germans. Although severely wounded Sgt Green continued to control his platoon until he was able to hand over to his Company Commander. For this action, and for his inspiration to his men through the campaign up to that time he was awarded the Military Medal.

B.62282 Sgt. G. W. Green

THE 1ST CENTAUR BATTERY, R.C.A.

46. 1 Cdn Para Bn was not the only Canadian unit to serve with 6 Airborne Div during Operation "OVERLORD".

The story of the brief existence of a Canadian field (S.P.) battery that operated for 25 days as part of 6 Airborne Div Arty forms an interesting supplement to the account of the Parachute Battalion's activities. Prior to D-Day the artillery of 6 Airborne Div regularly consisted of one light regiment of 75 mm. pack howitzers - 53 (Worcestershire Yeomanry) Light Regt R.A. To supplement this 1 Brit Corps had formed an ad hoc battery of twelve 95 mm. Centaur S.P. equipments. This unit, designated X Armoured Bty R.A., proved especially useful for counter mortar tasks during June and July. At the beginning of August the British found it necessary to withdraw the personnel of the unit for employment as reinforcements elsewhere, and as the continued existence of the battery was considered an operational necessity, the G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army approved the formation of a temporary Canadian unit to man the equipments (W.D., G.S., S.D., H.Q., First Cdn Army, Aug 44, Appx 60.)

47. The 1st Centaur Battery R.C.A. was formed on 6 Aug, under the command of Maj. D. M. Cooper, R.C.A. The battery comprised a Headquarters and three troops, each troop manning one Sherman O.P. tank and four 95 mm. S.P. Centaurs. The Centaur tank was heavily armed, mounting a Q.F., 95 mm. Tank Howitzer, Mk. 1, and two 7.92 mm. Besa machine-guns. Twin Vickers G.O. machine-guns gave anti-aircraft protection, and auxiliary weapons carried included a Thompson and a Sten machine carbine, a smoke bomb thrower and rear smoke emitters, and an assortment of grenades of various sizes.

48. R.C.A. personnel to bring 1 Cdn Centaur Bty to strength were posted from 12 C.B.R. Bn, and on 14 Aug the Canadian battery completed taking over from X Armoured Bty R.A. in the RANVILLE area. A British officer (Capt. E. J. Leopard, R.A.) who had been with the guns since D Day, remained on attachment to the Canadian unit as Battery Captain, together with 15 R.A. Sigs personnel, and one R.E.M.E. fitter (gun). A few days were spent in getting the gun crews thoroughly familiar with their new jobs, ready to carry out the role of 6 Airborne Div Arty, which was:-

- (1) Maximum harassing fire on the enemy's administrative machinery.
- (2) Vigorous and immediate retaliatory fire.

(W.D., 1 Centaur Bty, R.C.A.,
10 Aug 44.)

49. On 17 Aug the guns of the battery came into action near BREVILLE, as Operation "PADDLE" began. For this operation 1 Cdn Centaur Bty, under control of 53 (W.Y.) Light Regt R.A., was in support of 6 Airlanding Bde. Three days later the Canadian battery, left on the west side of the DIVES River when the Airlanding Brigade went forward, came under command of 1 Belgian Bty, and on 21 Aug moved to VARVILLE in support of Royal Netherlands Bde (ibid: 20 Aug 44).

50. The River DIVES was crossed on 22 Aug, and that afternoon the Canadian guns went into action again at a point (441094) south of DEAUVILLE, using an O.P. established in one of the town's hotels. Steering and brake trouble had left five Centaurs stranded along the road, and two of the unit's three Shermans had been put out of action by mines. Next day the battery, leaving Belgian command, moved to the LA HAIE TONDUE rendezvous (see para. 30) and on the afternoon of 24 Aug crossed

the TOUQUES River in support of an Armoured Recce Regt (ibid: 24 Aug 44. Designation of unit not given). Further breakdowns had reduced the battery's total armour strength to one Sherman, two Centaurs and one Cromwell tank, the last-named borrowed from the Recce Regt.

51. For the assault on BEUZEVILLE on 25 Aug (see para. 35) 1 Cdn Centaur Bty gave effective support to 3 Para Bde, carrying out a fire plan of 60 rounds per gun. Then the unit moved forward again (26 Aug) with Dutch infantry riding on its tanks and vehicles. Outside PONT-AUDEMER (774063) its guns went into action once more, as targets were engaged for the Arm'd Recce Regt and for armoured cars of the Belgian Group. As 49 (W.R.) Div moved in to take over the area (see para. 36), the battery moved to a new position (718106) to the rear of TOUPAINVILLE.

52. The short but active life of 1 Centaur Bty R.C.A. was almost over. On 28 Aug the unit was reorganized as a six-gun battery, the six surplus gun crews being returned to 2 C.B.R.G. But with the removal of 6 Airborne Div from an operational role, the need for the employment of the S.P. battery ceased. On 29 Aug orders were received for the disbandment of the unit, effective 30 Aug (ibid: Appx 2). Tanks were handed over to the British (259 Delivery Squadron R.A.C.), and the remaining personnel went to 2 C.B.R.G. By 2 Sep 44 1 Centaur Bty R.C.A. had ceased to exist. Its obituary notice may be found in the following War Diary entry:

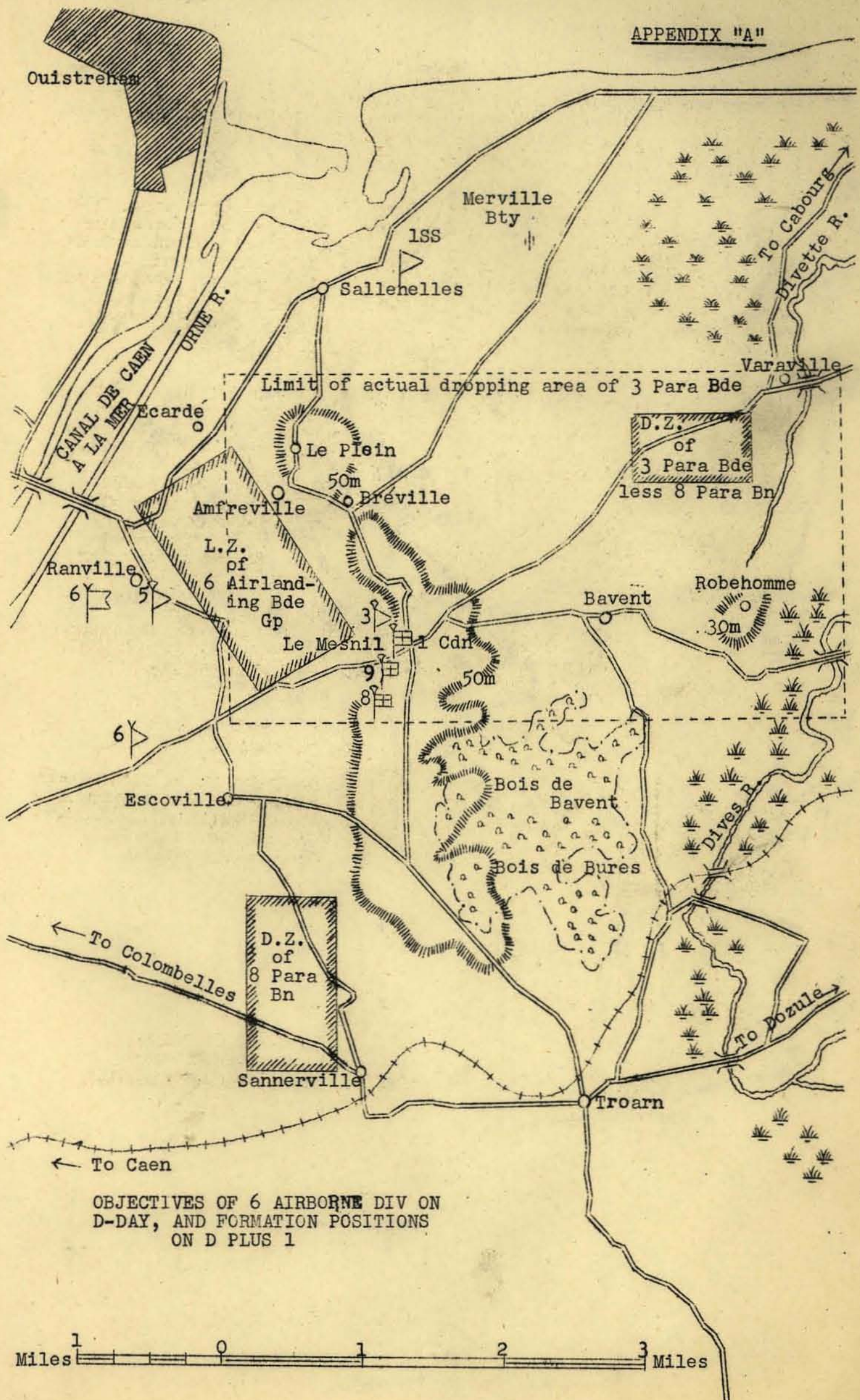
During its short life B.R.A. states that it performed a very useful purpose, and although originally immobile it was able to keep up with the advance of 6 Airborne Div and give useful fire support.

(W.D., A.Q. Branch, Adm H.Q.,
First Cdn Army, 30 Aug 44.)

53. The foregoing report was begun by Capt. T. M. Hunter and was revised and completed by Maj. G.W.L. Nicholson. The material contained in it has been checked by Major W. H. Hemphill, D.A.A. & Q.M.G., Cdn Liaison Sec, H.Q. 6 Airborne Div, and by Major J.A. Clancy, M.C., who was with 1 Cdn Para Bn through the entire Normandy campaign.

C.S.
(C. P. Stacey) Colonel,
Historical Officer,
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

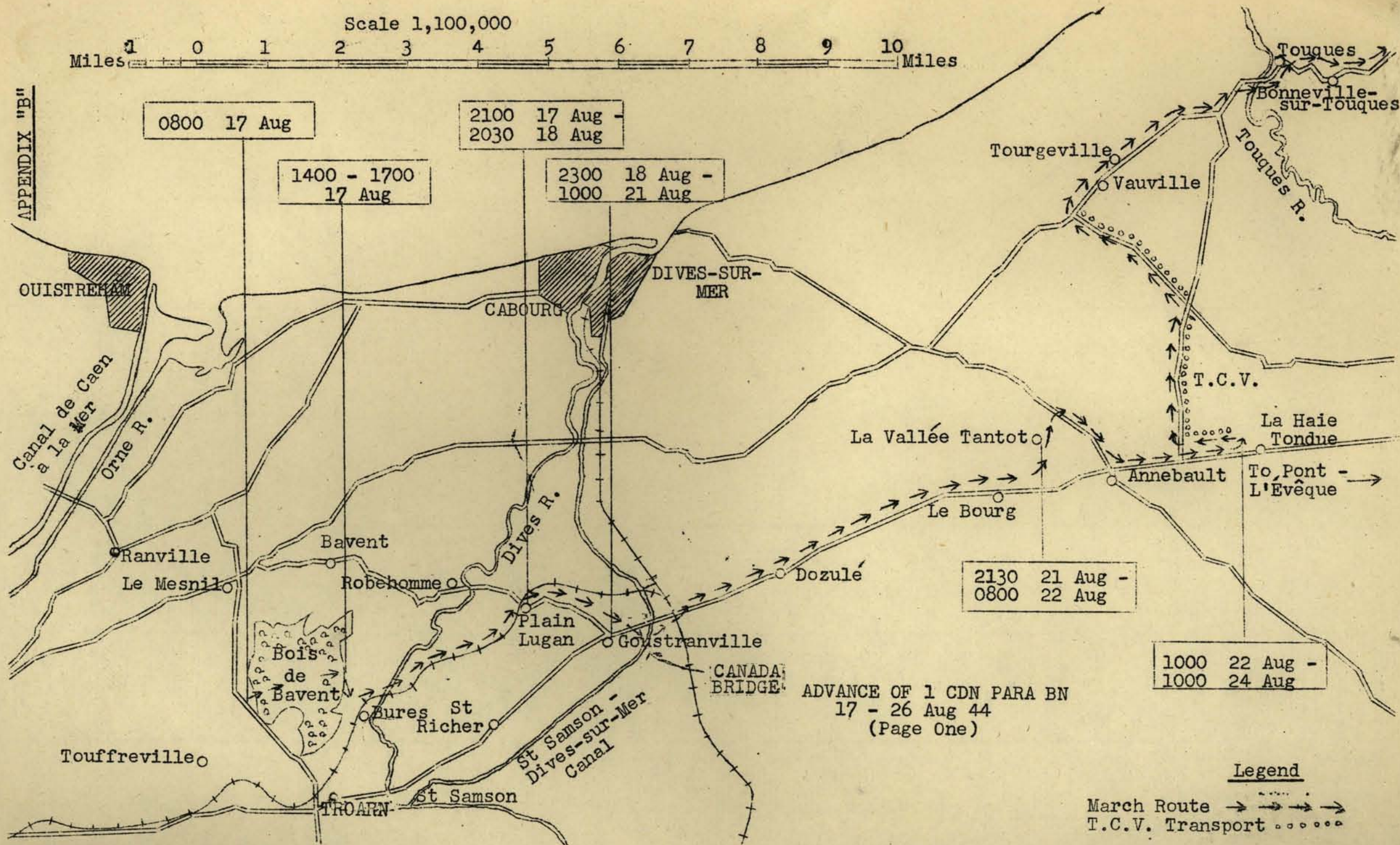
APPENDIX "A"

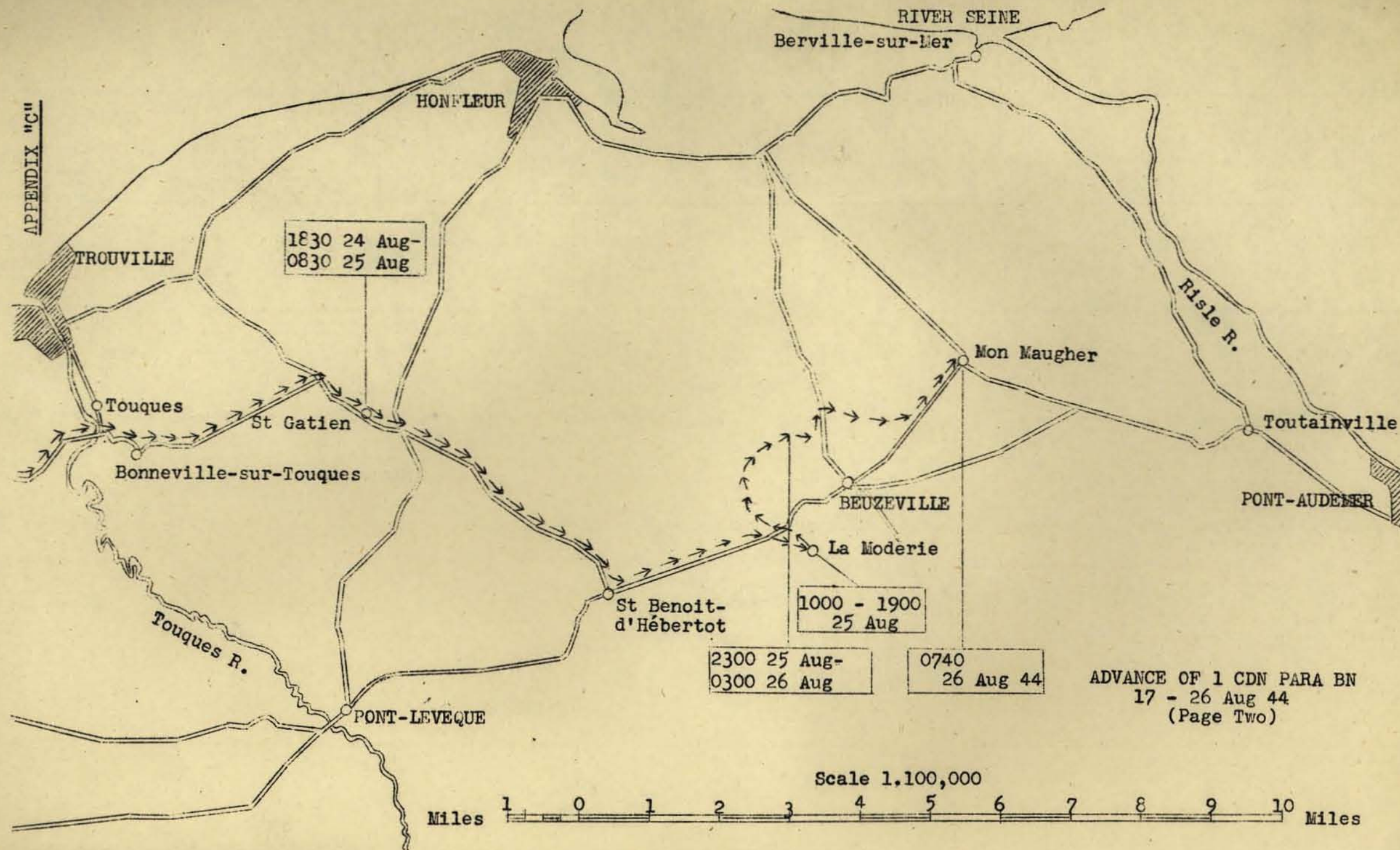


OBJECTIVES OF 6 AIRBORNE DIV ON D-DAY, AND FORMATION POSITIONS ON D PLUS 1

Scale 1,100,000
Miles 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Miles

APPENDIX "B"





ADVANCE OF 1 CDN PARA BN
17 - 26 Aug 44
(Page Two)