

# OPERATION: NEPTUNE

## The British Crossing of The Seine, August 1944

*A Platoon Leader CG Pack for Advanced Squad Leader*

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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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> Army, 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Armee 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.

### 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 Vernnonnet, behind which a steep 300 foot chalk faced escarpment dominated the river and both banks. Two roads from Vernnonnet 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 Foret 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.

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 Vernnonet. Another 250 could be found some 2 miles upstream in Giverny. Both groups were detachments of KG Meyer of the 49<sup>th</sup> 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.

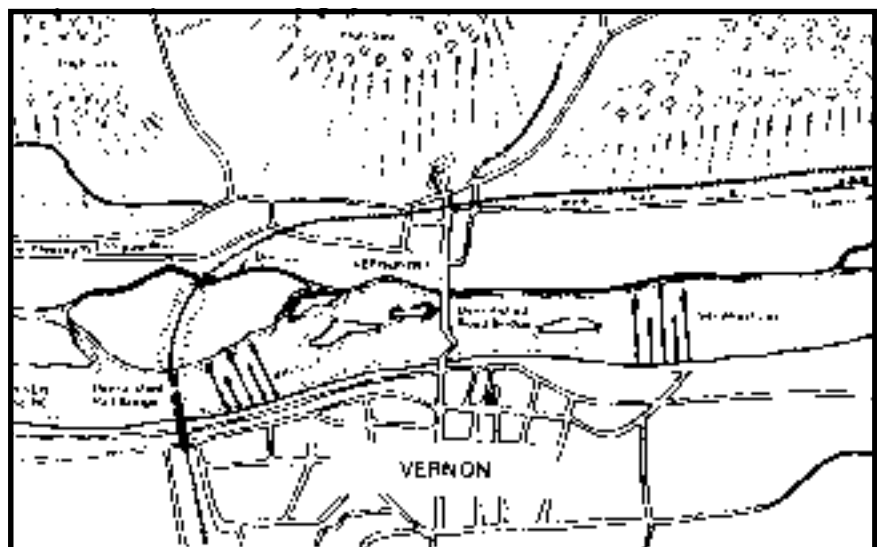
### THE PLAN

The job of forcing the Seine would be entrusted to the 43<sup>rd</sup> (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 43<sup>rd</sup>, assigned the mission to 129 Infantry Brigade. The 4<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires were ordered to secure the town of Vernon itself, which had been liberated by the French FFI. The 4<sup>th</sup> Somerset were to attack on the left flank between the two bridges, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires to the right of the road bridge, both units crossing in storm boats and DUKWs. A 'borrowed' squadron of Cromwells from the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division's 15/19<sup>th</sup> Hussars was available to provide tank support.

To reach the west bank of the Seine the 43<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Wiltshire Battalion did not reach Vernon until noon on the 25<sup>th</sup>. 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.



## 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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. By 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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, Brigadier Mole ordered the 1<sup>st</sup> Worcestershire Battalion to cross the damaged road bridge. As A Company moved to the foot of the bridge it was greeted by mortar fire from Vernnonet, while MG fire swept the bridge from a large concrete pillbox 50 yards from the bridge. Fire from both 2-in mortars and 6-pounder guns failed to eliminate the pillbox. One platoon, led by Sgt. Jennings, climbed onto the bridge and set off a booby trap of egg grenades; although badly wounded, he then managed to withdraw his men to safety. Eventually the company withdrew to nearby houses to have a hot evening meal!

By now Brigadier Mole was faced with the failure of his attack. 5<sup>th</sup> Wilts had lost A Company and the rest of the battalion had not yet crossed. 4<sup>th</sup> Somersets had two companies marooned on an island near the railway bridge and it was stalemate for the Worcesters on the road bridge.

## CG2 2300 25 August

The disaster to the storm boats now forced the 5<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires to use their DUKWs. At 2230 hrs four DUKWs were launched and three were grounded immediately, leaving just three to operate and ferry the remainder of the battalion across. However by 0300 hrs C Company was across without loss and had reached the top of the ridge. With B Company on the right and D on the left, the first bridgehead had been secured.

Elsewhere the 5<sup>th</sup> Somerset Light Infantry, also using DUKWs, attempted to land B Company 300 yards upstream to the right of the island of where A and C Companies were marooned. One DUKW grounded on a mud bank and the other sank at the foot of a newly constructed ramp, but the rest of the company was able to cross in storm boats without difficulty, and established a new bridgehead downstream, left of the road bridge. Then they cleared the ground between Vernnonet and the river.

Vernnonet was still held in some strength although the Somersets had knocked out two MG teams on the outskirts with hand grenades in the dark, and Cromwells from the 15/19<sup>th</sup> Hussars' firing from the west bank of the river had eliminated another. Soon a number of prisoners of the 148<sup>th</sup> Grenadier Regiment were "in the bag".

## CG3 0500 26 August

At dawn the Worcesters made a second head-on attempt to cross the road bridge. To their amazement they found that the Germans had vanished, probably under threat from pressure by 4<sup>th</sup> Somersets. By 0800 hours the Worcesters had crossed the road bridge and advanced north-east to capture the high ground inland from Vernnonet. With the greater part of all three battalions now across, 6-pounder anti-tank guns and carriers were ferried across to repulse any German armour attacks.

General Thomas now ordered a carrier

platoon from the Cornwalls to make a diversionary attack 10 miles north-west opposite Les Andelys. With nothing more than a 25-pounder field gun, a 3-in mortar and the carriers, the platoon simulated a crossing at Gaillon, while the divisional artillery attacked targets up and down the river to confuse the enemy. Their efforts draw the German reserves away, and as a result they failed to counter-attack in strength that day.

Meanwhile engineers had begun constructing the Class 9 bridge 'David'. Many had trained on the Isle of Wight in April and May with landing pontoons, part of Mulberry Harbour for the D-Day landings. 34 rafts were assembled and the bridge approaches bulldozed, while the cumbersome rafts were manhandled around the back gardens to get them down to the river. All this was done while under fire from MGs, 20mm AA guns, mortar bombs and German snipers. The bridge was completed by midday only to have a shell land right in the middle of it. The bridge was quickly repaired and eight hours later vehicles would be passing over it.

## CG4 1200 26 August

By now the situation had improved somewhat for the British. The 5<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires destroyed two MGs in the cliff face which had been raking the engineers building the bridges and by early afternoon had consolidated east of Vernnonet taking 100 prisoners.

On the left flank D Company of 4<sup>th</sup> Somersets, who had disembarked before first light, cleared the gardens and houses at the northern end of Vernnonet. By early afternoon the battalion was dug in along the spur 1,200 yds north of Vernnonet, having captured four 20mm dug-in AA guns and taken thirty prisoners.

Brigadier Mole now ordered the 4<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires across the damaged road bridge in the heat of the day to clear the area south of Vernnonet between the river and the escarpment. Many deep caves were located, from where the Germans had been able to pour accurate fire on the engineers building the bridges, causing heavy casualties. Having silenced the enemy, the battalion then advanced on a three company front and by evening had reached the spur 1,700 yards south-east of Vernnonet.

Thomas now ordered the rest of 214<sup>th</sup> Brigade to cross the river and expand the bridgehead. The 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Cornwalls Light Infantry were to go first, followed by 7<sup>th</sup> Somerset Light Infantry, the troops using the broken road bridge and vehicles the 'David' bailey bridge. At 1545 hours a scout patrol from the Cornwalls radioed that they had reached the centre of the Foret de Vernon due north of Vernnonet unopposed. The advance was turned into a festive occasion by the villagers of Vernnonet who pressed wine and cider on the heavily laden infantrymen.

Three miles further on B Company took up a position left of the high ground near Pressagny L'Orgueillucx. A Company was on the right in front of the forest edge, while D Company blocked the cross tracks 500 yards south-east. Anti-tank guns were placed and Battalion HQ was a chateau which had been a home for orphan boys and run by a priest.



### THE FIGHTING WESSEX WYVERNS

Commanded by the controversial Major General Thomas, the 43rd (Wessex) Division had its roots firmly in the west of England. Its infantry battalions were drawn from the county regiments of Cornwall, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Wiltshire and Worcester, although during the Normandy campaign it was occasionally reinforced by 'foreign' regiments from Berkshire, Essex and other counties.

Branded the "Fighting Yellow Devils" out of respect by its Wehrmacht and Waffen SS opponents, the 43rd's distinctive divisional badge of a golden wyvern - half serpent, half dragon - was seen in action throughout Normandy, the Low Countries, and Germany between June 1944 and May 1945.

In nearly a year of campaigning, the division suffered 12,500 casualties, including 3,000 killed in action.

### ORDER OF BATTLE

129 Infantry Brigade  
4 Somerset Light Infantry  
4 Wiltshire  
5 Wiltshire  
130 Infantry Brigade  
7 Royal Hampshire  
4 Dorsets  
5 Dorsets  
214 Infantry Brigade  
7 Somerset Light Infantry  
1 Worcestershire  
5 Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry  
43 Reconnaissance Regiment (The Gloucester Regiment)  
8 Middlesex MG Battalion  
94 Field Regiment  
112 Field Regiment  
179 Field Regiment  
59 Anti-Tank Regiment  
110 Light AA Regiment

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 by 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 4/7<sup>th</sup> 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.

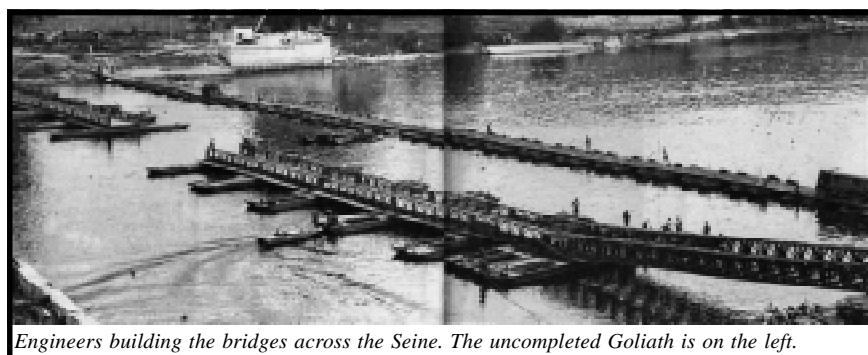
## CG5 0600 27 August

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 60-ton Bailey bridge called 'Goliath'. It had taken 500 sappers twenty eight hours to construct it, and spanned 68ft. By 1930 hrs the tanks of 4/7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards and 15/19<sup>th</sup> Hussars were crossing to give urgent support to the infantry on the far side.

Brigadier Essame, having reinforced the beleaguered Cornwalls with the first rafted tank over the river at 0800 hrs on the 27<sup>th</sup>, now ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Worcesters to advance on Tilly, 6 miles north-east inland from Vernnonet. 7<sup>th</sup> Somersets was ordered to move on their left through the thick Foret de Vernon south of Panilleuse, some 5 miles due north of Vernnonet.

Despite receiving reinforcements after the Noireau crossing, the Worcesters were severely under strength and could muster only 533 all ranks; the rifle companies averaged sixty-five and only had two platoons each twenty-five strong, plus enlarged Company HQ with LMGs and mortar. At 0810 hrs they set off, only to run into a German counter-attack led by Kampfgruppe



Engineers building the bridges across the Seine. The uncompleted Goliath is on the left.

Schrader with four infantry companies and three 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 4/7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards.

On the left flank of 214<sup>th</sup> Brigade's advance the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 recon 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 129<sup>th</sup> Brigade. 214<sup>th</sup> were on the left in Pressagny L'Orgueilleux and the Foret de Vernon and 130<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the centre pushing up the road east to Tilly.

## CG6 1200 27 August

Guided by the Maquis 4<sup>th</sup> Somerset Light Infantry moved through dense forest to advance on the village of Bois Jerome St Ouen, 2 miles inland from Vernnonet. 'D' Company led and soon got into a dog-fight against infantry and two dug-in tanks. Five hundred yards west of the village was an enemy-occupied chateau. 'B' Company captured it by midday on the 27<sup>th</sup> only to be thrown out by a sharp counter-attack supported by some armour. Fortunately the enemy later pulled out leaving the chateau empty.

That evening the Somersets took part in a night attack with 'A' Company leading behind an artillery barrage, and supported by a handful of tanks. They moved to the north edge of the

Bois Jerome and it was obvious that the village was undefended - once more the Germans had slipped away.

The two other battalions, 5<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires and 4<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires had started at 0800 hrs on the 27<sup>th</sup> pushing down the roads to Gasny and Giverny, south-east and south respectively. They came up against heavy opposition from light flak guns, used in a ground role, but an artillery barrage soon dealt with them. The battalion set up for the night in a wood.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires, aided by Cromwell tanks from the 15/19<sup>th</sup> Hussars' of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division soon reached the outskirts of Giverny with little opposition.

## AFTER THE BATTLE

As the 28<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Worcesters relieved the battered 5<sup>th</sup> DCLI in Pressagny, who then moved into the forest to capture Panilleuse some 4 miles away, which completed the bridgehead. On their right flank 7<sup>th</sup> Somersets' seized the spur between Panilleuse and Pressagny, which they reached without difficulty helped by the Recce Regiment.

In the centre 5<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Pressoir.

At the same time inland 5<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires (on the right) and 4<sup>th</sup> Somersets (on the left) attacked the village of La Chapelle-St-Ouen, just off the road east to Gasny. The Wilts 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! 4<sup>th</sup> 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 43<sup>rd</sup> Wessex Division, although the cost in lives had been high, the division suffering some 550 casualties. The 5<sup>th</sup> Wiltshires had suffered 159 casualties, the 7<sup>th</sup> Somersets 100 (including the 60 of A Company which had been taken prisoner) and the 1<sup>st</sup> Worcesters 93. In addition about 80 sappers had been lost, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Cornwalls had lost about 60 men in the fierce action at Pressagny.

## A PLAY-TESTER'S AFTER ACTION COMMENTS

Derek Tocher

This is a description of a play test CG game played between myself and Aaron Sibley in which I took the Germans.

### INITIAL PURCHASE

Germans purchase two reserve platoons (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Line) and the OBA with a field phone (goes with an 8-0 in 2U4). HMG/MMG kill stack and 9-2 leader (I rolled well) in 2R2. The 50L goes on hill 538 and the two 75\* in 19T4 and 19X1 since I reckon the British are likely to cross the river around hex rows 7Z and 7DD. Two platoons go in the village with the three MGs set to put fire lanes down the bridge I the British are so stupid to try and cross. The other platoon goes in the tree line on the left and the two reserve platoons in the tree line to the right of the village overlay. Most of the FPP goes on foxholes in the tree line and a couple of trenches on the crest of hill 621.

Aaron buys an elite platoon and HMG and MMG sections. The British SMOKE on turn 1 and the SMOKE from ordnance completely blocks LOS from gun positions and my kill stack on hill 621. The field phone operator however brings in the FFE in the middle of the river as 80mm harassing fire. Despite about 10 attacks on the sturm boats over two turns not a single hit is secured and all twelve squads get to the German bank safely. Not going well at this point. As the British tries to push inland the table turns however and first the OBA causes numerous breaks (at least 5 or 6). The British have now secured buildings 7DD3 and 7FF1 and have decided to push for a third building, 19DD6 and expand the bridgehead along the tree line by 7V0. This is a big mistake as although they do control the third building and hence win the scenario, they take horrendous casualties in the process as both 75s open up. These roll some hellish ROF and also three Critical Hits, rapidly depleting the British force.

Throughout the game the four tanks and two mortars snipe away at the guns on the hills. Despite huge volumes of fire the only German casualties are a single crew KIA. Similarly the two AA guns and the 50L secure minimal damage on the British throughout The scenario ends on German player turn 6. A substantial number of British units end up Isolated from the main bridgehead and while trying to escape the British lose another 1.5 squads and a leader. Aaron was rather over-ambitious and really should have dug in within a couple of hexes of the river bank.

The net result is that on the German bank at the start of the second scenario the British have only 6.5 squads left out of 14 which they sent across the river and a single leader. Meanwhile the Germans have 16.5 squads once the reserves are released.

### CG DATE II - NIGHT

Both sides buy Attack chits to avoid the penalties of "No Move". Little actually happens in this CG Date. The British concentrate on getting their forces across the river and the German morale is really too low to try and press home their numerical advantage in the early turns. The British try and push along the river bank to the U hex row but are met by a vigorous defence which limits the expansion to two hexes. A small German counter-attack retakes the Strategic location 19DD6 but the British capture 19AA7 in compensation. The scenario ends on the first dr with British losses of only 1.5 squads and German losses of 2 squads. The British now have about 17 squads on the east bank while the Germans have around 21.

During the redeployment phase the Germans pull back and abandon many of the Strategic Locations and foxholes in the open part of board 19 and now strongly defend a line 19CC3-AA2-Y2-W2-V3-U3-T4-T6-S7-R8-B9-T9-T10-7R1 which encircles the British deployment area. Apart from those units in the 19AA9 Strategic Location the British deploy in a series of foxholes along the board 7/19 join.

Both sides now roll 11's for CPs. The Germans buy two Tigers off board (using 7 CP saved from the previous CG) while the British buy the bridge, a platoon and two Humber armoured cars (saving some points for later).

Much to my surprise Aaron does not buy an Attack chit so we skip the third CG date and go to CG Date IV. Aaron does rather better on his CP roll this time and comes up with 20,

which he uses to buy three Shermans, the heavy bridge, an OBA module and an Attack chit. Unfortunately the Germans do less well with only 9 CP. I buy two platoons and an MMG squad (all of which will be held off board in reserve to cut costs), HIP for my two Tigers (which can now set up on board) and the Fighter Bombers.

This looks like the crucial CG Date, the Germans have many MGs and if I can cut up the British with fire lanes as they cross all that Open Ground, and the two HIP Tigers can bloody the nose of the British armour then I should be in good shape for the last two CG Dates.

### CG IV

The scenario started poorly for Aaron when he failed to get radio contact. On turn 1 he tried to send about five squads down the BB-GG hex rows. The numerous German fire lanes cut these up badly and four started to Low Crawl back to the start line. In contrast however the 76 MTR score two CH on the guns on the hill. A 20L AA gun and crew die but remarkably the 50L survives and pops a Humber AC on turn 2. The British make some progress along the tree line towards 7R1 but lose a squad and leader in the process (although they do capture a Conscript squad).

In the German half of the turn little happens although there is quite an exchange of gunfire. Most significantly the kill stack in 19AA7 (9-2, 458S w/HMG and 457S w/2 MMGs) are Broken (although the leader and one squad rally immediately).

At the start of turn 2 the radio lost contact having got an accurate S+R down the previous DFPh. The infantry assault down the GG board edge having failed Aaron now tries to turn the flank with armour. Unfortunately for him he runs into the HIP Tiger in 19FF which kills three tanks during his MPH. At this stage the British are in a deep hole having lost 28 CVP for a gain of only 6.

At this point we call it quits. The British have lost half of their armour, over a third of their squads are Broken (and most of these are stuck in Open Ground) and there are still at least three more turns to play. The Germans still have a second HIP Tiger and the air support has yet to arrive. There is no real prospect of further British progress in this CG Date and with the British being stuck along the board 7/19 tree line at the start of the next CG Date no prospect for a campaign win either.

### AFTERMATH

In many ways I feel Aaron lost it in the first scenario by deciding to cross the river in the 7GG - Z hex rows. At first this must look attractive since the river is narrow here and you are a long way from the guns on the hill mass.

However I think it is virtually impossible to develop the bridgehead from there without a great deal of luck. I think the British need to bite the bullet and come right up the middle between the L and V hex rows.

Once ashore there is plenty of cover for the advance to the village and also plenty of hexes where units can be rallied out of LOS of the German front line.

In addition Aaron had both his Bridges cross directly into the bridgehead. I would be tempted to put one, probably the pontoon bridge, out on the flank and run armour (the Humber Acs) over it and into the German rear.

All in all I think I played it pretty well with the only error being buying the OBA for CG Date I. It would be much better kept for 3 or 4 when it could be used to impede, via harassing fire, the British advance inland.

Like the other PL campaigns I have played if you lose a single scenario badly then it is very difficult to recover with only 5 or 6 CG Dates.

When recommending this to someone else then we think it would be a good idea for the more experienced player to get the British side as the combined arms nature of the forces needs careful handling, any of the problems Aaron had stemmed from not enough practice in that area. Having said that I really enjoyed the campaign and would happily take either side if I were to play again.

Q

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# OPERATION NEPTUNE

## ASL PL CG VFTT A



**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: British SR (Initial SSR I2.) are automatically accurate
- ⊕ German: Add 1 247 HS and HMG to the initial OB

**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  $\geq 4$  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.

**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

<b>IDLE SIDE Sets Up First</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>END</b>
<b>ATTACKING SIDE Moves First</b>						②	④	⑥	

### TERRAIN CONFIGURATION:

Treat all marsh on board 7 as brush. All buildings 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 MF/MP cost for Infantry/Armoured Cars/AFVs crossing a railway hexside are 1.5MF/SMP/3MP respectively].

**OVERLAY PLACEMENT:** Vernonnet village on matching hexes of board 19

<b>O1</b>	7O10	<b>X6</b>	19DD6
<b>OC1</b>	7Z4/7AA4	<b>X8</b>	19AA7
<b>OC2</b>	7N6/7N7	<b>X11</b>	7P1/7O1
<b>Roadbridge</b>	7R4/7S5	<b>Railbridge</b>	covering hexes 7I1 - 7I10



7	19	
		7



### 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

RG: 4x I1 4-5-7 Rifle Pltn    4x Cromwell VII  
 2x 2-2-8 crews                    2 x DUKW  
 2x OML 3" Mortars                12CPP



### 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

RG: 1x I2 Rifle Pltn                    RG: 1x I3 Rifle Pltn  
 RG: 2x I4 MMG squad  
 1x 247 HS                                1x HMG  
 RG: 2x G2 Inf Gun Section        1x 5cm PaK38 AT Gun  
 2x 2cm FlaK LKW AA Guns        3x228 Crew  
 40FPP                                      8CPP

### OPERATION NEPTUNE Campaign SSR:

**VFTT1** EC, Weather and wind are determined as per E3, if not provided on the CDS.

**VFTT2** German RG enter on the east, south and/or north edges of board 2.

**VFTT3** British RG enter on the west edge of board 7 [EXC: SSR VFTT9].

**VFTT4** Prior to placement of either the pontoon or Bailey bridge, all British units east of the river are considered Isolated for CG purposes.

**VFTT5** No Vehicle may enter/set up in any hex > than level 0 on board 2.

**VFTT6** The railbridge is impassable along the 16/15 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.

**VFTT7** Sturm Boats have an internet MP of 2 for the first scenario only, with 4MF thereafter, and can be retained.

**VFTT8** The western river bank is always a friendly set up area for the British player and he must set up any of his just purchased units there for no additional CPP cost. In addition, at the start of any scenario any

purchased British units have the option to start up loaded on beached, OB given Sturm boats/purchased AFV pontoon raft in any river hex adjacent to the western river bank.

**VFTT9** PL1.6194(a) and PL1.6194(b) are NA to the British player.

### OPERATION NEPTUNE Initial SSR:

I1. All PL CG SSR and Campaign SSR are in effect except as noted.

I2. Immediately at the start of the British Turn 1 PFP, the British may place 2 SR counters anywhere on the playing area. These SR are accurate on a dr  $\leq 2$ . 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.

**DESIGN AND DEVELOPEMENT:** Andrew Saunders and Nigel Brown

RG ID	GERMAN 49th Infantry Division	#	Units/Equipment	CPP	Scen Max	CG Max	Note
S1	Close Air Support	1	44 FB w/o Bombs	2	1	1	f
A1	Heavy Tank	1	PzKpfw VII	6	2	3	rf
I1	Rifle Pltn	3	4-6-7 MMC	4	1	2	lrw
I2	Rifle Pltn	3	4-4-7 MMC	3	2	3	lrw
I3	Rifle Pltn	3	4-3-6 MMC	2	2	5	lrw
I4	MMG Squad	1	MMG	1	1	3	ac
O1	Med Artillery		80mm OBA (HE only)	4	1	1	p
G1	Inf Gun Sect	1	7.5cm leIG18	4	1	1	ac
M1	Fortifications	15	FPP	1	3	6	a
M2	Sniper	SAN	1	1	1	3	
M3	Attack Chit			1	1	2	
RG ID	BRITISH 43rd (Wessex) Division	#	Units/Equipment	CPP	Scen Max	CG Max	Notes
A1	Carrier Sect	2	Carrier A	3	1	3	r
A2	Armoured Car Sect	2	Humber IV	4	1	2	r
A3	Med Tank	1	Sherman V(a)	5	2	4	r
A4	Med Tank	1	Sherman IIC(a)	6	1	2	r
I1	Rifle Pltn	3	4-5-7 MMC	3	2	5	lrw
I2	Rifle Pltn	3	4-5-8 MMC	4	1	2	lrw
I3	PIAT Squad	2	PIAT	2	1	2	ac
I4	MMG Squad	1	MMG	1	1	3	ac
I5	HMG Squad	1	HMG	2	1	2	ac
O1	Med Artillery		80mm OBA (HE, SMOKE)	3	1	2	p
O2	Heavy Artillery		150mm OBA (HE, SMOKE)	6	1	1	p
B1	Bridge	1	Pontoon Bridge	3	1	1	sa
B2	Bridge	1	Bailey Bridge	5	1	1	ta
B3	Raft	1	AFV Pontoon Raft	2	1	2	va
M1	Fortifications	15	FPP	1	1	3	a
M2	Sniper	SAN	1	2	1	2	
M3	Attack Chit			2	1	5	

**RG Notes:**

a Available for on map set up on CG Date of purchase

c Each British PIAT/MMG/HMG is accompanied by a 2-3-7 HS MMC. Each German MMG is accompanied by a 2-4-7 HS MMC. Each German Gun is accompanied by a 2-2-8 Crew.

f Not available until scenario 3. Air Support is available for two turns only.

l Determine leaders (SMC) as per PL1.6205.

p Increase CPP cost by one per Pre-Registered hex (C1.73) purchased with module (no module may have > 2 Pre-Registered Hexes). Each Pre-Registered hex is retained as long as the module it is assigned to is retained (PL1.4). Purchase of a Pre-Registered hex allows normal/creeping barrage (E12.) [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 (E12.771). Each barrage must have a north-south hex grain alignment (E12.11 - 12.2).

r Must enter as reinforcements if entered on the CG Date of purchase [EXC: PL1.6194]. The RG is available for on map set up if purchased on any CG date prior to that of the scenario [EXC: SSR 8 and SSR 9].

s Not available until scenario 3. Purchase of RG B1 allows the British player to place ≤6 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 Carriers/Armoured Cars/Passengers/Riders/Infantry on foot may use this bridge.

t Not available until scenario 4. Purchase of RG B2 allows the British player to place ≤6 continuous Bridge counters to form a bailey 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). This bridge is usable by all British units.

v 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 inherent crew and 2MPs. For NVR purposes treat as a CE AFV. An AFV Pontoon Raft treated as a large target for TH purposes. Refer to B6.33 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 5MP plus COT 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.

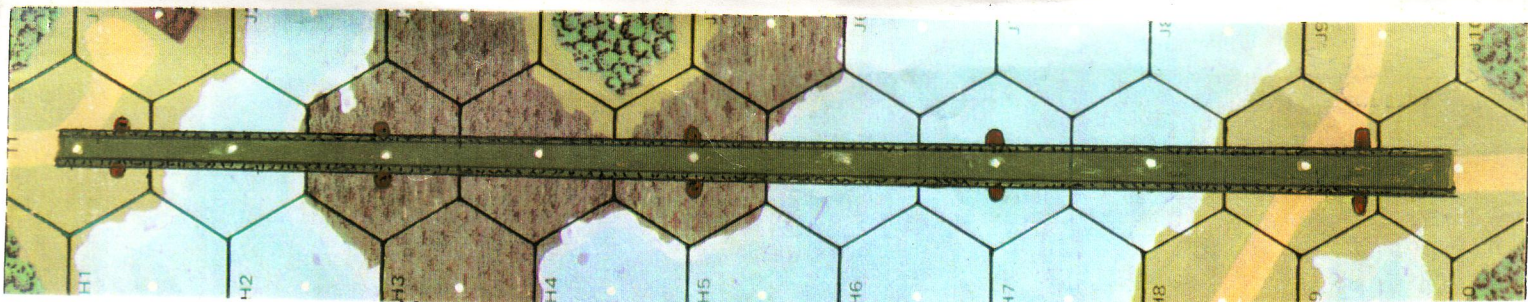
w British infantry platoons always arrive with a LMG. German infantry platoons always arrive with a LMG.

Scenario	Time/Date	Attacker	Weather	EC	Wind	Moon	Hist DRM
1	1845 25/08/44	British	Clear	Dry	No Wind	NA	0
2	2300 25/08/44	British	Night	Moist	No Wind	No Moon	0
3	0500 26/08/44	British	Clear	Dry	B25.63	NA	0
4	1200 26/08/44	British	Clear	Dry	B25.63	NA	0
5	0600 27/08/44	German	Clear	Wet	B25.63	NA	0
6	1200 27/08/44	British	Clear	Dry	B25.63	NA	0

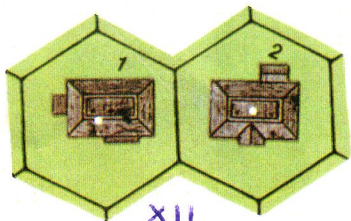
CG DRM	BRITISH	GERMAN
Leader	0	+1
Battle Hardening	0	0
Artillery OBA	-1	0
CPP Replenishment	0	0
Intensity Level	MID	LOW

Fortifications Available for purchase:	
Foxholes	Trenches
Set DC (g)	HIP (g)
Fortified Building (g)	"?"
(g) German only	

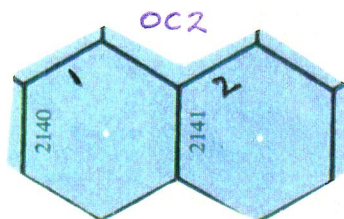
**Aftermath:** The assault commenced at 1845hrs with the British conducting a thunderous artillery and smoke barrage aimed at the far side of the river, targeting the prominent hills and the village of Vernonnet. The British took to the water in their storm boats in what turned out to be a rather uncoordinated attack, resulting in a number of British Soldiers losing their lives. After 4 hours, only a handful of toops 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. Eventually, men and vehicles were now starting to pour into the bridgehead across the class 9 folding boat bridge which now spanned the river. Spandau and AA fire still peppered the area, killing a number of the vital bridge engineers. Sunday saw the German Kampf Gruppe Schrader launch the expected counterattack, which was supported by 3 Tiger tanks. Naturally the Tigers gave some cause for concern, but in the end the British held firm and the bridgehead absorbed the shock. After this, the Germans virtually melted away and General Thomas, commander of the 43rd (Wessex) Division knew he had the battle almost won. This action opened the way for General Horrocks to unleash the armour of XXX Corps on their historic dash across northern France and Belgium.



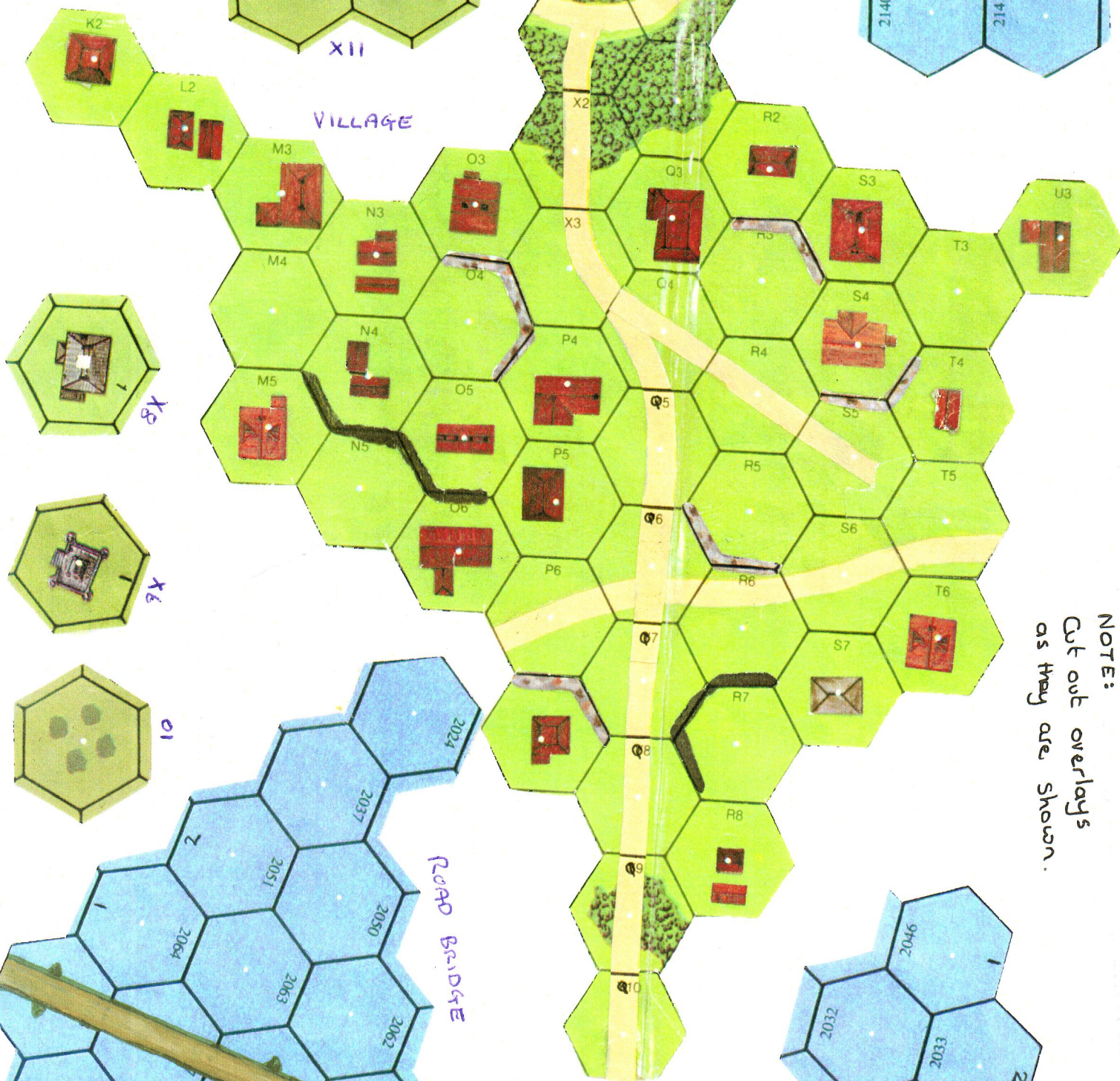
RAIL BRIDGE



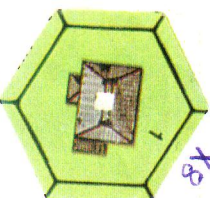
XII



OC2



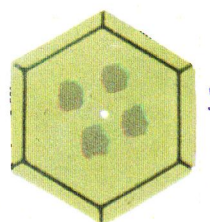
VILLAGE



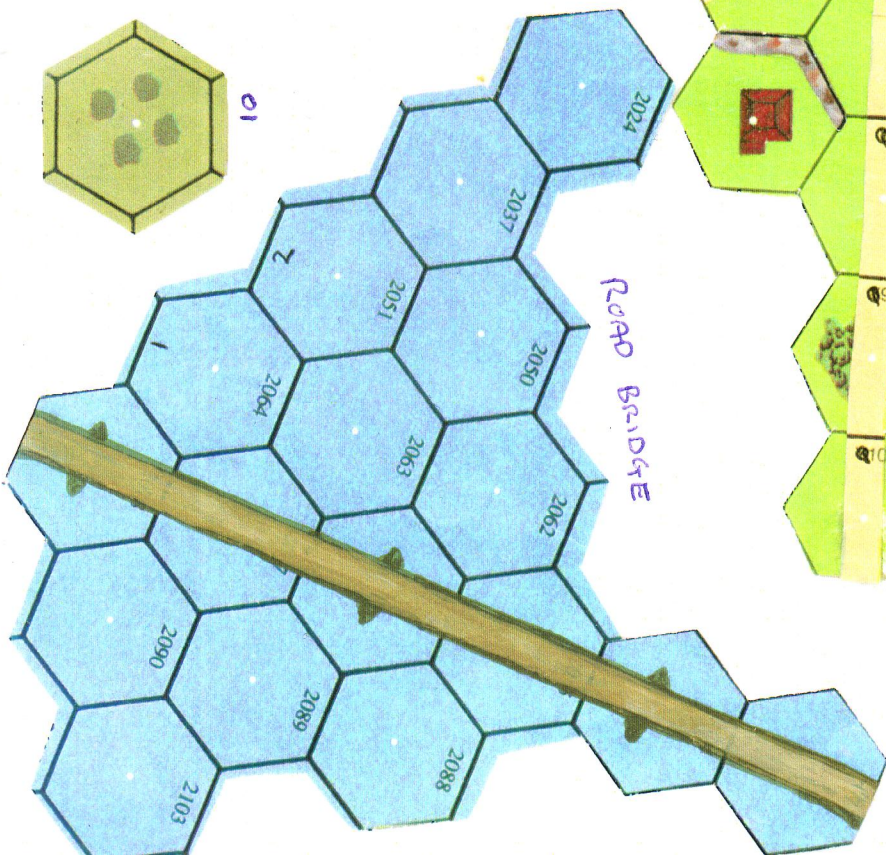
X8



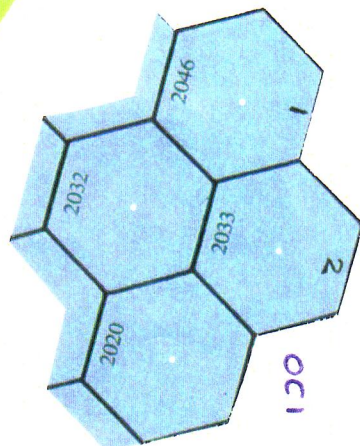
X6



O1



ROAD BRIDGE



OC1

NOTE:  
Cut out overlays  
as they are shown.