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The Guns of Bretteville: 13th Field Regiment, RCA, and the defence of Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse, 7–10 June 1944

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The Guns of Bretteville

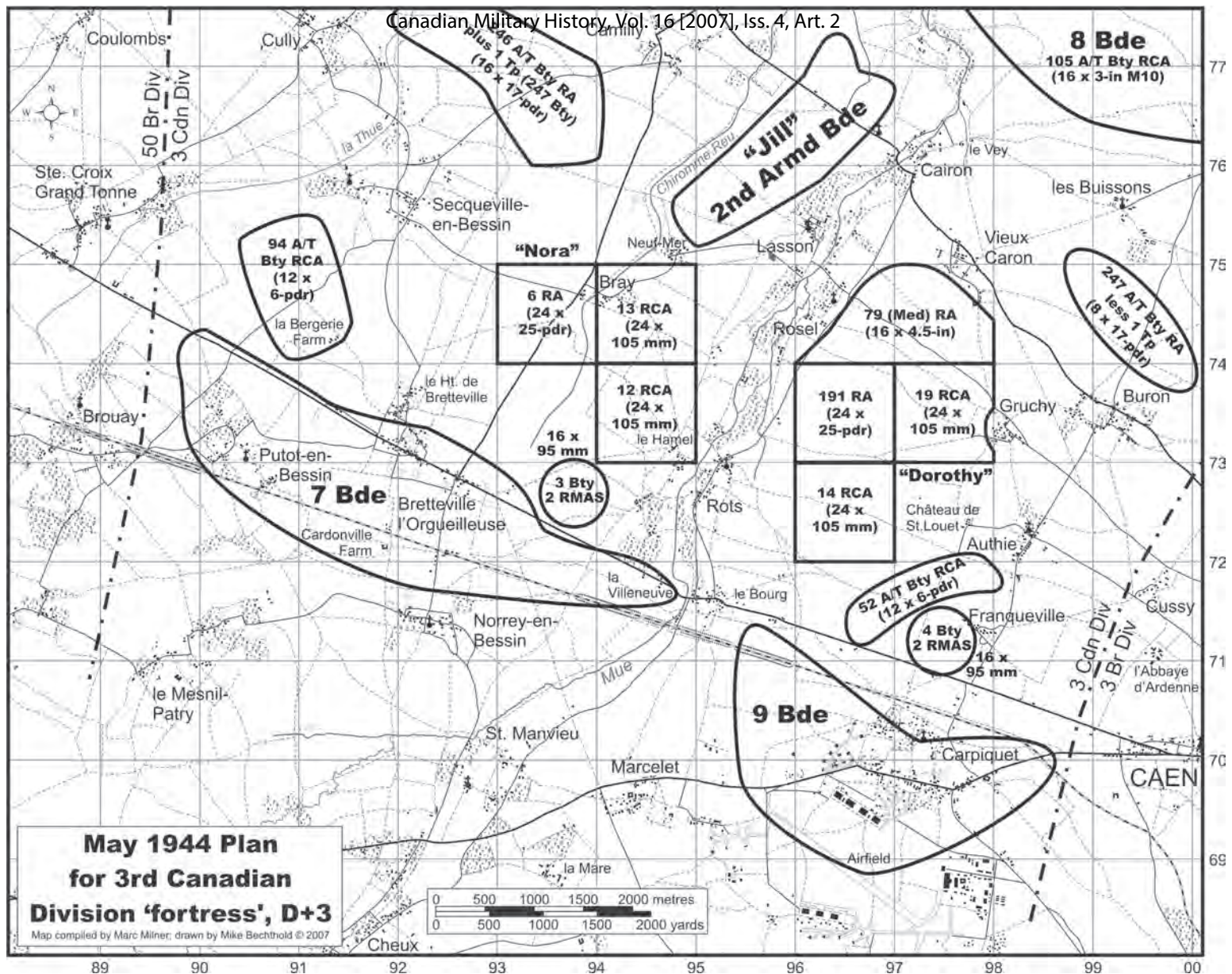
13th Field Regiment, RCA, and the defence of Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse, 7-10 June 1944

Marc Milner

In the days immediately following the D-Day landings of 6 June 1944, Canadian and British forces withstood the primary attempt by the Germans to crush the Allied invasion. Struck by a series of savage assaults by three Panzer divisions, the British and Canadian divisions buckled but did not break. The location and nature of these attacks were anticipated by Overlord planners. With Caen securely in British hands by the end of D-Day (it was hoped), only the broad, flat plains west of Caen offered the Germans the opportunity for a hard-hitting armoured thrust to the sea. Much of this key terrain was assigned to 3rd Canadian Infantry Division which was to establish brigade fortresses at the southern ends of the two key plains, support them with an exceptional number of artillery pieces, and destroy the German counterattack when it came. This is precisely what happened. In particular, the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade fortress astride the Caen-Bayeux road and rail line at Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse, Norrey-en-Bessin and Putot-en-Bessin withstood everything thrown at it between 8 and 10 June. Historians have focussed on the role of Canadian infantry battalions during this battle, and rightly so. British historian Michael Reynolds described the Regina Rifle Regiment's defence of Bretteville as "one of the finest small units actions of the Second World War."¹ But the Reginas could not have succeeded without the exceptionally powerful artillery support provided by Overlord planners, and in particular without Lieutenant-Colonel F. "Freddy" Le P. T. Clifford and the gunners of 13th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA).

Third Canadian Division was allotted more than double its normal artillery for the beachhead battles, a fact which says a great deal about what the Allies believed was going to happen west of Caen. In addition to its own divisional field regiments – 12th, 13th and 14th RCA – the Canadians had three more field regiments and a medium regiment temporarily assigned from 2nd and 4th Army Groups, Royal Artillery (AGRA), and two batteries of 95 mm self-propelled (SP) guns. Among the additions was 19th RCA, assigned from First Canadian Army and nominally attached to 4th AGRA, which landed on D-Day, and two British regiments of towed 25-pounders which were to join within days: 6th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (RA) from 4th AGRA was to land on D+2, followed by the 191st RA, lately of 2nd Canadian AGRA, on D+3. Thus, by D+3 the number of field regiments deployed behind the Canadian was to be six – 144 guns instead of the normal 72 for an infantry division. In addition, by D+2 the eighteen 4.5-inch guns of the 79th Medium Regiment, RA, from 4th AGRA were to be added, as were two batteries of the 2nd Royal Marine Armoured Support Regiment (2 RMAS) equipped with 95 mm howitzers mounted in Centaur tanks. The other division of the 1st British Corps to land on D-Day, 3rd British Infantry, was not as heavily reinforced. It landed with its own three regiments (converted to SPs) and added two field regiments on D+1.²

To handle all this, the Commander, Royal Artillery (CRA) of the Canadian division, Brigadier P.A.S. Todd, RCA, organized his guns into two



"Field Artillery Groups" - the 14th composed of 14th and 19th RCA along with 191st and 79th RA to be deployed around Authie-Buron in gun area "Dorothy." This group was to support the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade fortress planned for the Carpiquet area. The 12th Group, composed of 12th and 13th RCA and 6th RA, deployed in gun area "Nora" behind 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade fortress at Bretteville and Putot. These powerful groups were to be protected by the 32 howitzers of 3rd and 4th Batteries of 2 RMAS³ in a counter-mortar role, and screened by the 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA, and protected against tank assault from the west by two batteries of 17-pounder guns from 1st British Corps' 62nd Anti-Tank Regiment. (See map above.)

All of the field artillery regiments landed by the Anglo-Canadians on D-Day - 240 guns - were self-propelled (SP). The majority (168) were

American-built M7 Priests with 105 mm guns, while the rest were Canadian-built Sexton SPs with 25-pounder guns.⁴ Published sources are remarkably silent on precisely why the Anglo-Canadian assault artillery was converted to SP for the Operation Overlord.⁵ Canadian Military Headquarters Report No.141 says simply that the Canadians followed British practice for assault landings in which the ability to fire from landing craft and to land with the gun pointing at the enemy was considered important.⁶ But SPs also provided mobility and protection from small arms fire and shell fragments (although not from airbursts and the danger of mortar rounds landing directly in the gun bay). It also meant that the guns could deploy quickly in a fluid battle without the need to dig-in.⁷ In addition, each SP regiment fielded 13 Sherman tanks to serve as command posts, observation posts (OPs), and to carry officers and others around the battlefield.

These additional tanks meant that there was virtually another entire regiment of Shermans (52) in the Canadian beachhead beyond those in the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade.⁸ The conversion of all the Anglo-Canadian assault artillery from towed guns to SP is further proof that a major Panzer assault was expected during the beachhead battles.

All four Canadian field regiments which landed on D-Day were equipped with the M7 Priest and its 105 mm gun-howitzer drawn from American stocks. The 105 mm threw a larger shell than the standard 25-pounder of British Commonwealth artillery, and had a slightly shorter range. The mainstay 105 mm high explosive M1 shell weighed 33 pounds, with a bursting charge of nearly five pounds of TNT. The M48 PD (point detonating) fuse provided either a “super-quick” detonation or up to 0.15 second delay, while the M54 fuse permitted airburst or “Super Quick” settings. Alternate munitions for the 105 mm gun in the summer of 1944 included the M60 WP (white phosphorous) smoke round with the M57 fuse, which also proved useful for starting fires, and the M67 HEAT (high explosive, anti-tank) “fixed” round for direct fire at tanks. All ammunition was delivered in two-round 120-lb cases. M1 and M60 cases contained the projectile, the brass casing, seven-bag charge system and appropriate fuses, allowing the gunners to put the appropriate charge into each round for the program being fired. Charge-seven gave the M1 round a maximum range of 12,500 yards, but practical ranges for direct support of infantry were much less. The 105 mm gun’s maximum

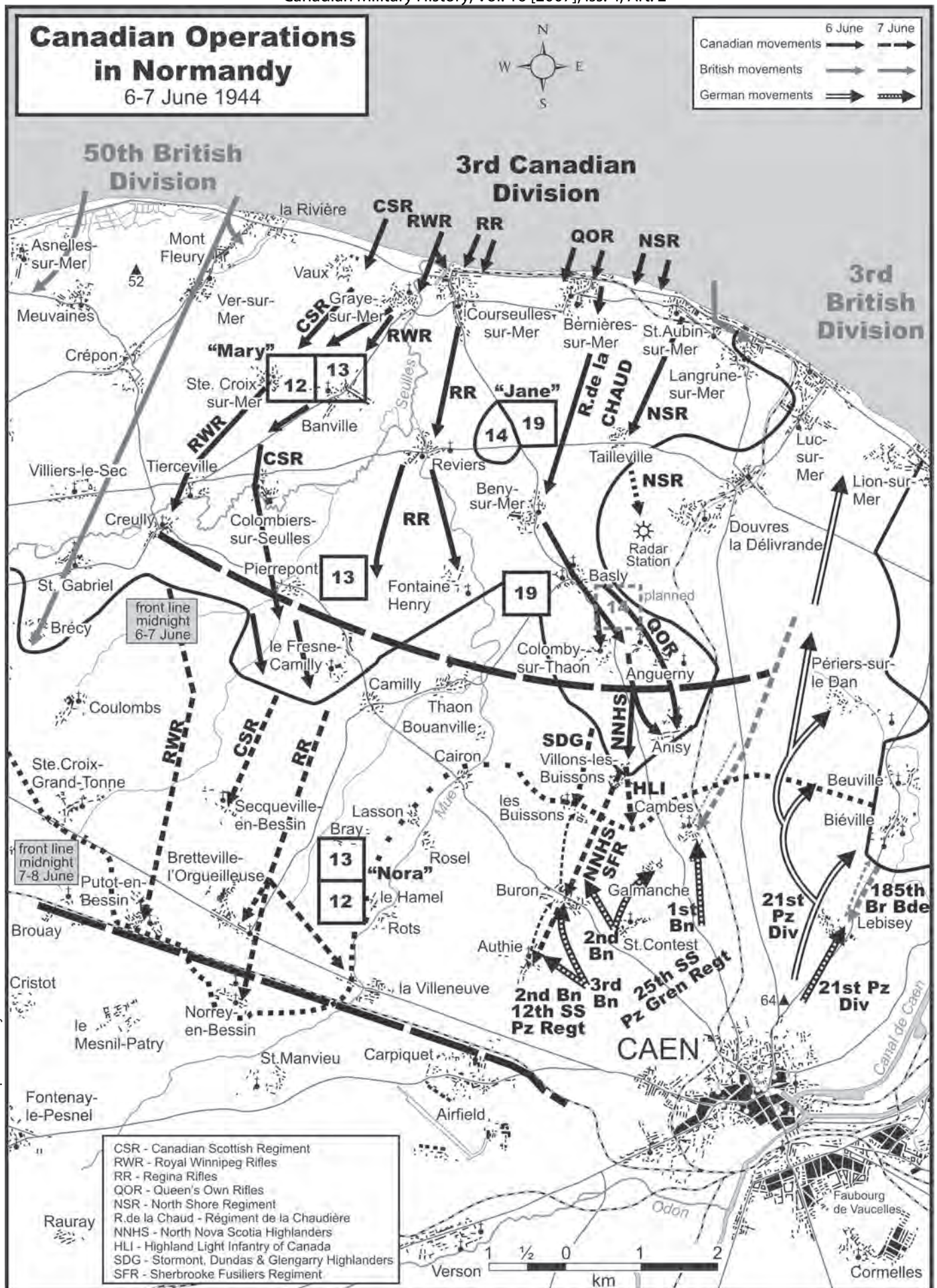
range was about 1,500 yards shorter than the 25-pounder field gun. This limitation would have serious consequences for 9th Brigade on D+1 as it advanced to Carpique. However, the 7th Brigade battle of 7-10 June 1944 was not affected by the 105 mm gun’s shorter range.⁹

The regiments landing on D-Day followed the standard organization of British Commonwealth artillery. The 13th RCA was composed of three eight-gun batteries (the 22nd, 44th and 78th - all militia units from Alberta), each in turn divided into two four-gun troops – giving the regiment six troops, designated A to F.¹⁰ Normally, a field regiment supported an infantry brigade, with batteries assigned to provide fire support for each of the brigade’s three battalions. During a battle, the artillery regiment’s commanding officer served at brigade HQ and co-ordinated fire support from all guns within range – not just his own regiment. The regiment’s second-in-command ran the regimental HQ in the rear. Forward Observation Officers (FOOs) and their parties operated with battalion headquarters, while over a dozen regimental officers were attached to neighbouring units to help co-ordinate artillery across the front. The situation in the beachhead battles was rather different.

It is important to observe that a field regiment was both a discrete combat unit and the tentacles of the artillery apparatus of the army in the field – division, corps, army and army group. The regiment provided immediate on-call support to its brigade at the front, but artillery regiments remained part of the whole “regiment” of Royal

An M7 Priest self-propelled gun firing on targets shortly after D-Day.





Canadian Operations in Normandy

6-7 June 1944

	6 June	7 June
Canadian movements		
British movements		
German movements		



50th British Division

3rd Canadian Division

3rd British Division

- CSR - Canadian Scottish Regiment
- RWR - Royal Winnipeg Rifles
- RR - Regina Rifles
- QOR - Queen's Own Rifles
- NSR - North Shore Regiment
- R.de la CHAUD - Régiment de la Chaudière
- NNHS - North Nova Scotia Highlanders
- HLI - Highland Light Infantry of Canada
- SDG - Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry Highlanders
- SFR - Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment



Map drawn by Mike Bechthold ©2007



A Royal Marine Centaur in Courseulles, late on 6 June, still sporting its wading equipment. Eight of these SP howitzers from “S” and “T” Troops, 2 RMA, were assigned to help the Reginas with indirect fire controlled by FOOs from 13th RCA. “S” Troop appears to have landed only two guns, while “T” Troop had three of its four SPs disabled by track damage on the beach. Nonetheless, Centaur fire - even on a small scale and often in an assault gun role firing direct - was crucial to the clearing of Courseulles, and other strongpoints along Juno beach, on D-Day.

Artillery, with access to every gun in theatre through a dedicated artillery communications net. The FOO, his battery and regiment, therefore, served as the conduit through which forward infantry units could access fire support on a vast scale. This is what ultimately made the artillery fire of British Commonwealth armies so devastating. It was possible for any FOO or even a “gunner” – an artillery private – to deliver the fire of everything from his own battery to that of all guns of the Corps onto a single grid reference in a matter of minutes. Under the British system you fired first and asked questions later.¹¹ It was this very powerful system, deployed on an exceptional scale behind 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, that was intended to and actually did crush the anticipated German Panzer assault on the beachhead in the days after 6 June 1944.

Mobility and armour allowed the Canadian artillery of 3rd Canadian Infantry Division to get ashore largely unscathed on D-Day: only six of its 96 M7s were lost. Three were destroyed when a mortar bomb landed inside a Priest of “A” Troop, 19th RCA while the vehicles were still on their

landing craft, and three M7s of 14th RCA were destroyed just south of Bernières-sur-Mer by anti-tank fire (see account by Wesley Alkenbrack starting on page 65). All of the guns of the 12th and 13th got ashore safely. The heaviest losses in artillery assigned to the Canadians were suffered by 2 RMA. It appears that only 22 of their 32 Centaur SPs got safely ashore on D-Day. Five were lost at sea or once ashore, and the remainder did not land on D-Day. Nonetheless, 2 RMA Centaurs were the first SPs ashore and provided crucial early fire support to Canadian infantry.¹² The mediums of 79th RA arrived on schedule on D+2, but neither of the towed British 25-pounder field regiments got into action before 11 June.

Despite these shortfalls in the planned allocation, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division still had an exceptional amount of attached fire support – ninety 105 mm guns available on 7 June 1944, plus sixteen 4.5-inch mediums by the next day. The contrast with American practice and experience on D-Day could not be sharper. The twelve 105 mm guns of the 111th FA Battalion, for example, supporting the 116th Regiment of



Lieutenant James Montgomery Doohan, born in Vancouver, BC, was a gun position officer with 13th Field Regiment on 6 June 1944. Late on D-Day, Lieutenant Doohan was returning from a patrol when he was hit by machine gun fire (possibly from a Canadian sentry). Doohan was hit by six bullets, four in his leg, one on his right hand (which required the amputation of his middle finger), and one in his chest which was deflected by his silver cigarette case. These wounds effectively ended Doohan's war. He was evacuated to England where, upon his rehabilitation, he volunteered to be an air observation pilot. After earning his wings, he was posted to 666 Air Observation Post Squadron, RCAF in Holland in the closing days of the war. Following the war, Doohan returned to Canada where he trained as an actor. He is best known today for his role as Montgomery Scott ("Scotty"), Chief Engineer of the USS *Enterprise*, on *Star Trek*.

the 29th Division at Omaha Beach were borne in DUKWs. Once ashore, the guns were to be lifted out of the DUKW and deployed as regular towed artillery. Badly overloaded and launched more than six hours before their scheduled touch-down on the beach, most of the 11th FA's DUKWs foundered in the heavy sea. Of the four to reach shore, three were promptly destroyed by German fire, leaving the equivalent of a British Commonwealth brigade with only one dedicated 105 mm gun. In the end, US 29th Division landed only 29 guns from four different battalions on D-Day. Had the same fate befallen the Canadian guns on D-Day as those of the US 29th Division, the Anglo-Canadian beachhead would have been destroyed by the German counterattacks.¹³

The only serious losses to 13th RCA on D-Day were in personnel. Of the five officers to land at Courseulles-sur-Mer with the Reginas in the assault wave, only one survived 6 June intact. Each Regina company was supported by a FOO "walking party" of a captain, his "Able" – a FOO's assistant – and a signaller carrying an 18 set. The 13th RCA's second-in-command, Major G.F. Rainnie, and a small party landed alongside the Regina's headquarters, while the regiment's recce party landed dispersed among the craft carrying the Regina's reserve companies. Of the FOOs, Captain W.M. Dirks drowned when his assault craft struck a mine and sank. His signaller swam ashore and his Able was picked up by the navy and taken back to England. Captain J. Else was wounded crossing the beach and his Able, Gunner J.F. Robinson, was killed. Else carried on, supporting the Regina's battle through Courseulles, before being struck again and evacuated. That left Else's signaller, Gunner J. Holtzman, to carry on, which he did, calling down fire from two Centaurs of "S" Troop, 2 RMAS, on a beach front blockhouse that was delaying the Reginas in Courseulles. Holtzman earned the Military Medal for his efforts. Later that evening Captain A.F. Wrenshall was wounded and evacuated. The only FOO with the Reginas to make it through D-Day was Captain W.J.G. Steele. Major G.F. Rainnie and his whole party of a corporal and two gunners were killed when they either detonated a mine or were struck by a shell. And Major J.D. Young, commanding officer of 22nd Battery and also the Unit Deployment Officer responsible for getting the guns into action, and his signaller were killed by a shell which struck their landing craft. Later in the day Lieutenant J.M. Doohan was hit by several bullets and had to be evacuated (see sidebar). In all, seven officers of 13th RCA were killed or wounded on D-Day, and it might well have been worse since "D" Company of the Reginas, with whom some of the recce party landed, lost about half its strength before ever getting ashore. Fortunately, Lieutenant-Colonel Clifford and the regimental headquarters landed unscathed at Nan Green at H+30, and two other FOO parties and Major R.K. Mackenzie came ashore safely alongside the Canadian Scottish Regiment (CSR).¹⁴

Although 13th RCA's personnel casualties on D-Day were small when compared to those of



Gunner W.G. Magee stands guard over his M7 Priest self-propelled gun while his comrades rest after a long day, 6 June 1944.

the infantry they supported, Major R. Mackenzie recalled that they caused significant disruption to the regiment for the first day or so.¹⁵ Major Young, for example, had the unique task of bringing the batteries and troops together as a unit amid the chaos. Whether his death contributed to the delay in getting the regiment into action is unclear. Major J.D. Baird assumed the job and the task of second in command of the regiment.¹⁶ With officers dispersed across the front in liaison and FOO roles (Mackenzie himself was soon attached to 8th Brigade, and 13th RCA FOOs remained with the CSR), it took some time to identify and fill the gaps in command and control.

A crowded beach on D-Day was probably why the guns of 13th RCA did not get ashore until the afternoon of 6 June (12th RCA came ashore in the morning and fired from the beach). The regiment was fully assembled by 1800 hours, when it deployed just north of Banville in gun area "Mary" after running a "gauntlet" of bombs from the Luftwaffe. The air attacks continued throughout the first night ashore, which the regimental history described as "a nightmare

with the German planes bombing and strafing everywhere."¹⁷ The lack of solid front lines also occasioned much digging of slit trenches and dodging of machine gun and sniper fire. In fact, one of the characteristics of the gunner's battle for the next week was the fluidity of the front and the ever present – and very real – danger of a direct attack on the gun positions. It says a great deal about the nature of the early battle for the beachhead to observe that 49 of the 167 casualties suffered by 13th RCA during the Northwest Europe campaign occurred between 6 and 12 June – including all the officer fatalities.

The Canadians did not capture their D-Day objectives astride the Caen-Bayeux highway on 6 June 1944, reaching only their intermediary objective before stopping for the night. The next day the advance was renewed in the hopes that they could reach their fortress positions before the Panzers arrived. In the case of 9th Brigade that hope was dashed. Caen had not fallen to the British on D-Day as planned and the brigade's left flank was wide open. Consequently, the

vanguard of the brigade was ambushed from that direction at about 1300 hours by two battalions and about 40 Mk IV tanks of the 12th SS Hitler Youth Panzer Division. Two North Nova Scotia Highlander companies, the Shermans of the Sherbooke Fusiliers and their supporting units which formed the vanguard fought around Authie and Buron all afternoon, and did so without artillery support. At the time the 12th SS struck, the regiment covering the 9th Brigade vanguard, 14th RCA, was out of range. It had been forced to withdraw from its assigned gun position near la Mare (northwest of Anguerny) because of machine gun and mortar fire from the radar station at Douvres – which was being attacked by the North Shore Regiment supported by the other field regiment of the 14th Group, 19th RCA. The vanguard's other support, the nine 6-inch guns of the British cruiser HMS *Belfast*, could not be contacted because the radio link failed.

The initial attack on 9th Brigade would have been shattered had its supporting artillery been on line at 1300 hours. It remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of the early days in Normandy, however, why the North Novas had to wait over four hours to receive artillery support. The only notation in the 14th RCA war diary about this is that when the attack started their FOOs withdrew to high ground around Buron to get better observation of the battlefield. This is not sufficient to explain why three batteries of self-propelled guns remained silent until 1800 hours when, as both the 14th's war diary and the North Nova's history records, they finally fired their first barrages. Nor does it explain why regiments of the 12th Field Group, which were nearing Bray in the late afternoon, were not called upon to provide support .

Coordination of fire support was the task of the divisional artillery HQ, which according to its War Diary "landed with little difficulty" around noon on 6 June and established itself in an orchard near Beny-sur-Mer "with considerable confusion." The war diary's entry for 7 June is short, observing that "The battle is progressing very favourably." Problems on the 9th Brigade front on 7 June do not make an appearance in the CRA's war diary until the next day, in a cryptic note that the brigade had "run into some strong points." In short, the CRA's war diary suggests that the divisional artillery HQ took no role in the battle on D+1.¹⁸ If so, this may not be

simply a failure in command. The section of the operational order for the divisional artillery titled "The Consolidation of the Divisional Covering Position" specified that DF [defensive fire] and DF (SOS) [emergency DF] tasks would be "issued by HQ RCA after co-ordination of demands on re-organization." Since the division had not yet consolidated on its covering position astride the Caen-Bayeux highway, it is possible that the CRA had not yet assumed full control of his guns. This may also explain why no fire support was received by the North Novas from 12th Field Group as it moved forward on the other side of the Mue River.

Whatever the reason,¹⁹ by late afternoon on D+1 the two companies of North Novas fighting around Authie were over-run, as elements of two German battalions pushed through Buron and onto the open ground to the north. There the first shells of Canadian artillery fire finally landed. The surviving Novas fighting north of Buron wanted to "stand and cheer!" at the sight of the 105 mm shells exploding among the Hitler Youth. According to Will Bird, Canadian gunners "routed the Germans," and the young Nazis were hounded all the way back to Authie by tanks, "dying in groups all over the field."²⁰

In the event, 9th Brigade's fortress was established at Villons-les-Buissons, north of Buron, on easily defended ground. This proved to be much less of a set-back for the Canadians than historians have claimed, since a brigade fortress at Carpique would have been untenable without the simultaneous capture of Caen by the British. Moreover, the position at Villons-les-Buissons denied the Germans use of the plain east of the Mue River for their Panzer thrust to the sea. In short, the mission of the division was accomplished even if the details of the plan were not - the expected Panzer assault had been blunted and stopped. This meant, however, that gun area "Dorothy" planned for the open ground west of Authie was lost and 14th Field Group RCA had to be squeezed into areas already designated for other activities.

The 7th Brigade was more fortunate on D+1. Its advance to the brigade fortress area astride the Caen-Bayeux highway was essentially uncontested, and was well covered by guns of the 12th Field Group. In the case of 13th RCA, new FOOs were quickly found for the Regins:

Some of the 13th RCA men who helped to secure the 7th Brigade fortress: Gunners Len Forbes, Herb Guard, Don Germscheid and Frank Curlis pose for the photographer, 25 June 1944.

Lieutenant T.J. O'Brennan for "B" Company, Lieutenant R.J. Macdonald for "D" Company and Captain Steele for "C." By D+1 these were no longer "walking parties" of three, but "armoured" OPs of five men mounted in a Sherman tank (the FOO, his Able, his signaller and two tank crewmen). These were easily able to move forward as 7th Brigade advanced. No FOO was attached to "A" Company of the Reginas, presumably because Clifford himself was in their midst at the battalion HQ.

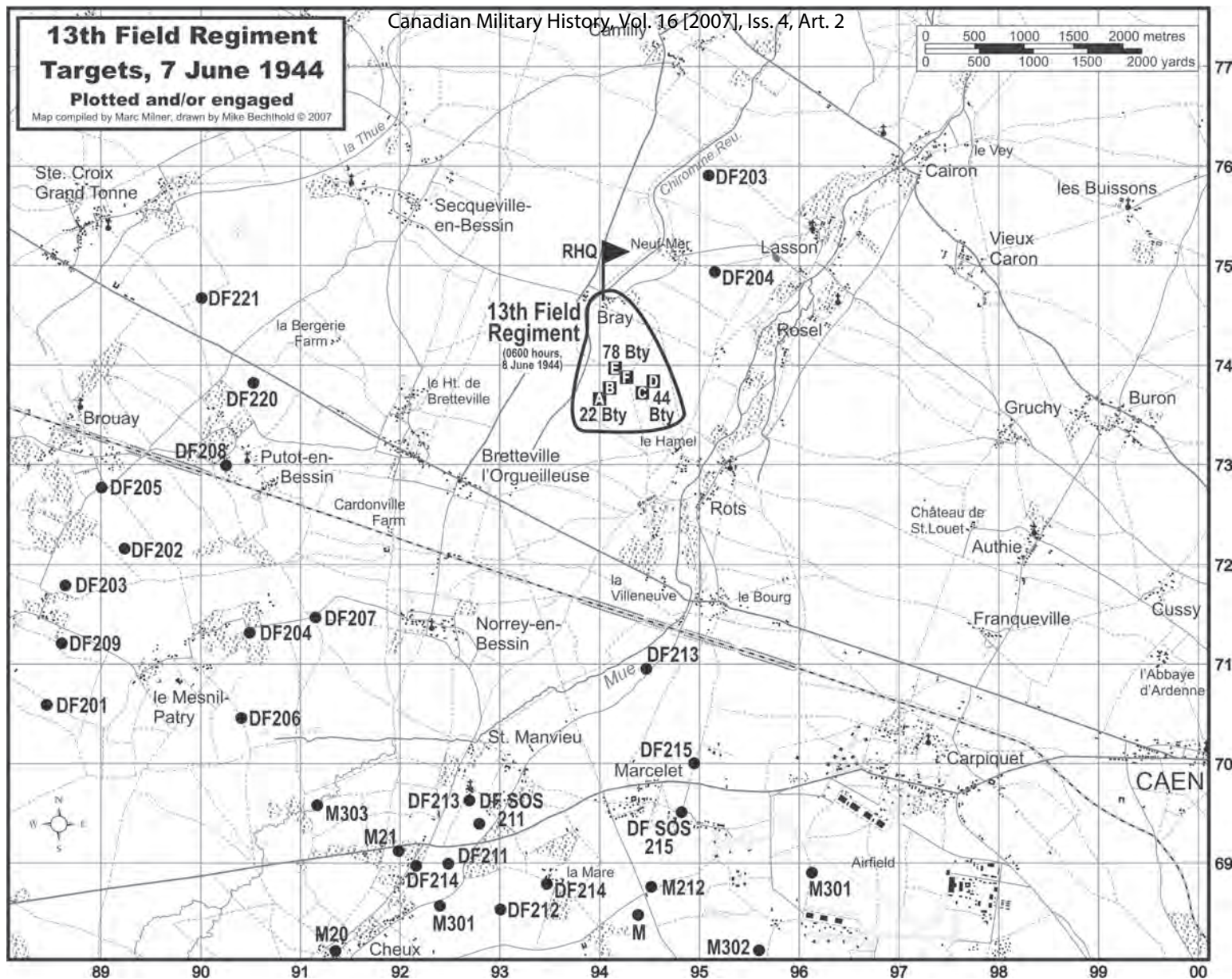
On D+1 13th RCA moved forward in two bounds. The first was a deployment half way between Pierrepont and Fontaine-Henry, to cover the brigade's final advance on their objective. They remained there until 1600 hours, when the advance to gun area "Nora," a grid square around the hamlet of Bray, began. The position was a good one. Barely a mile north of Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse, Bray is nestled into a little flat re-entrant west of the Mue River, just below the 50-metre contour line. On its western side rises the broad flat plain that runs north from Bretteville to the sea. The position is open to Bretteville across flat fields to the south, but sheltered from the Mue River a 1000 metres to the east by a broad flat crest providing excellent fields of fire. The regiment deployed south of Bray, with 22nd and 44th Batteries forward, both commanding open ground, 78th Battery tucked in behind them, and the RHQ in the village. From there it was possible for the 13th to engage targets south as far as Esquay across the Odon River southwest of Caen, east nearly to the Orne River crossings at Benouville (Pegasus Bridge), and west to within a few kilometres of Bayeux. The 13th RCA's war diary observed that "the gun posn at BRAY was most satisfactory and defensively ideal with good tk killing ground forward." This changed when 12th RCA deployed in the open ground directly in front of 22nd and 78th Batteries resulting in "a dangerously cramped Gp posn without any advantage of perimeter fire!"²¹



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But that was not the worst of it. The wooded valley of the Mue River to the east was a completely open flank. A mounted patrol from both regiments on the afternoon of 7 June probed as far as Rots where they found the chateau occupied and recorded the positions of a number of active 88 mm batteries – which they observed firing just a few kilometres from the gun positions at Bray. A company of the CSR was soon deployed to screen the flank from roughly le Hamel to opposite Rosel, but from there, through Cairon to les Buissons the front remained open. The artillery regiments provided their own local defence and OPs on the east flank to deal with infiltrations. As it turned out, the gun positions were under constant fire from the time they deployed until they moved to more secure locations on 9 June. Mortars, machine gun fire, snipers and 88 mm air burst were constant dangers – as were tanks from time to time. The War Diary of 2 RMAS records that some Centaurs were deployed on 7 June with the Field Groups, but there is no record of their activity before 9 June.

Although it was normal practice for a field artillery regiment to operate in support of a brigade, the situation in these early beachhead



battles was different. The whole of 13th RCA was dedicated to the support of one infantry battalion, the Regina Rifles, while the 12th RCA worked with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles holding Putot. As a result, Lieutenant-Colonel Freddie Clifford, the diminutive, wiry and tough professional gunner who commanded 13th RCA, and a small group of personnel settled in with Lieutenant-Colonel F.M. Matheson at the Regina's HQ, a small chateau beside the church in the eastern end of Bretteville. "A" Company of the battalion was also deployed in the heart of the village. FOO parties were assigned to companies in forward positions: Captain W.J.G. Steele with "C" Company in Norrey, Lieutenant T.J. O'Brennan with "B" Company in the Mue River valley near Rots, and Lieutenant R.J. Macdonald with what remained of "D" Company near la Villeneuve. In these static roles, the Sherman OP tank was usually established in an overwatch position, while the

FOO, his Able and signaller went forward to a good vantage point with a telephone line, leaving the other signaller in the tank to act as the radio link.

Although the guns, FOOs and HQ party were all in basically static positions, their dispersal and the general work of the artillery required many men of the 13th RCA to be in constant motion. Ammunition needed to be brought forward from the beach, alternate gun positions had to be surveyed in case they were forced to move (about 30 were surveyed during the first week ashore), land lines laid to FOOs and various HQs had to be maintained, reliefs and meals provided for those serving forward, liaison maintained with neighbouring formations, and dispatches and personnel moved between HQs at all levels. The situation was made even worse because 7th Brigade occupied a narrow and

deep salient, with enemy forces on both flanks. As the regimental history observed, "A few wrong turns, while travelling to the forward positions, would quickly take the unfortunate map reader into enemy territory."²² Harold Merrick, a gunner with the 22nd Battery, recalled being frightened of losing his way when detailed to drive two battery officers forward to the Regina's HQ early one morning. He had to navigate the short distance in the dark with one of the officers reading a map with a penlight. They took one wrong turn but got there eventually. The return trip in the dawn light was perhaps even more harrowing, since the scenes of battle littered the road.²³ On at least one occasion, signalmen from 13th RCA were nearly in Carpiquet before being called back. Others were not so fortunate. Late on 7 June Bombardier C.A. McDonald, signal NCO of Fox Troop, was killed by enemy infantry while returning from the OP in Putot.

While 9th Brigade fought a fierce battle just a few kilometres away, D+1 was a day of preparation for 7th Brigade. For the artillery this meant organizing fire plans in co-operation with the Reginas and the brigade HQ. The intelligence log of the 13th RCA records some 33 DF, SOS and Mike targets prepared on 7 June. Defensive Fire tasks, which included enemy forming-up areas, lines of communications, and likely approach routes, were selected by battalion and brigade staffs in consultation with the gunners. Most of these in the 7th Brigade battle plan fell into two general categories: the western approaches to the brigade fortress in the open ground west and southwest of Putot, and targets south of Norrey, including the most likely enemy concentration and approach routes around Cheux, St. Manvieu and Marcelet (see map on page 14). These proved to be very sound judgements. SOS fire tasks, to be brought down when the defending infantry were engaged, were arranged with the rifle companies to cover forward defence lines and areas immediately to the front which could not be swept by infantry weapons.²⁴ Other work went on in battery positions, where ammunition and perimeter defences were prepared. In Bretteville itself, the gunners attached to the Regina's HQ made themselves useful. Gunner W.C. Milner, a qualified machine gunner, recalled spending at least some time on 7 June attaching signal wire to anti-tank mines and laying these out so they could be drawn across the road in front of tanks.

Attacks on the 7th Brigade fortress started in earnest in the early hours of 8 June, when three companies of the 1st Battalion, 26th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment (I/26th), moved north from St. Manvieu to push the Reginas out of Norrey and Bretteville. This was the opening of an attempt to clear the Canadians off the Germans' planned start-line (the Caen-Bayeux highway) for a major panzer thrust to the sea. The I/26th's third company moved straight on Norrey under the cover of night, driving in the advanced positions of the Regina's "C" Company before the attack was crushed by artillery fire, forcing the Hitler Youth to dig in. They had, of course, walked into the pre-arranged DF tasks laid on by the FOO in Norrey, Captain Steele. Meanwhile, the I/26th's first company tried to slip around Norrey to the east where they, too, were stopped by artillery fire. This company of I/26th eventually occupied the Mue Valley as far as Rots – putting a major enemy combat unit directly opposite the gun positions at Bray for the first time. The second company of I/26th attacked west of Norrey but stopped at Cardonville Farm south of the rail line when the other attacks faltered.

The Regina's war diary records this first attack by I/26th as minor, presumably because very little of it was seen or felt in the company positions. However, it was not a minor attack - it simply was checked by pre-arranged artillery fire. As the history of the 12th SS records, "The positions of the whole Battalion [I/26th] were covered with brisk artillery and mortar fire throughout the day. It slowed any kind of movement."²⁵ The intelligence log of 13th RCA records that the regiment fired 976 rounds between 1800 hours on 7 June and 0600 hours the next day. The regimental history describes a "curtain of fire" securing the Regina's "C" Company position at Norrey.²⁶ When asked about this many years later, Lieutenant-Colonel Clifford described the idea of a curtain as "bullshit!"²⁷ The perimeter was maintained by a series of DF and Mike (regimental) shoots. One concentration on the road leading southeast from Norrey at 0500 hours on 8 June was fired at "scale 5" from both regiments at Bray - 240 shells on a single grid reference in a few short minutes. Two other Mike targets were fired in that area over the next few hours.

While the I/26th was pounded by fire, the main assault of 8 June took place to the west

by the 2nd Battalion, 26th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment (II/26th) at Putot and involved intense action on the part of everyone including the gunners. The 13th's war diary and regimental history recorded few details, describing the day simply as one of constant action in all directions. Many Mike and Uncle (division scale) targets were fired over an arc of approximately 240 degrees on 8 June. The regiment was nearly firing in a circle, requiring the use of two plotting boards.²⁸ The attack by the panzer grenadiers of II/26th on Putot, well supported by their own artillery and with several assault guns in direct support, over-ran the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. During that battle Lance-Bombardier E. Schauer of 13th RCA was awarded the Croix de Guerre for using the main armament of his OP tank to silence enemy machine guns firing at his FOO, which allowed effective fire to be called down in the area. The Canadian Scottish Regiment, in reserve at Secqueville, was tasked to retake Putot supported by the fire of five field regiments.²⁹ Artillery kept German infantry in the village down, isolated the battlefield with a smoke barrage, walked the Can Scots in with a creeping barrage, and then maintained defensive fire to the south and west until the position was consolidated. Putot was not lost again.

These first attacks on 7th Brigade forced a consolidation of infantry positions which made the fortress more secure but exposed its supporting artillery. The CSR company which had been guarding the brigade's eastern flank along the Mue River rejoined its battalion on the western flank. The Reginas also abandoned the valley of the Mue River. "B" Company moved from near Rots to the eastern end of Bretteville, and "D" Company moved from its exposed position near la Villeneuve to the farm at Cardonville, just north of where the second company of I/26 was stalled. The occupation of Cardonville secured the southwestern entrance into Bretteville and guarded the back of Norrey. Meanwhile, three troops of 2 RMAS Centaurs still fighting alongside the Royal Marines in the coastal area between 3rd Canadian and 3rd British Divisions were recalled to Beny in preparation for redeployment to their countermortar role around the 12 and 14th Field Groups.³⁰

This withdrawal into a tight perimeter around Bretteville may account for one of the most bizarre incidents of the battle. Historians

have recounted the story, often believed to be apocryphal, of the German staff officer who drove into Bretteville, stopped his Kubelwagon in front of the Reginas HQ, and stepped out of the vehicle only to receive a PIAT anti-tank projectile in the chest for his arrogance. Michael Reynolds places the incident at 0030 hours on the morning of 9 June, and then notes that the incident was struck-out of the Regina's war diary. This may be because, as Clifford recalled the incident (which he witnessed), it happened in broad daylight at noon on 8 June.³¹

Late on 8 June the second major attack on Bretteville was launched from the east. This consisted of two companies of the 12th SS Panzer Regiment's 1st Panzer Battalion (I. Panzerabteilung) (about 30 Panther tanks), a company of motorcycle infantry from the division reconnaissance regiment, and a battery of self-propelled guns. The Canadians were well aware of the concentration of tanks to the east, and "B" Company's FOO, Lieutenant O'Brennan, had called down fire on them during the day. The German Kampfgruppe was drawn together by Standartenfuhrer Kurt Meyer, commander of the 25th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, who led the attack on a motorcycle. It was timed for dusk (about 2300 hours) to avoid interference from Allied aircraft. The Panthers crossed the bridge over the Mue at la Villeneuve, which the Reginas had not destroyed, and then shook open and moved directly towards "B" Company on the eastern edge of Bretteville. Although weak in infantry, Meyer expected the companies of the I/26 dug-in south of Norrey to join the attack.

Only a handful of German infantry made it to the village. Most were stripped away by Canadian artillery, mortars and machine gun fire, while the 79th Medium Regiment, RA, which joined the battle from its positions around Thaon that afternoon,³² prevented the participation of the companies of the I/26th dug in around Norrey. Few of the 12th SS Panthers made it into Bretteville either. The 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA, destroyed three on the outskirts, forcing most of the rest to withdraw and join the SP battery as a fire-base east of the village. The two Panthers audacious enough to enter Bretteville around midnight were destroyed by infantry. The story is by now a familiar one. Captain Tom Greenlees, the 13th RCA's Survey Officer, was crouching behind the stone wall at the entrance



The Panther of the 12th SS Panzer Regiment destroyed by Regina sentries outside the battalion HQ in Bretteville on the night of 8-9 June 1944.

to the Regina's HQ when the Panther that made it that far was disabled by a PIAT. The tank has been immortalized in one of the iconic photos of the whole Normandy campaign. "The crew bailed out," Greenlees recalls, "and I somewhat ineffectively engaged the fleeing figures with a Sten gun borrowed from my survey crew beforehand."³³ The Panther's ammunition exploded and burned all night. Greenlees was therefore stunned the next morning when one fire-blackened crewman stuck his head from the tank, "more dead than alive," and was promptly shot by a rifleman from 50 feet. For Greenlees it was a stark introduction to the tragedy of war.

Gunner W.C. Milner vividly remembered the chaos, the fires, the parachute flares, the crash of explosions and rattle of small arms fire. These were punctuated by the ripping sound of armour-piercing rounds from Panthers firing petulantly over the stone wall against which he was sheltering. At one point Milner, carrying a Thompson submachine-gun as part of the regimental HQ defence section, had a chance to shoot some of the very few German infantry to enter the village. Standing in an alleyway, with

his back pressed hard against a building and the Thompson clutched to his chest,³⁴ he watched as an MG 42 section raced past him in the darkness and clambered over the stone wall at the end of the lane. Just as the last boot disappeared, Lieutenant-Colonel Clifford swept around the corner and fired a few harmless shots from his revolver at the fleeing Hitler Youth. Catching a glimpse of Gunner Milner and his Thompson, Clifford fired him a cold stare and a sharp, "See me in the morning!", then disappeared into the night to find more Germans. A mild rebuke about duty and something about there "being a war on" followed in the early hours of 9 June for Gunner Milner.³⁵

"Panzer" Meyer's attack late on 8 June spilled over to the gun area around Bray. All night 12th and 13th RCA "stood-to," with a defensive perimeter of small arms, Brens and PIATs. "Tank Alert" was signalled at 0545 hours, and the No.1 gun of Able Troop, 22nd Battery, 13th RCA, engaged a tank over open sights, with no apparent effect.³⁶ The intelligence log records that 78th Battery fired 44 rounds of M67 anti-tank ammunition that night. Meanwhile, 12th RCA,



Sergeant J.S. McGraw and Captain (Reverend) Graham Jamieson of the Reginas, at the crossroads near the Bretteville church, 15 June. The village remained on the frontline for nearly a month and the steeple, where Lieutenant O'Brennan spent much of his time as FOO for "B" Company on 8-10 June, has already been largely destroyed by enemy fire. A week later there was virtually nothing left of the church itself. The Reginas' HQ lay at the foot of the steeple, behind the soldiers.

deployed in the open in front of the 13th, received a number of Reginas in their position, gave them ammunition, and gently urged the infantry back into the fray. The same regiment recounts firing an "Uncle" (division) target "directly in front of us" – which would have included the 13th. Uncle and Victor (all field guns in the Corps, roughly 216 in all) targets were engaged throughout 9 June on an arc of 180 degrees, from the front of 3rd British Infantry Division north of Caen to that of 50th Division to the west. "Each time we switched back to the tanks in front of us," the 12th's history recounts, "the range would be shorter and the appeals of the FOOs more desperate. When we finally stopped them the range was just over 1,600 yards – much too close, especially when we were firing 8,000 yards in the opposite direction!"³⁷

Requests for fire support from FOOs with the Regina companies were constantly interrupted when the forward telephone lines were cut by tanks and shell fire. Lieutenant R.J. Macdonald, the FOO with "D" Company at Cardonville, lost his line at 2000 hours, and a line crew was immediately sent out to reconnect him.³⁸ In the event, they never did. While "A" and "B" Companies of the Reginas hunted tanks and enemy infantry in the eastern end of Bretteville,

one company of Panthers slipped south of the village and took positions inside the "D" Company perimeter. There they waited for infantry from the second company of I/26 to join them from across the rail line to the south. Major Gordon Brown's men of "D" Company were afraid to move lest they alert the Panthers, who were in fact all around them and intermingled with their 6-pounder anti-tank guns in a small orchard. In the midst of all this Brown had to wake his FOO, who had fallen into a deep sleep after days without rest. The last recorded messages from Macdonald were logged by 13th RCA at 0445 hours and 0450 hours, passed via 78th Battery, announcing that he was surrounded by tanks and needed "armour immediately." Macdonald and his Able, Gunner J.K. Jeffrey, were later found dead in a Bren carrier, killed by machine gun fire from one of the Panthers.

Either because Macdonald's line was cut, or because he was already dead, no fire support was received by "D" Company during its uneven fight against a company of Panthers. Once the Panthers moved off, the II/26th stirred to life, surged north over the rail line and were soon swirling around the Regina company "fortress" in the farm compound. "D" Company's desperate defence of the Cardonville farm had all the

character of a last stand against overwhelming odds. Brown was now down to “45 men and two officers” and they all had machine guns “of one sort or another (several German).”³⁹ Hitler Youth in their mottled camouflage uniforms lay dead and dying on the tops of walls, in windows and doorways. Grenades fell like rain and the Reginas fired like madmen, but still the teenage soldiers of the 12th SS came. When Brown eventually established radio contact with his HQ, barely half a kilometre away, his situation was grim. Lieutenant-Colonel Matheson immediately passed the radio handset to Clifford. Brown told the 13th’s CO that he believed that his FOO was dead, killed with many others in the orchard behind the farm, but wanted fire brought down immediately on the rail line just south of the farm and passed Clifford the grid reference. “Tell your men to stay in their trenches,” Clifford barked, “we’ll open fire in one minute.” While the fire orders were passed Brown informed Matheson that “D” Company could last only about 20 minutes longer.⁴⁰ He scarcely had time to make that report before the first shells thundered in, landing just beyond the southern wall of the factory – catching the Germans in the open. “The accuracy of the shelling was unbelievable,” Brown recalled. “We were to see so many more months of fighting and see and hear a lot of artillery shells from both sides, but nothing ever impressed

me as much as the one at Cardonville.”⁴¹ Walter Keith, who joined 16 Platoon of “D” Company in October 1944, remembers that the platoon was still talking about how that barrage creased the top of the farm compound wall on its way to the enemy.⁴²

The final major attack on the Reginas’ position came at 1300 hours on 9 June. Panthers of the 3rd Company of the 12th SS Panzer Regiment, supported by a few men from the 25th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, slipped south under the rail bridge at la Villeneuve and raced towards Norrey across a kilometre of open, slightly rising farmland. Infantry of the I/26th, still entrenched south of Norrey, were once again supposed to join in the attack and help drive the Reginas’ “C” Company from the key position in the brigade fortress. In their haste, the Hitler Youth’s Panthers soon left their own infantry behind, which was probably just as well given what awaited the German attack. After shaking out into extended order and briefly running parallel to the rail line, the Panthers turned slightly south to present their thick frontal armour to the anti-tank guns at Norrey. In doing so they exposed their flanks at fairly short range to a troop of newly-arrived Shermans of the 1st Hussars. Seven Panthers were destroyed in a matter of minutes, five of them by Lieutenant G.K. Henry and his

No.4 Gun of Easy Troop, 13th RCA, firing at Carpiquet on 28 June from a gun position near Lasson (mis-identified in the original caption as 14th RCA on 20 June). Note the additional armour plating added just prior to D-Day to further protect the gun crew.

LAC PA 14580



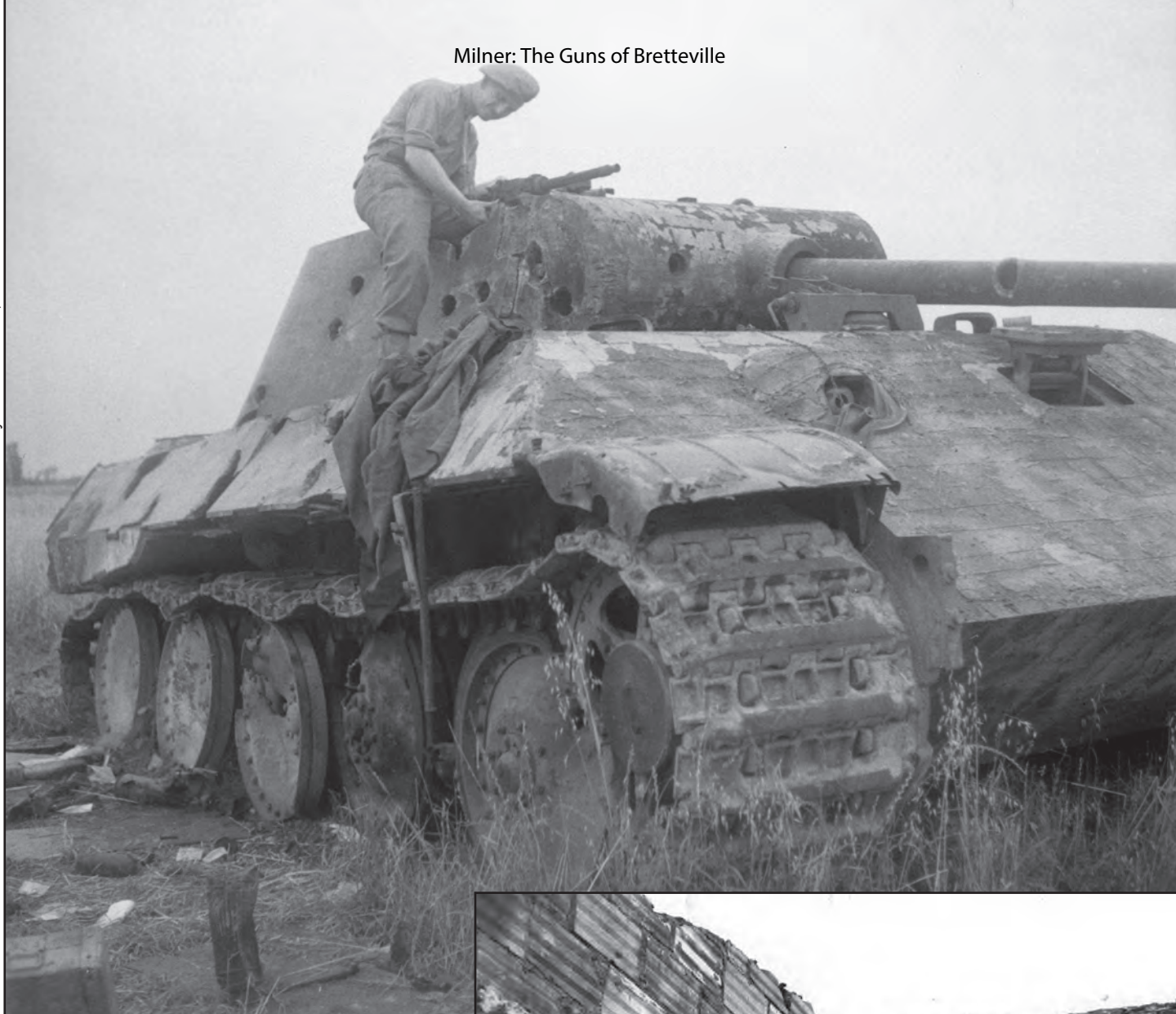
Right: This composite air photo, taken on 6 July 1944, shows the Reginas' battlefield around Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and Norrey-en-Bessin.

Below left: A closeup of Cardonville Farm. Note the numerous tank tracks surrounding the farm. Some of these would have been made by the 12th SS Panthers on the night of 8-9 June.

Below right: An unidentified soldier from "D" Company of the Reginas dug in at Cardonville Farm, 10 June 1944. The strain on his face from the previous days' battles is evident.



Photo by Michael Dean, LAC 130338



Top: One of the seven Panthers destroyed between Norrey and Bretteville by the Sherman Firefly of Lieutenant Henry and the other three Shermans from the 1st Hussars on 9 June. This photo was taken about a month after the battle and the damage on the tank reflects its use for target practice.

Right: Soldiers of "D" Company, the Regina Rifles, keep watch on the surrounding fields from an OP in Cardonville Farm, 10 June 1944.



Photo by D.I. Grant, LAC 129042

gunner Trooper A. Chapman in one of the most remarkable – and unheralded – feats of whole Normandy campaign.⁴³

The Panther attack collapsed within minutes following the engagement of Lieutenant Henry's Shermans. The rest of the Panthers fled while crewmen who bailed out of the burning tanks raced to find shelter. The history of the 3rd Company of the 12th SS panzer Regiment recorded that "the whole sector was under concentrated enemy fire, some of it from ships' guns..."⁴⁴ The fire was probably called in by Gunner E. Barton, 13th RCA, who moved forward to a vantage point, under mortar and machine gun fire, where he could direct it. When the wire to his carrier was cut, Gunner B.J. Bohn, the signaller, "ran the gauntlet" back to the radio.⁴⁵ Historians speculate about why the infantry of I/26th Regiment never left their trenches to support this attack. The rout of the Panthers may account for that, but it is more likely that artillery fire kept them home.

Although most accounts of the battle end with the defeat of the Panther attack on Norrey at noon on 9 June, 13th RCA's records reveal intense activity over the next two days. On 9 June the Regina's "D" Company at Cardonville once again came under intense attack, and Captain A.K. Pousette, their new FOO, was forced to defend his OP with grenades. Lieutenant O'Brennan continued his outstanding work with "B" Company on the eastern edge of Bretteville. An attempt to relieve him on 9 June failed when Captain Steele's Sherman was hit by tank fire and driven back. On 10 June O'Brennan was 200 yards out in front of the company position, on the crest of the rise east of the village, when he was overrun by tanks and called a Mike target on his own position.⁴⁶

By 9 June the gun positions at Bray were under such serious threat that they had to be abandoned – 12th RCA reported duelling with German mortars sited in the valley of the Mue and airburst shells fired by 88 mm flak batteries at Carpiquet airfield were a constant danger. The situation was eased somewhat by the arrival of S, T, X and Z troops – 16 Centaurs – of 2 RMAS, which reported engaging targets from around Bray on 9 June.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the batteries of 13th RCA appear to have simply moved across the road in the afternoon, probably just over the

crest of the ridge west of Bray (the RHQ did not move) into the grid square reserved for 6th RA which had not yet arrived. Nonetheless, counter battery fire by 88s and mortars intensified during the day, with the 12th RCA fighting a battle against a group of mortars just 1,700 yards away.⁴⁸ It finally became obvious that gun area Nora was untenable when an airburst over the 22nd Battery command post killed or wounded most of the men in it. So 13th RCA moved again later on 9 June. The regimental war diary says to grids 9575 and 9675 while the intelligence log (and the regimental history) placed the new battery positions west of Camilly on the road to Secqueville. It was not until 11 June that Lieutenant-Colonel Clifford took his leave of the Regina's HQ and 13th RCA's war diary recorded a quiet day. The battle for Bretteville – and the larger battle of which it was a part – was over. It was a resounding Canadian victory.

There is little doubt that the guns played a decisive role in securing the Anglo-Canadian bridgehead in the days immediately following D-Day, and in defence of Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse in particular. By one estimate, the regiments at Bray fired over 1,500 rounds per gun from 7 to 9 June 1944.⁴⁹ Assuming the same rates of fire on 10 June, that works out to over 4,800 rounds fired by 13th RCA in the initial beachhead battles: 2,400 120-pound crates of ammunition lugged from the beach day and night by Battery Sergeant-Major D.MacRae and his drivers over dark and insecure roads.

The anticipated Panzer counterattacks had been launched against the Allied beachhead and they had failed to achieve anything more than local tactical success. It is clear that Anglo-Canadian artillery was a key to this victory, and its power profoundly impressed the Germans who faced it during those battles of 7-10 June 1944. Hubert Meyer, GSO 1 of the 12th SS, observed later in the Hitler Youth division's history that their familiar tactics of "surprise, using mobile, fast infantry and Panzers even in small, numerically inferior Kampfgruppe, had often been practised and proven in Russia This tactic, however, had not resulted in the expected success here against a courageous and determined enemy... who was especially strong in defence and could not be taken by surprise."⁵⁰ When interviewed in 2002 Freddie Clifford agreed. His regiment's

Right: Lance Bombardier W.J. Peline, 14th RCA, mans his Priest's .50-calibre MG in the pulpit that gave the M7 its nickname. With 24 of these heavy machine guns available, one on each M7, SP regiments maintained a powerful reserve of firepower against infantry and soft-skinned vehicles.

training and the army's doctrine worked superbly. In defence of the 7th Brigade fortress, artillery stripped away the enemy infantry or prevented them from moving, leaving their tanks vulnerable. "The Germans thought we were fucking Russians!" Clifford exclaimed when asked about the fighting around Bretteville. "They did stupid things and we killed those bastards in large numbers" – not the usual interpretation one gets from the literature.



Notes

1. Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno: 1 SS Panzer Corps in Normandy* (New York: Sarpedon, 1997), p. 85.
2. Landing Tables for 2nd British Army are attached to its War Diary dated 2 July 1944. The [British] National Archives [TNA], Public Record Office [PRO] WO 171/234.
3. There were no 1st and 2nd Batteries in 2 RMAS.
4. The Sextons landed with 50th Division on GOLD beach.
5. Neither the Canadian official history, C.P. Stacey's *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in Northwest Europe 1944-45* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960), nor G.W.L. Nicholson's *The Gunners of Canada, Volume II* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), say why the regiments were converted, only that they were.
6. CMHQ Report 141, "Situation of the Canadian Military Forces Overseas," p.24.
7. Digging-in a 25-pounder (to get the same level of protection for the crew) required the removal by hand of 28 tons of earth to form a pit 18 feet in diameter and three feet deep, plus a further 24 tons removed to form the ammo pit. George Blackburn, *The Guns of Normandy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), p.202.
8. Historians seem blithely unaware that the artillery possessed so many tanks, and they may well account for some of the confusion that occasionally muddles infantry reporting of the presence of tanks and what they are – or are not – doing.
9. Technical specs on rounds are drawn from a number of confusing sources, but largely "CMHQ Artillery Equipments, Volume 3, Calibre 78 mm to 105 mm," and "TM9-325, 105 mm Howitzer M2A1 Carriages M2A1 and M2A2 and Combat Vehicle Mounts M4 and M4A," May 1948, held by the CFB Gagetown Museum.
10. The headquarters, signals and support elements of 13th RCA, and those of other field regiments, were wartime organizations and had no regional affiliation. Gunner William C. Milner, the author's father and one of the few Maritimers in 13th RCA, spent his war attached to RHQ and vividly recalled not being allowed anywhere near the guns – they belonged to the Prairie militiamen.
11. See Blackburn, *Where the hell are the Guns?* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1997), pp.261-3 for a description of the various call signs for massed barrages. An "Uncle" target drew on the fire of the Corps artillery, 216 guns. A "William" target was all guns within range and able to fire.
12. 2 RMAS was organized into two batteries, 3 and 4, composed of eight four-gun troops designated P to Z, with a Sherman OP tank attached to each troop. War Diary, 3 Support Craft Battalion/2 RMAS, TNA PRO ADM 202/306. The two troops of Centaurs which landed with the North Shore Regiment at St. Aubin provided excellent fire support. See Marc Milner, *D-Day to Carpiquet: The North Shore Regiment and the Liberation of Europe* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane/NB Military Heritage Project, 2007), pp.52-55.
13. For the best account of the 111th FA's experience – and what that meant on D-Day – see Joseph Balkoski, *Beyond the Beachhead: the 29th Infantry Division in Normandy* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books 2005), pp.140-145. Major L.F. Ellis, *Victory in the West: Volume I, The Battle of Normandy* (London: HMSO, 1962), p.191 notes that, "Twenty-two out of thirty of the howitzers of two field battalions and an infantry cannon company were lost."
14. Tom Greenlees, the regiment survey officer, recalled no losses to the recon party when coming ashore. If the memory of Gunner William Milner was correct, the HQ party landed from an LCT on the RWR beach, directly in

- front of where the memorial to Charles De Gaulle now stands. Milner was the first off the craft. Given a rope, he was ordered by a sergeant to take it ashore and tie it off on a beach obstacle so the rest could come ashore safely. He did so, after plunging off the LCT ramp into water neck deep. The beach was still under mortar and small arms fire, and Milner stopped to field strip his wet weapon only to be kicked by the same sergeant and told to "Get to hell off the beach!"
15. Interview with Major R. Mackenzie, Toronto, 29 April 2004.
 16. Interview with Colonel F. le P.T. Clifford, 25 April 2002.
 17. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment* (Holland, 1945) p.33.
 18. The CRA's war diary for the first two weeks ashore in Normandy was probably composed much later, and is therefore of dubious value. See the comment in "History of HQ RCA 3 Cdn Inf Div" in the Directorate of History and Heritage, NDHQ, file 142.33(D1), which was compiled at the end of the war: "It is of interest to note that the rough War Dairy now available at this HQ is a complete blank from 6 Jun to 18 Jun ..."
 19. Artillery records for this period are thin. The war diary of 13th RCA is fairly comprehensive and its intelligence log has survived in the files at the Library and Archives of Canada. 14th RCA's war diary is cryptic as are those for 12th and 19th RCA – none of the intelligence logs for these regiments have been found in Canada or the UK. Survivors of the regiment who have been contacted have shed no light on what took place. At this stage the only working hypothesis the author has is that without FOOs, the vanguard of 9 Brigade simply could not be supported. Whatever happened in 14th RCA during those four crucial hours remains a mystery. War Diary, HQ RCA, 3rd Canadian Division, TNA PRO WO 179/2774. The war diary of the CCRA, 1st British Corps, says nothing about this problem, TNA PRO WO 171/263.
 20. Will Bird, *No Retreating Footsteps: the Story of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders* (Kentville, NS: Kentville Publishing, 1954) pp. 00-01.
 21. 13th RCA, war diary, 7 June 1944.
 22. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment*, p.37
 23. Harold Merrick to the author, 11 April 02.
 24. "Memorandum on DF and DF(SOS) Tasks," n/d, 2 Royal New Brunswick Regiment Archives, Bathurst, NB.
 25. See Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision "Hitlerjugend"* (Winnipeg: J.J. Fedorowicz, 1992), p.50. For the best account of the Reginas' battle see, Gordon Brown and Terry Copp, *Look to Your Front... Regina Rifles: a Regiment at War, 1944-45* (Waterloo: Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2001).
 26. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment*, p.37.
 27. Interview with Clifford, 25 April 2002.
 28. The regiment's history records that the guns fired over an arc of 340 degrees, but this seems to be an exaggeration. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment*, p.38
 29. A brief description of the fire plan is in the radio log of 7 Brigade, TNA PRO WO 179/2879.
 30. War Diary, 2 RMAS, 8 June 1944, TNA PRO ADM 202/306.
 31. Interview with Clifford, 25 April 02, and Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, p. 79.
 32. The War Diary, 79th Medium RA, for 8 June 1944 records being "in action" at 1730 hours, and later "engaged tanks to the front." TNA PRO WO 171/1065.
 33. Tom Greenlees to the author, 16 February 2002. For the most detailed account of this action see, Brown and Copp, p.78.
 34. Thompson sub-machine guns were not issued to Canadian troops in northwest Europe, but they were standard equipment of the M7 Priest. Four SPs of the 13th RCA were destroyed by German bombing in England on 30 May, two days before they embarked, and replacements were drawn immediately: the Thompson probably came from one of them.
 35. Milner remained deeply impressed with Clifford's professionalism for the rest of his life, and rather embarrassed by his own youthful disregard for rank – a situation not helped by the fact that Milner was about a foot taller than Clifford. On one occasion when Gnr Milner kept shaving while Clifford asked him questions, answering between strokes with a casual "Yup" and "Nope," the exasperated commanding officer of 13th RCA finally barked, "Fer Chrissake Milner, stand to attention when talking to yer Colonel!!"
 36. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment*, p. 39
 37. T.J. Bell, *Into Action with the 12th Field, 1940-1945* (Holland, 1945), pp. 48-49.
 38. 13th RCA Intelligence Log, 0145/09.
 39. See Gordon Brown's remarkable account of his company's defence of Cardonville in Brown and Copp, pp.79-84.
 40. Georges Bernage, *Les Canadiens face à la Hitlerjugend (7-11 juin 1944)* (Bayeux: Editions Heimdal, 1991), p.53.
 41. Brown and Copp, p.84.
 42. Telephone conversation with Walter Keith, 2002. Hubert Meyer lists this attack as made by the II/26th, but is otherwise strangely silent on it: see p. 57.
 43. John Marteinson and Michael R. McNorgan, *The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Royal Canadian Armoured Corps, 2000), p.244.
 44. Meyer, as quoted on p.58.
 45. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment*, p.40.
 46. *The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment*, p.41.
 47. 2 RMAS remained in the Bray area, supporting the capture of Rots by the Royal Marines and the Chaudieres. On 18 June it redeployed to the airborne bridgehead east of the Orne and four days later, after the Centaurs were handed over to the Royal Artillery, the Royal Marine gunners started going home on leave. 2 RMAS War Diary, TNA PRO ADM 202/306.
 48. *Into Action with the 12th Field, 1940-1945*, pp.49-50.
 49. *Into Action with the 12th Field, 1940-1945*, p.47
 50. Meyer, p.57.

Marc Milner is best known for his work on the Battle of the Atlantic and the Royal Canadian Navy, but as the references to his father here indicate his interest in Normandy is deep and abiding. His most recent book is *D-Day to Carpique: the North Shore Regiment and the Liberation of Europe* (NB Military Heritage Project 2007). Milner is Chair of History at the University of New Brunswick and Director of the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society.