On 6 June 1944, a massive Allied invasion fleet landed 125,000 Allied troops on five beaches in Normandy on the north coast of France. Increasing German resistance and the nature of the terrain meant that by 27 June, when the Allies had expected to have broken out, they were still bottled up in the Normandy area. By the end of the month the Americans had taken Cherbourg, but it was not until 9 July that the British took Caen.

Operation Goodwood, launched 18 July, failed to achieve a breakthrough towards Paris, and it was not until 30 July, when Operation Cobra led to US forces breaking through west of St Lo, that the Allied forces began to make progress into the French interior.

During the night of 7/8 August the Canadian 1st Army launched Operation Totalize, which led to the capture of Falaise on 17 August. At the same time the US V Corps reached Argentan, threatening to trap the German 7th Army, 5th Panzer Army and Panzergruppe Eberbach. Although some 20,000 men were able to escape from the pocket before the Allied were able to close the gap, some 50,000 Germans were captured, while losses amounted to 10,000 men, some 600 AFVs, 950 artillery pieces and 7,500 vehicles, material losses the Germans could ill afford.

Aerial reconnaissance showed that both the railway bridge and the road bridge had been destroyed, although the latter had been hastily repaired by the Germans. In theory it was passable to infantry moving in single file, although they would be completely exposed to enemy fire while doing so.

Intelligence sources estimated the German strength to number some 250 men in and around Vernonnet. Another 250 could be found some 2 miles upstream in Giverny. Both groups were detachments of KG Meyer of the 49th Infantry Division. They were armed with an assortment of MGs and 20mm flak guns, but lacked any tank support, and possessed few 88s or mortars.

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The job of crossing the Seine would be entrusted to the 43rd (Wessex) Division, which had spent over two years in England prior to the Normandy invasion practising such operations. Their orders were “to force a crossing of the Seine on or about 25 August. To cover the construction of a Class 9, a Class 40 and Class 70 bridges. To form a bridgehead of sufficient depth to allow passage though of the remainder of XXX Corps.”

For the assault, General Thomas, commander of the 43rd, assigned the mission to 129 Infantry Brigade. The 4th Wiltshires were ordered to secure the town of Vernon itself, which had been liberated by the French FFI. The 4th Somerset were to attack on the left flank between the two bridges, and the 5th Wiltshires to the right of the road bridge, both units crossing in storm boats and DUKWs. A ‘borrowed’ squadron of Cromwells from the 11th Armoured Division’s 15/19th Hussars was available to provide tank support.

To reach the west bank of the Seine the 43rd had to cross the American lines of communication along the Argentan - Breteuil - Pacy route. Despite being allocated three time spans to do this, delays were inevitable, and the 4th Wiltshire Battalion did not reach Vernon until noon on the 25th. By 1600 hrs they had been joined by the bulk of 129 Infantry Brigade and were dug in around the town. The brigade was under strict orders to give the Germans no idea of their arrival, and to pretend that Vernon was in the hands of the French.

**CROSSING THE SEINE**

Following the destruction of the German forces in the Falaise Pocket, the commander of the British XXX Corps, General Horrocks, was determined to maintain the pursuit of the German remnants.

The next barrier facing him was the Seine, and Horrocks decided to force a crossing at Vernon, a popular Parisian summer resort with a population of 10,000. Across the river lay the suburb of Vernonnet, behind which a steep 300 foot chalk faced escarpment dominated the river and both banks. Two roads from Vernonnet passed through the escarpment, one north west to Gisors and Les Andelys, the other south east to Gasny and Giverny. Behind the escarpment lay the dense Forêt de Vernon, which provided excellent cover for any German reinforcements approaching from Beauvais. A series of submerged islands in the middle of the river were also likely to cause problems. The river bank on the western side was also so steep that DUKWs would only be able to get down into the river over man made ramps.

The British Crossing of The Seine, August 1944

**THE PLAN**

The job of forcing the Seine would be entrusted to the 43rd (Wessex) Division, which had spent over two years in England prior to the Normandy invasion practising such operations. Their orders were “to force a crossing of the Seine on or about 25 August. To cover the construction of a Class 9, a Class 40 and Class 70 bridges. To form a bridgehead of sufficient depth to allow passage though of the remainder of XXX Corps.”
CG1 1845 25 August
Following a 15 minute bombardment and a 10 minute smoke shell bombardment, 129 Infantry Brigade launched its attack across the Seine.

The task of crossing on the right was given to the 5th Wiltshire Battalion. As A Company got underway the smoke cleared giving them a clear view of the far side. Unfortunately they were also visible to German MG gunners who opened fire on them. The first two boats became grounded on a submerged island only 30 yards from the far shore, while others got stuck on a sandbank. The men jumped out into the water and waded ashore, spreading out for cover as they reached the bank. The end of the first hour only one of the eight boats survived and only 60 per cent of A Company was across. However the Germans put in a strong counter-attack as darkness fell and A Company was virtually wiped out.

Another misjudgement caused some trouble for the 4th Somerset Light Infantry Battalion, who were crossing on the left flank between the railway bridge and the road bridge. The watercourse was not dry as expected but was 60 feet wide with steep muddy banks containing deep water and depths of soft mud and silt. Despite this A Company embarked at 1910 hrs and established their initial bridgehead. C Company followed up quickly and advanced inland.

Concerned about the problems his troops were encountering on the left, the enemy. Their efforts were in vain, they were also visible to German MG gunners who opened fire on them. The first two boats became grounded on a submerged island only 30 yards from the far shore, while others got stuck on a sandbank. The men jumped out into the water and waded ashore, spreading out for cover as they reached the bank. The end of the first hour only one of the eight boats survived and only 60 per cent of A Company was across. However the Germans put in a strong counter-attack as darkness fell and A Company was virtually wiped out.

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In the middle of the night B Company was overrun and an enemy force was in the village (a German patrol had unknowingly linked up in the darkness with a Cornwall patrol), and a deadly game of hide and seek ensued. At dawn a large German force moved up through a cornfield, swept out of the early morning mist and quickly overran the few defenders. The survivors fell back to A Company’s positions by the forest edge, but the Germans stormed through the gap and a strong party outflanked A Company, forcing Colonel George Taylor to order a defensive fire programme on top of A Company. D Company was then attacked by two German companies and although a small detachment held the Germans up for a short time in bitter fighting but were soon overrun.

The situation became so desperate that Taylor issued a special Order of the Day which was circulated to all section commanders: “The battalion WILL defend the LEFT flank and only defend I mean TO THE LAST MAN and the LAST ROUND. In this close country the enemy may infiltrate behind you but remember - if you hold your FIRE he can’t locate you and if he can’t locate you he’ll walk straight into your trap and if he walks into your trap every bullet you fire will kill a German.”

Eventually several armoured cars from the Recce Regiment and later some 4/7th Dragoon Guards’ tanks arrived to stabilise the situation. The Cornwalls then moved to occupy the village of Pressagny, but all three of its rifle companies had taken heavy casualties, dead, wounded and captured.

CG5 0600 27 August

At the river engineers worked throughout the morning, more or less under constant fire. Although the cliff top MGs and 20mm AA guns had been silenced by now, an enemy gun firing from the south was causing some trouble. One direct hit on ‘David’ sank boats and destroyed two of the floating buoys, closing the bridge for nearly two hours. Stray shells were also dropping on the town and each company in turn reported casualties.

By 1715 hrs, almost 48 hours after the first assault, the first vehicle, a bulldozer, crossed the Noireau crossing, the Worcesters were severely weak in numbers, and many of its men were new, including the Commander. Thomas insisted that all companies should be in the advance, so A Company was ordered to a set of crossroads in the middle of the forest.

The company advanced for about a mile through the dense forest, where visibility was often down to feet, before digging in by an abandoned farmhouse by a set of cross tracks. The next morning the company CO led a patrol on a short recce to establish that they were in the correct position as their maps were so unreliable. Reaching an opening in the forest they were fired upon and a sergeant and the company clerk were killed. Seconds later they were overwhelmed by German troops, who then quickly captured the rest of the company, some 60 men in all. On hearing the news General Thomas was furious and fired the battalion CO, Lt.-Col. Nichol for allowing it to happen.

On the far right sector of the divisional front was 129th Brigade. 214th were on the left in Pressagny L’Orgueilieux and the forest de Vernon and 130th Brigade in the centre pushing up the road east to Tilly.

CG6 1200 27 August

Guided by the Maquis 4th Somerset Light Infantry moved through dense forest to advance on the village of Bois Jerome St Ouen, 2 miles inland from Vernonnet. ‘D’ Company led and soon got into a dog-fight against infantry and two Tiger tanks. A confused battle went on all day with the close-packed column of carriers, jeeps and anti-tank guns continually under fire. Eventually the battle was stabilised with the arrival of two tanks from 4/7th Dragoon Guards.

On the left flank of 214th Brigade’s advance the 7th Somersets moving forward through the forest of Vernon, also encountered German opposition while heading for the village of Panilleuse. During a visit to Battalion HQ, Thomas became annoyed that A Company was being held in reserve, even though it was very weak in numbers, and many of its men were new, including the Commander. Thomas insisted that all companies should be in the advance, so A Company was ordered to a set of crossroads in the middle of the forest.

The company advanced for about a mile through the dense forest, where visibility was often down to feet, before digging in by an abandoned farmhouse by a set of cross tracks. The next morning the company CO led a patrol on a short recce to establish that they were in the correct position as their maps were so unreliable. Reaching an opening in the forest they were fired upon and a sergeant and the company clerk were killed. Seconds later they were overwhelmed by German troops, who then quickly captured the rest of the company, some 60 men in all. On hearing the news General Thomas was furious and fired the battalion CO, Lt.-Col. Nichol for allowing it to happen.

On the far right sector of the divisional front was 129th Brigade. 214th were on the left in Pressagny L’Orgueilieux and the forest de Vernon and 130th Brigade in the centre pushing up the road east to Tilly.

AFTER THE BATTLE

As the 28th dawned, the whole division was now firmly established across the Seine and General Thomas gave orders to expand the bridgehead as quickly as possible. Despite torrential rain every night, rations (including rum!) came up more or less on time and morale was quite high.

On the extreme left lst Worcesters relieved the battered 5th DCLI in Pressagny, who then moved into the forest to capture Panilleuse some 4 miles away, which completed the bridgehead. On their right flank 7th Somersets’ seized the spur between Panilleuse and Pressagny, which they reached without difficulty helped by the Recce Regiment.

In the centre 5th Dorsets pushed slowly through the woods and by evening had occupied the villages of La Queue d’Haye and Heubecourt, both of which were devoid of enemy troops.

In the afternoon the 7th Hampshires attacked Tilly, capturing it by 1400 hrs with the capture of ninety-five prisoners. But the Hampshires had met scattered but persistent resistance on the way.

On the very far right 4th Wiltshires cleared the village of Giverny despite sniping and SP guns then took the high ground to the east of the village and moved into Le Pressour.

At the same time inland 5th Wiltshires (on the right) and 4th Somersets (on the left) attacked the village of La Chapelle-St-Ouen, just off the road east to Giverny. The Wilt advanced under a barrage across open fields and orchards. The enemy quickly surrendered and 160 prisoners including many Poles were taken, for the loss of thirty Wiltshires. All the haystacks were set on fire by the Germans, which the Wyvern engineers extinguished with a trailer pump! 4th Somersets
then moved on Haricourt.

The next day the Wiltshires advanced 7 miles to Gasny but the enemy had withdrawn, and patrols captured about eighty more prisoners.

By the end of the 28 August, the bridgehead was firmly established and control was handed over to XXX Corps, allowing them to begin the dash across northern France and Belgium. A week later both Brussels and Antwerp were in British hands, and by the middle of September they were poised along the Dutch border, ready to strike into the heart of the Rhine.

The action at Vernon would go down as a famous and important battle honour for the 43rd Wessex Division, although the cost in lives had been high, the division suffering some 550 casualties. The 5th Wiltshires had suffered in 159 casualties, the 7th Somersets 100 (including the 60 of A Company which had been taken prisoner) and the 1st Worcesters 93. In addition about 80 of A Company which had been taken prisoner

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OPERATION NEPTUNE

ASL PL CG VFTT A

CG VICTORY CONDITIONS: The British win if at the end of any CG Scenario they Control the majority of building hexes on or between hexrows M and T on board 19 and Control ≥ 4 Level 3 hill hexes on Hill 621; or at Campaign end if they Control the majority of building hexes on or between hexrows M and T on board 19 and any 3 of the following 4 building hexes - 2T8, 2V8, 2W9 and 2W7.

VERNON, FRANCE: The assault crossing of the River Seine at Vernon by the British 43rd (Wessex) Division in August 1944 remains one of the most important of the entire Second World War. Operation Neptune pits one British Division against one German Division. On one side, a fully equipped, battle hardened unit made up of soldiers from the ancient kingdom of Wessex, backed by some of the best artillery in the world and supported by tanks. On the other side, a much depleted, second rate, static division of men of various nationalities, conscripted to fight a war for Germany that was already lost. On paper the British were assured of success, but between the two opposing armies lay that great river, the Seine, overlooked at the proposed crossing point by steep hills, which were riddled with defensive strongpoints. The Germans were waiting, and were as ready as they ever would be.

INITIAL SCENARIO VICTORY CONDITIONS: The British win if they Control any three building Locations East of the river at scenario end.

INITIAL SCENARIO: British Attack, German Idle

INITIAL SCENARIO BALANCE:  
- British: Leadership DRM is -1  
- German: CPP Replenishment DRM is -1

CG DATES: 1845hrs 25 Aug 44 to 2100hrs 27 Aug 44 (six CG scenarios)

CG BALANCE:  
- British: Leadership DRM is -1  
- German: CPP Replenishment DRM is -1

TURN RECORD CHART

TERRAIN CONFIGURATION:  
- Treat all marsh on board 7 as brush. All battlefields on board 7 are stone.
- The river is deep with a slow current flowing to the north.
- Treat hexes 7G3, 7H2, 7H1, 7I2, 7J2, 7K2, 7K3 and 7L3 as gully hexes containing a Deep stream [EXC: AFVs may not enter].
- The road (inclusive of the bridge) running from 7A9, 7A1, 19I10, 19Q6, 19Y6 and 19GG5 is a railway and is treated as a paved road for all purposes [EXC: road bonus is NA and the MP/MF cost for Infantry/Armoured Cars/AFVs crossing a railway hexside are 1.5MF/5MP/3MP respectively].

OVERLAY PLACEMENT:  
- Vernonnet village on matching hexes of board 19
- Roadbridge covering hexes 7H1 - 7I10

INITIAL BRITISH OB:  
- Elements of the 43rd (Wessex) Division [ELR:4] set up in any Land hex west of the river [EXC: Infantry and their accompanying SW set up Cloaked in Assault Boats]. Assault Boats set up Beached in any river hex adjacent to the western river bank.
- German: CPP Replenishment DRM is -1

INITIAL GERMAN OB:  
- Elements of the 49th Infantry Division [ELR:2] Infantry, including any SW/SMC stacked with them and any Fortifications purchased set up anywhere east of the river. All other units set up anywhere on the playing area east of the board 19 hexrow 5.
- German: Add 1 247 HS and HMG to the initial OB

OPERATION NEPTUNE Campaign SSR:  
- No vehicle may enter/set up in any hex > than level 0 on board 2.

INITIAL SCENARIO: 

1. All PL CG SSR and Campaign SSR are in effect except as noted.
2. Immediately at the start of the British Turn 1 PPFs, the British may place 2 SR counters anywhere on the playing area. These SR are accurate on a dr 2. Any extent of error dr is halved (FRD). The SR are then immediately converted into standard SMOKE FFEs, with the FFE counters then removed from play.

OPERATION NEPTUNE Initial SSR:  
- British 43rd (Wessex) Division against one German Division. The British may place 2 SR counters anywhere on the playing area. These SR are accurate on a dr 2. Any extent of error dr is halved (FRD). The SR are then immediately converted into standard SMOKE FFEs, with the FFE counters then removed from play.

OPERATION NEPTUNE Campaign SSR:  
- No vehicle may enter/set up in any hex > than level 0 on board 2.

TREAT hexes 7G3, 7H2, 7H1, 7I2, 7J2, 7K2, 7K3 and 7L3 as gully hexes containing a Deep stream [EXC: AFVs may not enter].

NOTE: The railbridge is impassable along the I6/I5 hexside to all units. The road bridge may be crossed by Infantry only, providing they pass a NTC immediately prior to entering hex Q8 at a cost of 2MF.

EC, Weather and wind are determined as per E3. if not provided on the CDS.

OPERATION NEPTUNE Campaign SSR:  
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OVERLAY PLACEMENT:  
- Vernonnet village on matching hexes of board 19
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- German: CPP Replenishment DRM is -1
### Aftermath:
The assault commenced at 1845hrs with the British conducting a thunderous artillery and smoke barrage aimed at the far side of the river, targeting the prominent hills and the village of Vernonnet. The British took to the water in their storm boats in what turned out to be a rather uncoordinated attack, resulting in a number of British Soldiers losing their lives. After 4 hours, only a handful of troops had succeeded in establishing themselves on the far bank. The operation was already in high danger of becoming a shambles. Friday night fared little better, with little of Vernonnet village cleared of Germans. The attack, by this time, was well behind schedule. A concerted counterattack by the Germans now could indeed spell disaster. Saturday came and went, with the situation looking a little better. Vernonnet was virtually clear, and the bridgehead had now penetrated a few hundred yards further inland.

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### Table: Scenario/Time/Date/Attacker/Weather/EC/Wind/Moon/DRM

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### CG DRM

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### Intensity Level

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### Fortifications Available for Purchase:

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### Notes:

- Available for on map set up on CG Date of purchase
- Each British PIAT/MMG/MMG is accompanied by a 2-3-7 HS MMC. Each German MMG is accompanied by a 2-4-7 HS MMC. Each British Gun is accompanied by a 2-2-8 Crew.
- Not available until scenario 3. Air Support is available for two turns only.
- Determine leaders (SMC) as per PL1.6205.
- Increase CPP cost by one per Pre-Registered hex (if >1 MMC purchased with module (no module may have > 2 Pre-Registered Hexes). Each Pre-Registered hex is retained as long as the module is assigned to it is retained (PL1.4). Purchase of a Pre-Registered hex allows normal/creeping barrage (EI.12.) [EXC: creeping barrage is NA for the German OBA]. A creeping barrage increases the cost of the module by 50% (FRU) and is not convertible (EI.7.771). Each barrage must have a north-south hex gain alignment (EI.11. - 12.2).
- Must enter as reinforcements if entered on the CG Date of purchase [EXC: PL1.6194]. The RG is available for available for on map set up if purchased on any CG date prior to that of the scenario [EXC: SSR 8 and SSR 9].
- Not available until scenario 3. Purchase of RG B1 allows the British player to place 56 continuous Pontoon Bridge counters to form a pontoon bridge from any water hex adjacent to a western river bank land hex devoid of woods/buildings to any water hex adjacent to an eastern river bank land hex devoid of woods/buildings. The bridge cannot cross any island land hex(es). Only Carrier/Armoured Car/Passenger/Riders/Infantry on foot may use this bridge.
- Not available until scenario 4. Purchase of RG B2 allows the British player to place 56 continuous Bridge counters to form a bridge. The bridge cannot cross any island land hex(es). This bridge is usable by all British units.
- Not available until scenario 2. In essence this is a section of pontoon bridge but with engines. It may carry any 1 AFV/Armoured Car, plus a maximum of 10PPs (riders on AFVs are NA). An AFV Pontoon Raft has an integral crew and 2MPs. For NVB purposes treat as a CE AFV. An AFV Pontoon Raft as a target for TH purposes. Refer to B6.35 for the TH mechanics, and when doing so replace the word "bridge" with "AFV Pontoon Raft". Passengers receive no TEM for any fire directed at them (EXC: any applicable AFV TEM). All other rules for passengers on boats remain unchanged. It costs an AFV, SMP plus CO2 to load/unload from an AFV Pontoon Raft. If any AFV becomes a Burning Wreck the raft and all its occupants are sunk and removed from play. Otherwise the AFV wreck stays on the raft until scenario end, then the wreck is removed from play.
- British infantry platoons always arrive with a LMG. German infantry platoons always arrive with a LMG.