

NINE DAYS
of
BATTLES
for
BRIDGES



MARTIN N. WRIGHT

Private publication
Not for re-sale

Amongst the famous military events of the 20th century, is the use of the newly formed **First Allied Airborne Army** as a spearhead for an assault towards the Ruhr industrial area of Germany, the largest airborne operation ever attempted and an integral part of Operation “**Market Garden**”. It has been extensively written about and created debate and argument ever since September 1944.

Military commanders, battle participants, historians and even civilians have their own opinions of the reasons for the event, its implementation, the management of the battles and even what actually happened. Whatever the faults, and there certainly were some, it is clearly an event in military history that has and will continue to intrigue people, for generations to come.

Many people know the story from the 1977 film of the 1974 book by Cornelius Ryan, “A Bridge Too Far”. A good film for its era that used participant advisors, but there were inevitable mistakes, omissions and as with all films, the use of artistic license. It has been said that a film is a means of writing history that gradually become the truth through repetition and lack of contradiction.

This book looks at the nine days of battles for the bridges, seeking to provide a balanced view and showing the trials and tribulations of each battle group so that the reader can better understand and reach their own opinion about those September 1944 event

Meeting with the late
Lord Peter Carrington
on 20 September 2009,
the 65th anniversary
of his actions on
Nijmegen Bridge



We should never forget the price paid for freedom

This publication is for participants in the 80th anniversary, commemoration and re-enactment of the XXX Corps drive towards Arnhem. Any errors, omissions and mistakes are purely my own, including any failed interpretation of the many opposing facts.

Martin N Wright



Just one squadron of
participants on the
75th anniversary event

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Abbreviations

1 A/B	1 st Airborne Division (GB)
1 Airborne Corps	1 st Airborne Corps (part of 1AAA) (Allied)
1 Polish A/B	1 st Polish Airborne Brigade (Poland)
1AAA	First Allied Airborne Army (Allied)
101 A/B	101 st Airborne Division (US)
107 Pz Bde	Panzerbrigade 107 (German)
82 A/B	82 nd Airborne Division (US)
A/T	Anti Tank
Bazooka	Man portable anti-tank rocket launcher (US)
Bf109	German Messerschmitt fighter aircraft
C-47	Douglas C-47 Skytrain (US) (Dakota – GB)
DUKW	2.5 ton amphibious truck (Duck) (US)
DZ	Parachute drop zone
FW190	Focke-Wulf fighter (German)
GHQ	General Headquarters, London (GB)
HQ	Headquarters
Ju88	Junkers fighter/bomber aircraft (German)
LZ	Glider landing zone
OB West	Oberbefehlshaber West, West front HQ (German)
Panzerfaust	Man portable anti-tank rocket launcher (German)
PIAT	Projector, Infantry, AntiTank weapon (British)
PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment (US)
RAF	Royal Air Force (GB)
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps (GB)
REME	Royal Electrical and mechanical engineers (GB)
RTR	Royal Tank Regiment (GB)
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
TAC HQ	Tactical Headquarters
Typhoon	Hawker Typhoon fighter bomber (GB)
VIII Corps	VIII (8) Corps (GB)
XII Corps	XII (12) Corps (GB)
XXX Corps	XXX (30) Corps (GB)

Command Structure

Allies

Eisenhower (Dwight D.)

SHAEF

Montgomery (Bernard)

21st Army Group

Dempsey (Miles)

British Second Army

Horrocks (Brian)

XXX Corps (GB)

O'Connor (Richard)

VIII Corps (GB)

Ritchie (Neil)

XII Corps (GB)

Brereton (Lewis H.)

1 AAA

Browning (Frederick "Boy")

1 Airborne Corps

Gavin (James)

82 A/B (US)

Sosabowski (Stanislaw)

1 Polish A/B (PL)

Taylor (Maxwell D.)

101 A/B (US)

Urquhart (Roy)

1 A/B (GB)

German

Von Rundstedt (Gerd)

OB West

Model (Walter)

Army Group B

Brandenberger (Erich)

7.Armee (Seventh Army)

Von-Zangen (Gustav-Adolf)

15.Armee (Fifteenth Army)

Student (Kurt)

1.Fallschirm-Armee

(First Parachute Army)

Chapter 1 - September 1944

For the people of the Netherlands, the incredibly fast drive of the Allies from Normandy to the liberation of Brussels, arriving on 4 September (200 miles (320km) in 7 days) and the freeing of the majority of the Belgian nation from occupation was spectacular. 5 September became known as “Dolle Dinsdag” (Mad Tuesday) because of the panic amongst fleeing German Soldiers. It gave the Dutch great hope that their time of freedom, from occupation and the two SS officers who had run their country since 1940, was arriving, Rijkscommissaris Dr Arthur Seyss-Inquart, was now operating from a bunker complex in Apeldoorn, 15km north of Arnhem.

The problem the Allies faced was that Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (“SHAEF”) had not expected the German army to fail to hold the Seine river line or to retreat so fast. The logistics to keep a modern army in the field became critical as they were still landing most supplies over the beaches in Normandy. The Third US Army needed 350,000 gallons (1.3m litres) a day of fuel at the front line and was tying up 6,000 “Red Ball” trucks needed to transport the fuel and supplies to the Third US Army. The liberation of Paris so early in August was unplanned, requiring fuel and trucks to transport food and supplies daily to the starving city. The First US, the British

Second and the First Canadian Armies all needed fuel as well.

“PLUTO” Pipe Line Under The Ocean that had been designed to transport fuel under the sea to Cherbourg had proved a disappointment, and was still not working, although the pipeline laid on land to transfer fuel pumped from ships anchored off the landing beaches to storage tanks on shore and from there towards Rouen on the river Seine was proving useful. With most rail bridges in France destroyed, everything had to be transported in lorries to the front line now well over 300 miles (500km) away, using around 50 gallons (200 litres) of fuel for the 3-day round trip, a typical lorry could deliver just 3 tons.

SHAEF's plan to defeat Germany, was to capture the Ruhr. General Eisenhower had not made a decision how, so allowed all armies to advance as far as possible at the same time, on a very broad front, which caused shortages of fuel, supplies and transport for all four armies, the Canadians in the north received least, the British had to survive with their limited transport and the two American armies further south squabbled and stole from each other to keep moving.

The leading elements of the British Second Army arrived in Belgium, liberating individual towns and capturing crossings over rivers and canals on route. They would soon need to pause whilst the rest of their units and supplies were moved forward.

On 3 September Brussels fell to the Guards Armoured Division after a 120km race won by the Irish and Welsh of 32 Brigade.

Next day the inland port of Antwerp fell intact to 11 Armoured Division, these dramatic events requiring a German response.



*Staghound of 2 Household Cavalry
Regiment at Liberation of Brussels*

Hitler turned his attention to Belgium.

On 3 September the German Fifteenth Army, strung along the coast, was ordered to create fortresses in each French port, plus Walcheren Island (in the Antwerp estuary), surplus troops to move back to Belgium and the Netherlands. A new German army, 1.Fallschirm-Armee (First Parachute Army), was created to defend the Netherlands using the Albert Canal as the front line.

Top Secret “Ultra” decrypts from the British Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park, of the German orders became available to the senior Allies on 6 September.

Allied Command

Supreme Commander, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower had set up his main HQ in France at St-Jean-le-Thomas, close to Avranches in Normandy on 19 August and he personally took over as Ground Forces Commander from General Bernard Montgomery on 1 September. Montgomery now promoted to Field Marshall, commanded the 21st Army Group, comprising Canadian First and British Second Armies. General Omar Bradley taking command of the newly formed 12th US Army Group, comprising First, Third and Ninth US Armies.

Britain was short of infantry reserves and had already started disbanding infantry divisions in Normandy to provide replacements for other divisions, however in Britain there rested a whole army, unused and desperate to get into the fight. The First Allied Airborne Army (“1AAA”) which had been created on 2 August 1944. Their inexperienced planning group had produced a new idea every few days since then, looking for opportunities to use their army to advantage, however the continental armies were moving too fast and had already overrun or bypassed many possible objectives, such as the Seine, Boulogne and Albert Canal.

Eisenhower was under pressure from the United States to use 1AAA, which comprised six divisions, who could be delivered quickly to the front and keep the Allied momentum going. After so many planned and dropped or

cancelled operations, September would be the last chance to use 1AAA before storms and winter set in. Eisenhower's chief of staff, Walter Bedell Smith believed that 1AAA was "like a coin burning a hole in Eisenhower's pocket."

On 8 September the Germans launched a new weapon against Britain, from near The Hague, the V-2, the world's first guided ballistic missile. Its existence was known by the Allies and one had already landed in Paris, however no solution could be found to destroy a missile travelling at Mach 3. The only protection was to eliminate the production and capture launch sites, which meant capturing Belgium and the north west Netherlands as the missiles could be launched from any road junction or small open space and had a range of 200 miles (320km). Next day Montgomery was informed of the attack and was asked by the British Government for an estimate of how long it would take to seal off the Rotterdam-Antwerp area.

The French/American army that had landed in the south of France in mid-August in Operation Dragoon met Patton in eastern France on 12 September, having herded 250,000 German soldiers, with all their equipment, back to Germany, who would now be available to man the border defences.

On 14 September, five months after Eisenhower was given control over all Allied strategic bombers, he surrendered the power, so heavy bombers would not be available to help punch a hole through the Siegfried line into Germany.

Pre-Planning

A proposed airborne operation, Operation Comet, had been on the table, created by 1AAA planners, to land three brigades to capture the bridges at Grave, Nijmegen and Arnhem. Lt. Gen. Miles Dempsey was not happy with the plan as German resistance was strengthening, meaning ground forces would have great difficulties breaking through and getting to Grave to meet up with the very weak and isolated Airborne forces. On 10 September Dempsey met Montgomery at his HQ, east of Brussels and discussed making Comet larger. He received permission to plan for an increase in airborne troops from brigades to divisions.

Montgomery held a second meeting that day, this was a pre-arranged meeting with Eisenhower, in his plane at Brussels airport where Montgomery started by being quite rude to Eisenhower about his lack of military understanding and being out of touch, as he was based 350 miles from the front line with almost non-existent communications. Rebuked by Eisenhower, Montgomery apologised before suggesting a modification to the previously proposed Comet plan. Montgomery asked for, and was granted a promise of increased supplies if the plan was approved. He also asked for First US Army, targeting Maastricht, to close up and protect his right flank.

Montgomery was alone amongst the Army commanders who had a possible use for 1AAA, his 2nd British Army had

been allocated 1AAA from 3 September. The American Armies preferred to use the transport aircraft to move supplies to Patton, so had objected to all previous plans.

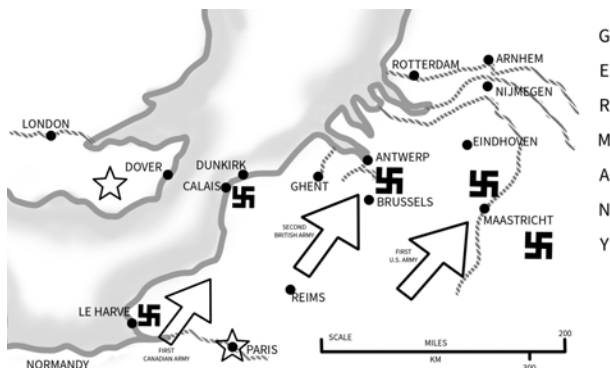
The V2 rockets were a factor, as they were fired from the Rotterdam area, so the direction of the attack had to be north. In addition, the possibility that crossing the Rhine further north would be easier, as it would outflank the Siegfried line. It would also make Germany stretch their men and material further, with the isolation of the German Fifteenth Army in the Pas de Calais also of great benefit.

Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, together with around 300 key people in the Chiefs of Staff of both nations were already travelling to the Second Quebec Conference scheduled for 12-16 September, where the main items on the agenda were the post war demilitarisation of Germany and the war on Japan.

Eisenhower's staff, were busy moving their forward HQ from the isolated St-Jean-le-Thomas to the French Royal town and palace of Versailles, where the SHAEF Main HQ would join it from England. Eisenhower had just spent a week in bed in his accommodation in "Maison Montgomméry" which overlooked Mont-Saint-Michel, with his leg in plaster having recently damaged his knee pushing his aircraft after it made an emergency landing on a beach.

Eisenhower needed to make a quick decision.

Positions - 10 September 1944



*Canadian,
British and
U.S
armies*

Army Group Commander
Army
Army Commander
Location

Montgomery
British Second
Dempsey
North Belgium

Bradley
First US
Hodges
East Belgium

Bradley
Third US
Patton
East France

Target
Operation codename
Fixed defences
Rivers/canals to cross
Break Westwall/Siegfried
Main rivers to cross
German Army defenders
Estimated defence strength
Supply situation
Flank support

North of Arnhem
"Market Garden"
Rivers/canals
6
bypass
Meuse/Waal/Rhine
First Parachute
Weak
short
right

Aachen
-
Westwall
3
yes
Meuse/Rhine
Seventh
Average
short
left

Saarland
-
Westwall
2
yes
Saar/Rhine
First
Strong
short
none

Use of 1AAA
Capture V2 launch sites
Isolate/surround Army
Open up route into Germany
Useful route into Germany
Ready to go
Success

yes
yes
yes, 15th Army
yes
yes, north of Ruhr
7-10 days
probable

reluctant, difficult
no
no
yes
yes, south of Ruhr
7 days
probable

too far away
no
no
yes
less targets
2 days
probable

Air Marshall Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower's deputy and a vocal critic of Montgomery was in the plane with Eisenhower and Montgomery. He was surprised that the normally staid Montgomery would suggest such an idea, but approved the use of 1AAA and the revised Comet plan.

Eisenhower considered the risks and opportunities and chose what would become "**Market Garden**", giving Montgomery the go ahead, setting a date of 16 September. Montgomery agreed to this date provided Eisenhower fulfilled his promise of supplies and transport vehicles.

Meanwhile, Dempsey had summoned Maj. Gen. Frederick Browning of 1 Airborne Corps to his Brussels HQ at midday and in the next two hours they expanded Comet to create the outline plan for a night-time airborne landing by three airborne divisions with a XXX Corps central drive, it was given the code name "sixteen". They also fixed the British 1 A/B on Arnhem as it would be a political disaster if things went wrong and an American division was trapped.

Browning flew to England while Dempsey showed Montgomery the outline plan after he returned from the meeting with Eisenhower with the go-ahead for the operation. In the afternoon the XXX Corps commander, Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks was also shown the plan and it was explained how VIII and XII Corps would flank the XXX Corps advance. For the first time, airborne troops were being told to capture cities. Three cities of 80-100,000

people each that had to be taken to enable the bridges to be captured and held.

Eisenhower, who had flown back to Normandy, had to be pushed next day by Montgomery who threatened a 23 September start date unless he got his supplies. Eisenhower had promised an extra 500-1,000 tons a day, even if it meant three US divisions lost their transport. Montgomery was happy with the answer he got and set 17 September as D-Day. Eisenhower did provide extra transport and some supplies, but nowhere near what was promised, nor did he stop his American Armies from “stealing” supplies or continuing their own attacks, as he thought it was politically unacceptable to order all American forces to halt.

Both British and American armies had been overstating their prospects of success and downgrading the risk of German opposition in order to avoid being side lined and deprived of fuel. This boosted optimism, with even a SHAEF report stating that “the end of the war in Europe is in sight”.

Eisenhower had not discussed Market Garden with Bradley or any of his army commanders before his decision was made. Both Bradley and Montgomery’s arch rival, Lt. Gen. George Patton were furious when told. Bradley would not change his plans to support Montgomery, although Bradley later said that he considered Montgomery’s plan “one of the most imaginative of the war”.

Planning

The main airborne objective was to capture bridges and keep the roads open so that the British Second Army vehicles could drive 100 miles (160km), right past Arnhem, to where they would assemble before driving north to cut off the Fifteenth Army, then attacking eastwards into Germany.

Browning sent a coded message “New” to the UK before he flew to England from the Dempsey meeting in Brussels, the codeword called a planning conference at his HQ at Sunninghill Park near Ascot where he would brief, at 1800, the assembled divisional, brigade and regimental commanders of the Airborne Army, the air chiefs and key staff officers. Among those present was Lt. Gen. Brereton, Browning’s commander and the head of 1AAA, who took the decision that the landings must be in daylight.

Also present was Maj. Gen. Paul L. Williams the troop carrier commander who threw the whole plan into disarray by saying that the tug aircraft could not pull two of the smaller American gliders each over that distance, it would be one tug, one glider. Williams then went on to rule out two lifts per day, because the days were shorter and the mornings mistier and the Americans had stricter rules than the British at flying in poor visibility. Combined, these changes would effectively mean far less gliders on D-Day and that three days of good weather would be needed for all

the airborne troops to arrive. Around four brigades would land on D-Day, slightly more than the original Comet plan.

82 A/B and 101 A/B were represented at the conference however, 1 A/B and 1 Polish A/B commanders had not been invited. The British and Polish commanders had previously been briefed on Comet which they had complained about, so may have been kept away deliberately. Informed next day, and provided with his objectives on 13 September, Maj. Gen. Roy Urquhart, commander of 1 A/B, after studying the plan and making a detailed 1 A/B plan, went to Browning two days before D-Day and told him that he considered it a suicide mission. The Polish opinion was similar.

The next day the codename for the operation was changed to “Market Garden”. Market being the airborne element.

The increase in the number of airborne divisions to be carried had created an air logistics problem for IX (9th) Troop Carrier Command. There were simply not enough C-47 Dakotas (“Skytrains” the Americans called them) for the paratroopers and gliders, to transport them all, even in three drops.

Key decisions for the air component were taken without British 21 Army Group being represented. Once decisions were taken, the orders were issued and those decisions could not be reversed or altered.

Browning decided not to tell his divisional commanders about the evidence of German armoured units near Arnhem.

Planning for “Garden” (land forces) also commenced.

On 13 September Eisenhower set out his priorities, (1) get a bridgehead across the Rhine, (2) concentrate for final drive into Germany, (3) secure approaches to Antwerp or Rotterdam and (4) open up the port of Brest in western France. He also confirmed to Montgomery the availability of transport and supplies that were needed to cross the Rhine and clear the approaches to Antwerp.

Montgomery issued on 14 September the Market Garden operational order, M525, setting objectives, including a bridgehead at Arnhem, 65 miles ahead by D+3. The long objective being the German industrial area of the Ruhr across the Rhine which produced 50% of Germany's coal and steel, its loss would be fatal to Germany.

In preparation, in the week before the operation, bombers attacked anti-aircraft gun sites and fighter airfields, including Deelen, north of Arnhem. Fighter bombers continued the work of flying “Rhubarbs”, low level attacks against targets of opportunity, such as transport and flak units, during the day. Civilian targets, such as houses and factories, were banned from being attacked. 1,395 bomber and 1,240 fighter bomber attacks took place before D-Day.

Meanwhile in eastern France and Belgium, the process of rounding up isolated German troops and fighting for road and river crossings continued, sometimes the fights were very hard for both sides, going on for several days and requiring heavy artillery support. The First Canadian Army was tasked with clearing the land to the North Sea and attacking the fortress ports along the coast, taking over tasks being undertaken by troops urgently needed for “Market Garden” and clearing the Scheldt estuary to open the port of Antwerp, despite their shortages of supplies and transport.

As vehicles of fighting units arrived from Normandy, they were given much needed maintenance, especially the tracked vehicles, however if a vehicle needed more than 4 hours work, it was put aside to be looked at later with the hatches welded lightly shut to keep thieves out until the REME maintenance depots and the replacement parts stores could be moved to Belgium. RASC lorries delivering supplies were also clocking up high mileage and needed maintenance.



AEC Matador towing a 3.7 inch AA gun

Market

The airborne element, “Market” would be the largest airborne military operation ever seen and would need to be planned, organised and launched within 7 days.

The C-47 fleet had been expanded rapidly in 1944, but there was a shortage of ground crew. Many pilots were new to Europe and only the lead planes and ones transporting senior officers carried a second pilot/navigator. Combine this with a fear of 40% losses to enemy actions and accidents had resulted in the US IX Carrier Commander Williams only agreeing on take-offs being made during daylight, which would result in a daytime drop and insisted on **only one run per day**. When Montgomery found out about this decision, he argued hard, but Eisenhower had given the carrier commander the final say on all air matters until the troops were on the ground and anyway, it was too late in the planning process to change as it would have caused delays or chaos.

More decisions were made by Williams U.S. Air Force officers with 1AAA planners regarding the location of drop/landing zones, based mainly on avoiding flying over enemy flak positions and again, once made, were unchangeable. Two more days of planning took place to link bombers, fighters and fighter bombers of two air forces, in two countries, with C-47 paratrooper and towed glider flight plans. Good weather was essential to the Market plans.

The only change allowed was to have the “Screaming Eagles”, 101 A/B land closer together rather than scattered on seven drop/landing zones. No troops would now land between Eindhoven and the bridge at Zon, even though 101 A/B was scheduled to capture Eindhoven on D-Day.

The only “Coup-de-Main” operation was the “All American” 82 A/B at Grave Bridge where a small force was to land south of that bridge whilst the main force landed on the north side. A request was made for a similar operation for Arnhem Bridge, as envisaged in the Comet plan, along the lines of “Operation Deadstick”, the highly successful Normandy Orne Canal/river assault by gliders on 5/6 June.

Browning refused to allow a day time Coup-de-Main and Williams refused a night-time attack, with 1 A/B being told that the land south of the bridge, whilst suitable for 1 Polish Brigade parachutists scheduled for D+2, was not suitable for gliders and that the German anti-aircraft defences in the area were too strong to allow aircraft to fly over there with enough gliders at night to deliver a strong enough force to hold the road bridge for 18 hours, despite RAF Air Vice Marshall Hollinghurst, the British transport commander, being willing to mount the operation.

With 101 A/B being required to capture Eindhoven city, to open the route for XXX Corps on D-Day, 82 A/B would need to capture Nijmegen city, as it dominated the bridges,

no later than D+1. Lastly, 1 A/B would need to hold most of Arnhem until at least D+3.

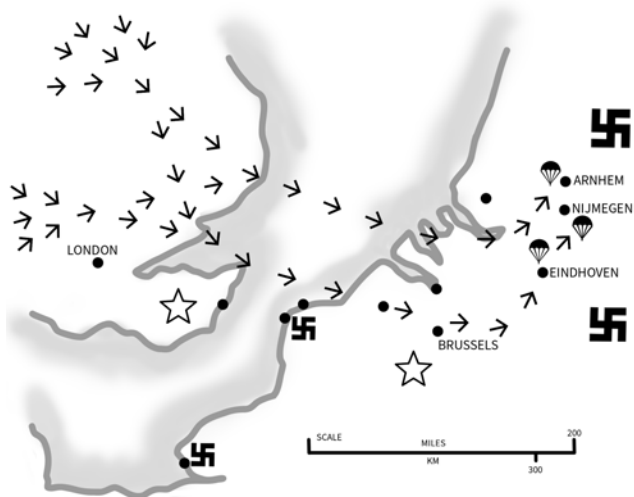
The supply of men and equipment by air would be in a bottom up manner, namely 101 A/B would have almost all theirs on D-Day, as it was pointless landing them after XXX Corps had driven past and the early bridges were considered more important as a loss of an early one may halt XXX Corps. 82 A/B would receive all their men and equipment a little slower and 1 A/B would be spread over 3 days. This was wrong according to the people who thought that the further away you were, the longer you would have to fight whilst isolated, so needed your men sooner to create a solid defence, this was certainly what the Germans, after they had analysed the event, believed should have been done.

Several days were spent getting planes and gliders together, including 412 returned C-47's from "Operation Dragoon", the mid-August landing in the South of France where the airborne element of a one division drop had been a fiasco. Thousands of containers needed packed, airborne troops needed briefed and moved to the correct airfields. A few U.S. Paras were given British chutes, ones they had never used before, just before boarding their planes.

The planned operation involved aircraft taking off from 23 airfields in England with 20,190 men delivered by parachute, 13,781 men with 5,230 tons of equipment, including 1,927 vehicles and 568 guns delivered by glider.

In the afternoon of the 16th, the latest weather forecast arrived, it was good, with just some early morning mist predicted in the next three days. Lt Gen Brereton ordered Market to proceed.

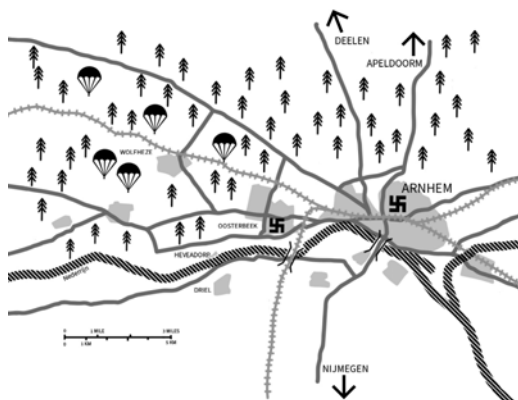
Flight Routes



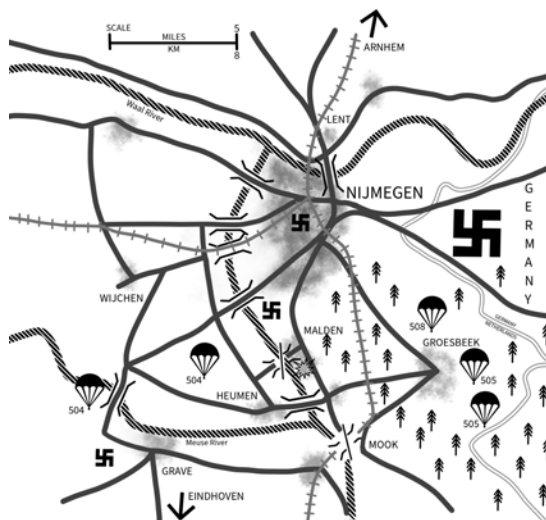
*View from a Horsa glider
being towed by a bomber*



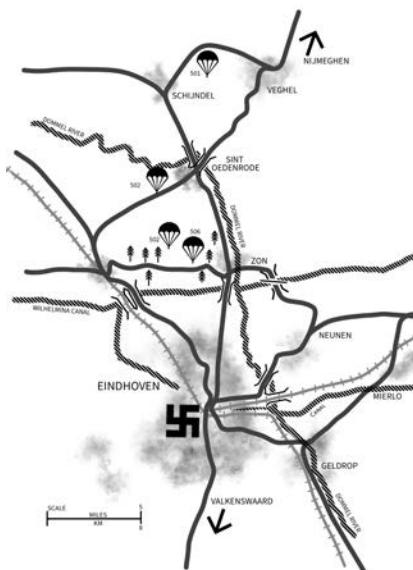
Parachute Drop Zones (DZ) and glider Landing Zones (LZ)



1 A/B – Arnhem



82 A/B - Nijmegen



101 A/B -Eindhoven



British paratroopers prepare to board Short Stirling bombers at Fairford, Gloucestershire

Garden

“Garden”, the ground force planning, was more logistics based, involving an initial 20,000 vehicles.

- XXX Corps (30 Corps) already in Belgium, would form the main force.
- VIII Corps (8 Corps) was to form the right wing, its armour was in Antwerp but its infantry were still near Paris, without their vehicles, which had been “borrowed” to move supplies forward. They would have to advance 200 miles (320km) straight into battle.
- XII Corps (12 Corps) was fighting in the Antwerp area, it would disengage when relieved and move across Belgium to form the left wing.

Ground units were accumulating the supplies they would need, including dismantling temporary bridges built over the Seine and filling 2,300 lorries with extra bridging materials ready for the Sappers and Pioneers.

On 10 September, a lucky event took place when Major David Peel of the Irish Guards managed to capture a temporary, but very strong, wooden bridge over the Meuse-Escaut Canal and establish a small bridgehead on the north bank, the official name was the De Groote Bridge, but it would henceforth be known as “Joe’s Bridge”. After Sappers removed the 2,000lbs of demolition charges and the Guards fought off the inevitable immediate counter attack

made by SS troops backed up with self-propelled guns, they expanded the bridgehead. The capture of Joe's Bridge was announced by the BBC next day, on 11 September on its 6pm news programme. Several larger German attacks over the next few days failed to eliminate the bridgehead.



German constructed Joe's Bridge

During this late planning period Montgomery was still not receiving the promised supplies, so Eisenhower temporarily borrowed some fast US transport convoys and allocated additional supplies of fuel, essential for Operation Market Garden from US Armies based further south. He also gave permission for the C-47's to be employed for two days to bring supplies forward to Brussels to supplement those brought by lorry before the planes were sent to England to prepare for the parachute operation.

The 1AAA planners were bad at communicating with the ground units, it was several days into the planning process before they realised that the road layout would force XXX Corps into an advance only 10 yards wide, most of the way

to Arnhem. The routes to be used by VIII and XII Corps seemed worse, zig zagging narrow roads across the countryside. The XII Corps route had been discussed as part of another proposed plan before being rejected as the road system was very poor, so XXX Corps did not expect XII Corps to move quickly, or be able to assist XXX Corps much.

Two conferences organised by 1AAA in the UK, on 12 and 15 September between the airborne troops the RAF and US Air Force relating to air support did not include anyone from the continent, so no ground forces were able to comment or understand the plan. Only 101 A/B made any attempt to visit and discuss the air support with Horrocks.

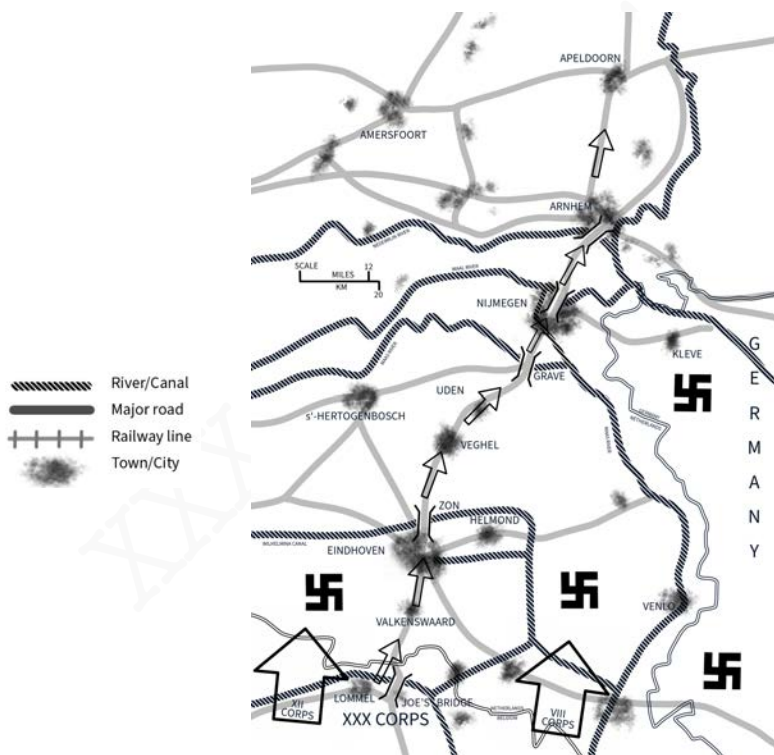
Organised chaos might be one way to describe the week it took to get the operation ready.

15 September, Montgomery meets commanders of Guards Armoured, XXX Corps and 11 Armoured



Commanders of ground troops, over 100 Colonels, Brigadiers and Major Generals were briefed in an Order or “O Group” by XXX Corps commander Brian Horrocks, at a Belgian cinema in Bourg-Leopold scheduled for D-1. Delayed by security checks, the briefing started at 1115 with

Horrocks opening with “This next operation will give you enough to bore your grandchildren for the rest of their lives!” he went on to point out on a projected map on the screen what he called the “Club Route” to Arnhem and beyond to the Zuyder Zee and to outline the details of this complex operation.



XXX Corps route to Apeldoorn

Intelligence

The underground in the Netherlands had been infiltrated and decimated several times during the German occupation and were not trusted by Allied Commanders, however a late August request for the resistance to attack the railways near Arnhem was undertaken successfully with all four lines damaged in early September, including a viaduct. A message from the Dutch resistance published in a SHAEF report on 7 September stating that a broken panzer division was refitting north of Arnhem and might have 50 tanks was downgraded as it was unverified. Another Dutch report of 1,000 tanks in the Reichswald forest was not believed.

All Dutch civilian men were reported as having been drafted on 10 September to help German troops dig slit trenches, anti-tank ditches and gun positions. Germans threatened to burn houses of disobedient civilians and executed several saboteurs. The German soldiers had stopped their eastward trek. Germans were also reported to be turning the heights east of Nijmegen into a hedgehog all round defence fortress.

On 10 September SHAEF had not identified any German armoured units ahead of XXX Corps, German Enigma radio messages were now at a much lower level of activity as the German army were able to use telex communications, so Bletchley Park received less raw data to decode, although on 5 September “Ultra” decrypt showed that the German 2nd, 9th SS, 10th SS and 116th Panzer Divisions had been ordered to the Netherlands to refit and rest. The decrypted Enigma

message also gave indications of the strength and the order of battle of the Panzer units.

The location of 2nd and 116th were identified on 12 September as facing the First US Army near Aachen.

An “Ultra” decrypt of a Japanese embassy message dated 11 September had the embassy stating it believed a German collapse would happen soon and the war could end in 1944.

On 13 September 1 Airborne Corps published an assessment based on the previous two days information which included that Germans were fighting well but had few reserves, an armoured strength of 50-100 tanks and that defences along river and canal lines were being strengthened. A photo reconnaissance flight had spotted a handful of tanks.

Further decrypts, of 14 and 15 September suggested that the German forces suspected an Allied airborne landing and an armoured thrust by 800 tanks through Eindhoven heading towards Arnhem amongst other possible Allied actions. II SS Panzer Corps (including 9th SS Panzer Hohenstaufen (“9SS”) and 10th SS Panzer Frundsberg (“10SS”)) was identified as possibly being in the Netherlands but its strength was unknown. The HQ of German Army Group B was identified in Oosterbeek, just west of Arnhem.

15 September was not a good flying day, however next day reconnaissance flights were flown with nothing considered material to change the current assessment.

Eisenhower's SHAEF intelligence summary for 16 September estimated 6 Battalions, 20 tanks and a dozen guns were opposite XXX Corps. SHAEF was also aware that over 50,000 Germans from the Fifteenth Army were moving slowly east across Belgium into the Netherlands.

By 17 September 9SS were now placed on the map, in Germany, behind the Siegfried line, where "Ultra" had identified they had been ordered to refit.

At Joe's Bridge, two Daimler scout cars sped fast through the German lines towards Valkenswaard, their task was to assess German defences and whether a small bridge on the road would be strong enough to take tanks. Meeting Dutch civilians, information was collected, a photo was taken and the two vehicles raced back, safely to their own lines. Two of the civilians however, whilst returning to their homes were shot and killed, probably by Dutch SS.

Limited concerns were raised over the viability of the operation as most people were optimistic after the recent swift advance from Normandy. Insufficient "Ultra" evidence of German strength was available and as the plan advanced, irrespective of what detrimental decisions were

taken by inflexible planners, it would have required SHAEF itself to cancel the operation.

Three airborne divisions would be used in “Market” and six divisions, three of them armoured, in “Garden”. This represented 9 of the 52 divisions that Eisenhower commanded. Attacking a disorganised German Army, they should be sufficient to punch a hole 100 miles deep over the Rhine, outflank the Siegfried line, which ended east of Nijmegen and open the door to the Ruhr, within four days.

Intelligence was not sought regarding the nature of the land over which the six ground Corps would fight. It had not been studied in detail and was hardly considered in the Market Garden plan, which really only concentrated on the air operations.

The planned timescale had no buffer to allow for likely problems and delays arising, let alone a major disaster such as the massive bridges at Grave or Nijmegen being destroyed by the Germans. Everything would have to go as planned, if Arnhem was to be reached in time.

British clocks changed from double summer time (DST) to single summer time on 16/17 September. Sunrise on 17 September would be 0616 and sunset 1849 for the Allies. Plans were drafted using DST timings and some Allied aircraft flight plans incorrectly still showed DST times.

German Forces

The Germans were operating on German Summer Time which was Central European Time +1 so were one hour ahead of the Allies, their clocks changing in two weeks.

German soldiers were flooding through Belgium into the Netherlands in early September. Unable to keep ahead of the Allied advance, many sidestepped the Allies, moving north to join units defending the coastal region, before heading for Germany. Others headed for Luxembourg/Maastricht. Panic had ensued on “Mad Tuesday”, 5 September, with troops fleeing by any means possible towards Germany.

Strong action was taken by German military police to halt the fleeing troops and reunite them with their units or form them into workable ad-hoc defence units. German high command knew they had just days to recover from the loss of part of Belgium, setting up defensive positions using the river and canal system to slow and hopefully stop, the advance of the leading British unit, XXX Corps.

The top German commander based in the Netherlands was Generalfeldmarschall Walter Model, commander of Army Group B with responsibility for forces facing both Montgomery and Bradley. Having just handed responsibility of OB West to Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt, Model concentrated on Army Group B, moving his HQ to Oosterbeek, a suburb west of Arnhem where it became

operational on 14 September. A recent Allied SHAEF report on Model described him as being totally devoted to Hitler and liking nothing better than being asked to do the impossible.

Although only just formed, *1. Fallschirm-Armee* (First Parachute Army), commanded by General Kurt Student, had the largest force in the Netherlands, 20,000 men, spread thinly in the 120km (75 mile) front line. Fielding 32 lightly armed Battalions, many of the “paratroopers” were surplus Luftwaffe aircrew and signallers who had never touched a rifle let alone jumped from a plane, the NCO’s, some of whom were veterans of the battle of Crete in 1941, added infantry skills. Quickly supplied with all types of infantry weapons and equipment, it was these men that would be used to halt the British advance.

Battered units that had retreated from France had been sent to quiet areas to reform, the Netherlands was quiet. The most important of these reforming units was II SS Panzer Corps comprising 9SS and 10SS which had escaped Normandy via Maastricht. Severely weakened, they were downgraded to Kampfgruppen with 2,500 and 3,000 men in each, only half of which were trained combat troops with just three working Panther tanks. Experienced, they had good morale and had undertaken specific anti-parachutist training in Normandy. The only other tanks in the Netherlands, a few Panzer III’s and Panzer IV’s were worn out vehicles at a driver training school.

Heavy equipment began to arrive, forty new 105mm howitzers were brought to Wolfheze west of Arnhem together with a large supply of ammunition and 600 artillerymen who were accommodated next to the lunatic asylum. A few Jagdpanzer IV tank destroyers also arrived, near Eindhoven.

Deelen Airfield, just north of Arnhem had been a key fighter control centre, however its locally based aircraft and anti-aircraft defences had just been evacuated back to Germany.

Near Koblenz, von Rundsted, who had been appointed by Hitler to OB West on 5 September commanded several Army Groups, in addition to Model's Army Group B. The remnants of the Seventh Army, which had retreated from Falaise with many heading for the Luxembourg area, was now facing the US First Army, part of Bradley's 12th Army Group.

The static Fifteenth Army, based in the Pas de Calais region had been ordered on 3 September to garrison the ports, with six spare Divisions and five additional damaged Divisions escaping from Seventh Army, ordered to move east to reinforce a new front line. 65,000 men strung out and moving slowly across the Antwerp estuary, at ½ Division per day, threatened by the First Canadian Army which had the task of capturing the coastal strip and ports.

Von Rundsted and Model had many problems to solve, Army Group B had a front of 400km with just twelve Divisions supported by 84 tanks and assault guns whilst it was facing an Allied force of twenty Divisions with 1,700 tanks, not that the German commanders were aware of what they were facing, due to their poor intelligence sources.

Several factors were in their favour, German officers, irrespective of rank, did not question orders and were strictly forbidden to even enquire what was happening in areas outside of their small area of operation. The German soldier was also trained to obey all commands without question and could cope with being moved between units and jobs as well as being put under the command of unknown NCO's and officers. This allowed the creation of scratch units and battle groups, which through ignorance of the overall situation, combined with German propaganda painting an optimistic picture, were generally effective in both attack and defence. Many German soldiers escaping France were in shock, their ordered world had been shattered, they had never experienced such a retreat/rout before, but now, put back into formations, order returned.

These soldiers, were aware they were now defending the borders of their homeland. To top this up, Himmler had issued on 10 September a warning that every deserter would be punished and their family would be shot, it was very effective.

A thin crust of defence now existed along the canal lines.

Near Lommel, the small British bridgehead over the canal, called Neerpelt was of concern. It took several days to bring sufficient experienced forces, including weak Panzer Grenadier battalions from both 9SS and 10SS, four battalions of Fallschirmjaeger Regiment 6, 15 newly arrived Jagdpanzer IV 75mm tank destroyers and two 88mm guns in an anti-tank roll to strengthen the recently formed

Kampfgruppe Walther, based around Valkenswaard before they mounted an attack on the 15th, managing to get into the village of La Colonie (2km north of Joe's Bridge) but did not succeed in destroying the bridgehead due to the British defensive artillery fire and the lack of German artillery, they pulled back.



Support from 55 Field Regt 25 pdrs

Unable to attack again yet, it was decided on the 16th to temporarily defend the inevitable British expansion of the bridgehead, siting artillery and anti-tank guns on both sides of the road to Valkenswaard and further back towards Eindhoven. The positions were also strengthened with additional troops. The movement of many British vehicles could be heard preparing for an attack.

Chapter 2 - Sunday 17 September 1944 – D Day

The first shots of Operation Market Garden started during the night of the 16/17 September 1944 when bombers targeted 117 German anti-aircraft gun positions, fighter airfields and radar stations. Continuing into the morning of the 17th with more bombers and fighter-bombers, the claim of success against the targets was high, by both U.S. and British bombers.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning and all-over southern England, C-47 Dakota aircraft were being loaded with troops, gliders were hitched to their towing bomber or C-47 aircraft and pilots checked the weather forecasts. 1AAA was on its way to its first battle.

The aircraft formed up into streams, stretching back over a hundred miles, turning towards the Netherlands on two routes designed to avoid anti-aircraft hot spots. The northern stream with British 1 A/B and U.S. 82 A/B approached from the west before turning northeast and heading directly to their drop/landing zones. The southern stream, coming from the southwest, carrying U.S. 101 A/B passed over the XXX Corps vehicles lined up in Belgium, ready for the start.

The first to land on each DZ and LZ were the pathfinders, dropped from 12 Stirling and Albermarle bombers, who set

up in each landing area two Eureka transponders and 8ft x 4ft marker panels in a letter 'T'. Dropped accurately in the afternoon, 20 minutes before the main force was due, they did their jobs well, setting off orange smoke when the planes approached.

*XXX Corps watch
101 A/B fly over
Gheel in Belgium*



*Parachute
landing*



1 A/B - D-Day

1st British Airborne (“1 A/B”) airlanding brigade aircraft towing gliders were first to take off. 320, mainly Horsa, but with 13 Hamilcar and 10 Hadrian (US “Waco”), 3,000 men including 800 gunners with 24x75mm artillery pieces, and 32x6-pdr and 12x17-pdr anti-tank guns, landing west of Arnhem. It took almost an hour before the last of the gliders found a space to land, when at 1310 the 157 transport aircraft carrying 2,700 paratroopers arrived, they were all on the ground within 10 minutes, altogether a remarkably good landing. The DZ’s and LZ’s were 4 to 8 miles from the prime targets of Arnhem road and rail bridges.

Having brought the gliders in first, twenty two jeeps, some with anti-tank guns, artillery and ammunition trailers were extracted and sat waiting for the rest of the vehicle crews to parachute in. Four gliders with jeeps had been lost on route and six were stuck in crashed gliders, however a recon unit in jeeps set off for the bridge at 1540 but ran into German defenders on route and was blocked. Lt. Col. John Frost, commanding 2nd Battalion, 1st Para Brigade (“2 Para”) set off marching with his battalion and some engineers along the river route for the three bridges. Approaching the railway bridge, warned to expect anti-aircraft gunners, they discovered there were none. ‘C’ Company and a platoon of Sappers climbed onto the tracks, cutting wires on the northern end as they went, however there was an explosion, resulting in a southern span of the bridge dropping into the

Nederrijn. The old German floating bridge nearby was already missing its centre section so was unusable. 'B' Company stayed at the floating bridge whilst 'C' Company went into Arnhem to attack the German HQ.

Frost continued along the northern river bank, collecting German prisoners as he went, aiming for the third target, the road bridge in the centre of the city with 'A' Company and his HQ.

The repairs to this massive 2,000ft (600m) road bridge had only just been finished. Begun after the bridge was collapsed into the river by the Royal Netherlands Army on 10 May 1940, the day neutral Netherlands was attacked, it had blocked all the Nederrijn River traffic as well.

The bridge was where two dozen mainly elderly German troops had made a fast exit or locked themselves in concrete shelters, these German gunners at the road bridge had the unenviable reputation of being the worst in the local German command. The British plan was to capture the north side with 200 men from 'A' Company, then send a platoon of 25 men across the bridge to secure the south side.

Frost lost radio contact with 1 A/B HQ as their No 22 Set (radio) only had a 6-mile range. 2 Para were not aware that a 9SS German armoured reconnaissance unit had crossed the Arnhem Bridge at 1700 heading for Nijmegen, nor that the smaller 10SS Reconnaissance unit would return to Arnhem.

Arriving at the road bridge in the dark, at 2100, 2 Para with over 500 men settled into the buildings at the north end of the bridge. The first attempt to cross the bridge coincided with a 10SS Battalion on bicycles seeking to travel south. In the confused fighting, neither side captured the bridge. Another British attempt later at night used a 6 pounder anti-tank gun and a flamethrower to knock out a pill box on the bridge, it worked, but set fire to a wooden hut that was an explosives store, which then set the bridge paintwork on fire. Four German lorries carrying troops trying to drive north over the bridge were fired on, caught fire and added to the blockage on the road.

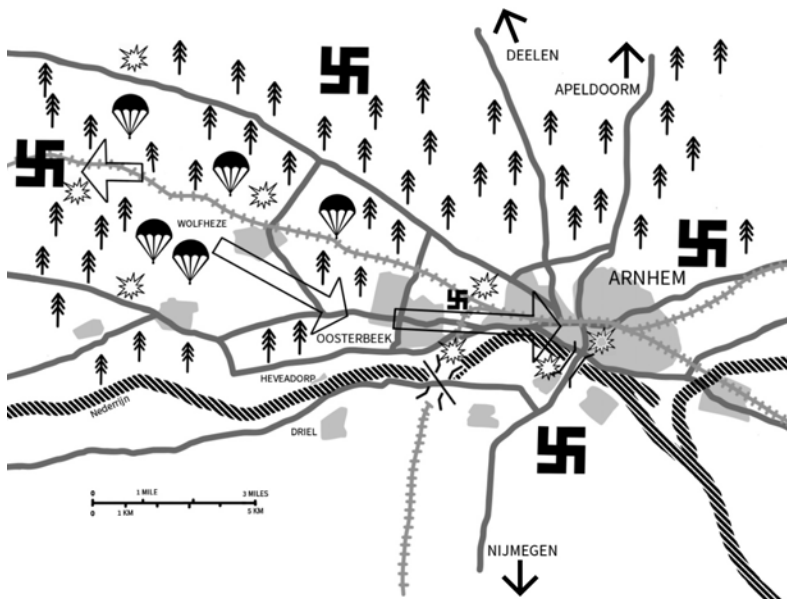
Half of the 1 A/B infantry force, 1 Air Landing Brigade under Brigadier Hicks, had settled in to defend the landing zones, with the rest of 1st Para Brigade under Brigadier Lathbury moving east towards Arnhem on two direct inland routes where 1 and 3 Para bumped into two hastily formed German defence lines that to their surprise included tanks, self-propelled Jagdpanzer IV's, armoured cars and half-tracks.

A German staff car drove into a 3 Para ambush and Major General Kussin, the military commander of Arnhem died in a hail of bullets.

Both sides reinforced their troops and the contact lines spread north and south.

1 A/B commander Urquhart with Lathbury became separated from their men and vanished in the street fighting.

Unable to break through the Germans, 1 and 3 Para ended the day on the edge of the city, with the British being told to halt for the night.



1 A/B Arnhem D-Day

German Forces – North - D-Day

The German commander in the Netherlands, Walter Model was in Oosterbeek, west of Arnhem about to eat lunch in the Tafelberg Hotel. He could see the Arnhem landing taking place, worried that his Army Group B HQ was the target, his staff rushed to pack whilst Model issued immediate orders by using the public phone system to bring scattered units to the battle.

SS Obergruppenführer Bittrich at his HQ 27km east of Arnhem ordered Kampfgruppe Hohenstaufen (9SS) and Frundsberg (10SS) troops and their equipment to head to Arnhem, together with troops from other units in the region.

Orders issued at 1340, before the gliders west of Arnhem had finished landing, ordered the only motorised unit available, 9SS Reconnaissance, to Nijmegen where its commander, Fallschirmjaeger Colonel Henke assumed command. 9SS Recon crossed Arnhem Bridge at 1800 German time, unaware of approaching British paratroopers, crossing the Betuwe (the area between Arnhem and Nijmegen surrounded by rivers and canals called “the Island” by the Allies), they reported back that strangely, there were no Allied troops on the Island.

The forces in Nijmegen, were very weak, only 19 men from 10SS and a dozen trainees were on duty at the road bridge and whilst explosives were in place, they were not wired

with detonators. Not having enough troops to defend the whole city, a cordon with outposts was created around the north side of the road and rail bridges. Additional reinforcements were requested.

9SS Reconnaissance arrived in Nijmegen just in time to reinforce the 40 men guarding the bridges and repel the 1 Battalion 508 PIR sent to find out what the defences were.

It was decided that 10SS, located on the border of the Netherlands and Germany should defend Nijmegen, whilst 9SS defend Arnhem. 10SS Reconnaissance was ordered to Arnhem Bridge as compensation for the 9SS unit already sent to Nijmegen, however there was almost no defence in place at Arnhem Bridge as the city commander, Major General Kussin had gone missing mid-afternoon.

Many of the ordinary soldiers around Arnhem were marked unfit for combat, "light duties only", they would have to be thrown into the battle regardless.

German troops arrived on foot and by bicycle at Arnhem from the scattered quick reaction groups that 9SS had been formed into and were fed into the defence as Kampfgruppen (battle groups), on the roads to Arnhem, supported by a few armoured vehicles, they halted 1 & 3 Para.

430 Hitler Youth, based at Wolfheze to undertake training were organised into a line to block the route from the

LZ/DZ to Arnhem, on the high ground close to Arnhem by SS Lt Col Sepp Krafft by 1530.

Other units obeyed their SS Corps anti-airborne training, which required instant attack on the DZ/LZ areas. Reinforcements continued to arrive into the evening and during the night, filling out and extending the thin front lines.

Hitler was informed of the landings and had a mild heart attack, resulting in him having to rest. Later in the day he criticised the Luftwaffe, calling them cowards and gave immediate orders to divert men and equipment to the Netherlands.

Model, needed troops to oppose the landing ground near Nijmegen. Nothing was immediately available in the district so orders were given for a static Divisional HQ to become mobile and await orders. 406 Division, which had no troops, no ammunition nor any information as to what they were to do, requisitioned a few vehicles. They received orders in the night to move close to Kranenburg, on the German-Netherlands border, just east of Groesbeek.

Several alarm battalions made up from Luftwaffe training schools in western Germany were also ordered to move to that area overnight. Additional troops, further away, were also ordered to join 406 Division but would take longer to arrive.

Model ordered units in Germany onto trains including Heavy Panzer Battalion 506 at Paderborn with Mark VI Königstiger (Royal Tiger) which would be loaded overnight to move at dawn, the trains were given top priority on the railways. More Royal Tigers would be coming in a few days from Dresden. 280 Assault Gun Brigade on route by train to Aachen was diverted to Arnhem with ten Flak batteries with many scratch infantry units also being ordered to move by fastest means possible to the battle areas.



*Gliders near Wolfheze,
west of Arnhem*

*Generalfeldmarschall
Walter Model*



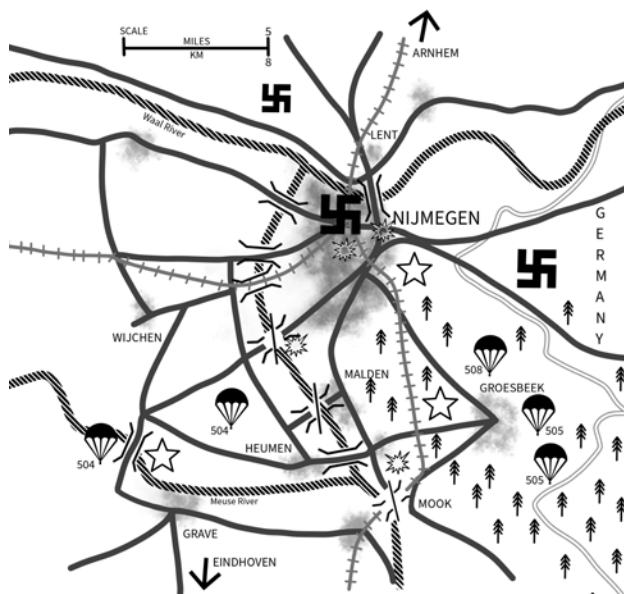
82 A/B – D-Day

82nd Airborne (“82 A/B”) commanded by 37 year old Major-General James Gavin had a target drop zone for the 480 C-47’s and 50 gliders on the heights near Groesbeek, eight miles South of Nijmegen, and the bridges across the river Waal, with a sub section targeting fields to the west and north of Grave. 82 A/B comprised 3 Parachute Infantry Regiments (“PIR’s”) each of 3 battalions plus supporting specialist battalions.

The Groesbeek landings were “just like a practice landing”, taking just 12 minutes to drop the three battalions of 505 PIR. The troops were able to form up and move to their targets within minutes. 508 PIR landed in the same zone and cleared the area to enable the gliders who were following the paratroopers to land, they had a good success rate as well. The few guns were extracted and ready for action within an hour. 2 Battalion 505 PIR had landed on an anti-aircraft gun position which disproved the Air Force assertion that to fly over anti-aircraft guns would be disastrous. Groesbeek and hill 81.8 were quickly captured.

1 Battalion 508 PIR moved towards Nijmegen with orders to capture the main bridges over the Waal River. Two companies were dispatched to link up with a Dutch civilian who would lead them to the road bridge at 1900. Company A got lost in the woods and Company B, after waiting an hour in vain for the local guide, advanced on its own

initiative towards the bridge. These paratroop's found a defence being formed by 9SS Reconnaissance, which had just arrived from Arnhem and were digging in on the southern approaches to the road bridge. The attack failed.



82 A/B Nijmegen D-Day

The 82 A/B, 504 PIR drop at Grave were excellent, pathfinders landed at 1231 with the main forces arriving 30 minutes later. One plane load of E Company 2 Battalion 504 PIR refused orders to jump, until close to the bridge, landing just 600 yards to the south of bridge 11 at Grave, where the

16 men were immediately able to drive off reinforcements arriving from barracks near Grave and then attack the pre-war Dutch casemate used as an anti-aircraft tower, capturing it.

Turning the casemate rooftop 20mm guns onto the northern tower, it was soon captured by the remaining troops of 2 Battalion, who had landed on the north side at DZ "O". The massive 270yard (250m) bridge was captured intact with almost no casualties.



Bridge No 11 at Grave

3 Battalion remained in reserve during the day as they were not needed for either of the assaults, which had been completed by 1800.

The 504 PIR had other objectives, a choice of bridges over the Maas-Waal Canal to capture. The objective on day 1 for 1 Battalion was bridges 7, 8, 9 and 10.

The first one to be attacked was No 7 at Heumen, a vertical lift bridge at a lock gate, which had been captured intact in 1940 by Germans dressed in civilian clothes and Dutch Army uniforms. Called the Molenhoek Bridge by the Americans, it was strong enough to take tanks and despite fierce German resistance was captured intact after a brisk fight before it could be blown.



Bridge No 7 at Heumen

Bridge 8 was blown. Bridges 9 & 10 had to wait and would be attacked during the night. The railway bridge over the Maas at Mook was blown by the Germans.

Gavin set up his HQ in the woods west of Groesbeek next to a large German ammunition dump. He had set his main objectives for D-Day as (1) Secure the landing areas for further drops and to ensure the large number of German tanks reported to be five miles to the south east of Groesbeek, in the Reichswald forest, did not interfere (2) capture Grave bridge and (3) capture a bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal.

All objectives were met, however the large bridges at Nijmegen over the Waal River had been removed from the D-Day priority list as Gavin's boss, Browning had insisted on the heights being the key feature of this battle.

*U.S. designed
Waco glider
could carry a
jeep, a trailer,
a howitzer, or
13 troops*



1 Airborne Corps – D-Day

“Boy” Browning commanding 1 Airborne Corps would eventually be in charge of four Airborne divisions and would provide the linkage between them and XXX Corps. Initially his Corps HQ would only have 82 A/B and 1 A/B under its control, 101 A/B being initially controlled by XXX Corps.

Browning brought his HQ into the 82 A/B LZ south of Groesbeek at Grafwegen, in 14 gliders. Signals, RAF Radar and ground attack officers arrived in another 18 gliders and as the US forces used different communications a further 6 gliders brought American signals teams and their equipment. His first action was to walk over to the Reichswald forest where he relieved himself on German soil. The HQ men claimed they were the first British troops to enter Germany. Setting up their HQ in the woods west of Groesbeek the radios initially only managed to link up with Gavin, commanding 82 A/B, just a mile away.

Their main concern was losing the DZ/LZ near Groesbeek which were only protected from the west. To the east was the Reichswald forest where a Dutch report had indicated 1,000 German tanks were located, even if downgraded to 100, this was a serious risk to the landing.

A Phantom Reconnaissance Unit, landed with Browning. Their Regiment had been formed in 1939 and was outside

the normal Army command system, under the cover that their job was to report directly with GHQ on the location of Allied units, they were actually the link between Bletchley Park and Army commanders for decoded Ultra Enigma messages. They could communicate with other Phantom units located with XXX Corps and 1 A/B. Browning was to find they were one of the few working radio links to operate between Allied HQ units during the battles.

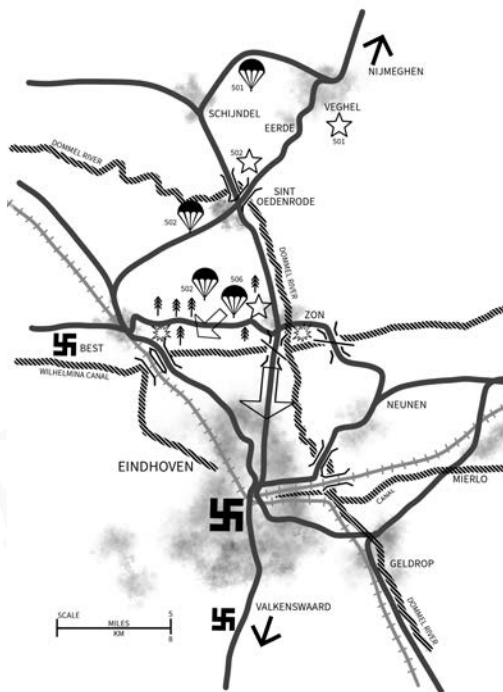
Discovering a large German ammunition dump in the woods next to his HQ, Browning relocated to a nice house near Malden, south of Nijmegen.

A Dutch officer attached to Gavin's HQ used the public phone system to call Arnhem and was able to confirm that the landings had taken place and that all seemed to be going well.

The Dutch Resistance had been using the phone systems for resistance purposes, especially the Gelderland Provincial Electricity Board (Dutch acronym PGEM) private network, allowing private conversations un-intercepted by the Germans and throughout the battle did communicate between Arnhem and Nijmegen although 1 A/B would not use this system to explain their difficulties to Browning, not trusting the Resistance and thinking the phone system was unsecure.

101 A/B – D-Day

101st Airborne (“101 A/B”) target landing area for the 424 C-47’s was north of Eindhoven, between Best and Zon, with the smaller DZ’s “A” and “A1” for 2,050 men near Eerde west of Veghel. Their objectives were four small bridges in Eindhoven and seven larger ones on the road north to Veghel, a distance of 15 miles (24km).



101 A/B Eindhoven D-Day

A fairly good parachute drop, completed by 1330 had 501 PIR troops moving within 45 minutes to their targets. Tasked with 4 bridges, two railroad and two road bridges just west of Veghel over the Aa River and the Zuid Willems Canal. All these bridges were captured intact, then the three battalions occupied Eerde and Veghel and secured their main landing ground.

502 PIR had two main tasks, the bridge over the Dommel river at Sint Oedenrode and the defence of the main DZ/LZ where they landed. 1 Battalion went north and after a fight around the cemetery, captured the small town of Sint Oedenrode and its bridge. US P-51 fighter-bombers had hit a German column of around twelve vehicles including tanks, eliminating two of them just before 1 Battalion 502 PIR arrived to capture the town. These were some of the old “Herman Goering” training tanks photo reconnaissance had spotted just before D-Day.

Later, a 502 PIR Company and some engineers advanced west towards the bridge near Best, where they encountered an anti-aircraft unit supported by infantry and then a strong German unit in lorries driving to reinforce Zon arrived. After a firefight, the outnumbered Americans pulled back.

506 PIR came in on the main DZ and was tasked with capturing the Wilhelmina Canal swing bridge at Zon (sometimes called “Son”, now called “Son en Breugel”) and

then moving onto Eindhoven to secure four small bridges in the city over the small Dommel River.

It took 45 minutes to form up the first battalion which, led by General Maxwell Taylor himself, then approached Zon from north of the canal, the Germans opened fire with 88mm guns firing airbursts. Overcoming that difficulty and taking the guns on the north side with a bazooka and bayonet charge ("Easy Company" who later became famous in the "Band of Brothers" series) 506 PIR got within 50 yards of the Zon Canal swing bridge only for it to explode in their faces showering them with large pieces of timber.

Having lost the canal bridge at Zon, the canal could now only be crossed at bridges to the west at Best, as the small wooden lift bridge to the east had been blown days before, the alternative was to construct a new bridge.

One hour after the parachutists, the gliders arrived on the main DZ/LZ. 70 Gliders and tow aircraft had set out from England, 64 crossed into the Netherlands, 6 planes were then shot down and 46 damaged, 53 gliders managed to land on the LZ. Sadly, the 101 A/B glider carrying trailers with radios to talk to XXX Corps and 82 A/B failed to arrive or were damaged on landing, so 101 A/B were unable to contact, any other unit. The bulk of the gliders carried jeeps to give 101 A/B some mobility, 32 jeeps made it to the LZ intact. Some trailers carrying medical equipment arrived as did some with ammunition. No artillery had been brought in

by glider, 101 A/B only had mortars. A medical facility was up and working with an hour of the gliders landing.

506 PIR with around 2,000 men spent all evening crossing the canal at Zon on a temporary walkway bridge rigged by engineers and local carpenters, the last man crossed at midnight, battalions marching south to Eindhoven, Spending the night halfway there in ditches despite planning orders that they should meet up with XXX Corps south of Eindhoven that evening, although an alternate plan gave them until the afternoon of D+1 to clear Eindhoven.



88mm anti-aircraft gun at Zon

XXX Corps - D-Day

Down near Joe's Bridge which crossed the Meuse-Escaut Canal (now called the Bocholt-Herentals canal) near Lommel in Belgium, the British troops of 50 Division had watched C-47's flying overhead. Preceded by 35 minutes of artillery fire from 350 tubes, mainly 25 pounders, who targeted known enemy positions, then orders came for the first of the vehicles to start their engines and at 1435 Operation Garden's advance began, behind a 5 mile (8km) rolling artillery barrage, which managed to destroy the nearby anti-tank guns located along the roadside.

Guards Armoured Division set up their HQ in a factory east of Joe's Bridge overlooking the canal. Recently reorganised into four battle groups, Grenadier, Coldstream, and Irish each made a battle group comprising one battalion of tanks and one infantry battalion, the fourth was a mixed Welsh tankers with Scots infantry. All infantry were mounted on vehicles.

Horrocks had chosen 5th Guards Armoured Brigade to lead, its commander chose the Irish Guards Regiment to lead, J.O.E. Vandeleur, its commander chose No3 Battalion and that commander chose Lt. Heathcote's troop, finally this Lieutenant chose himself as lead tank of the army. With no interruptions it would take 3 hours for the 888 vehicles of 5 Brigade to pass the start line, 8 hours 21 minutes for the whole of the Guards Armoured Division.

The Irish Guard tanks lead off and lose several vehicles to large improvised mines before crossing the border onto the concrete Dutch road, where after 10 minutes the second and third group in the column were attacked, losing nine tanks and two armoured cars to panzerfausts at ranges of 5 to 10 yards, the stricken crews that survived were taken prisoner before the Irish Guards infantry could move forward.

The bulldozer, travelling with the lead group, was taken off its tank transporter and returned to clear the road so the advance could continue, then the transporter got stuck trying to turn around so the Irish Guards could pull back 500 yards (450m) to make space for an RAF attack.



Tracked Loyd Carrier of Irish Guards A/T platoon

The Air Liaison Officer used his radio to call down the “cab rank” fighter-bombers, the Typhoons and Tempests attacking targets indicated by red smoke fired by tanks and mortars. 230 sorties were needed over the next hour to help clear the area, at least one aircraft fell victim of British artillery shells which were still being fired. Exceedingly angry Irish Guards infantry went in to clear the Germans out, especially after a prisoner lobbed a grenade he had

hidden, into a vehicle, even so, 250 prisoners were taken and were then made to run all the way back to Joe's bridge.

The holdup meant that the rolling barrage had moved on without the following vehicles and when the advance started again, most of their artillery ammunition had been used up so couldn't repeat the barrage.

Advancing again at 1630, past the German infantry which seemed to comprise Luftwaffe, paratroopers and SS soldiers as well as regular army units with 4 ex-Russian anti-tank guns, 88mm and assault guns opposing them, they made for Valkenswaard their first objective, losing more tanks and men on the way. Finding a bridge on the road was still intact the leading unit arrived at 1730 outside Valkenswaard, the armour having to wait for the infantry to tidy up the woods alongside the road from Belgium and catch them up before they entered the town, which was protected by an anti-tank ditch recently dug by local forced labour. At 1930 they entered Valkenswaard where they found some buildings on fire and a quick search turned up 30 prisoners. British vehicles packed the town as well as lining up nose to tail all the way back to Belgium. Drivers were nervous of mines so did not want to park on the grass verges, preferring to stay on the concrete road on this wet night.

Skirmishes took place along and close to the road throughout the night and there was also a British night time tank and infantry attack to the east from Belgium, where

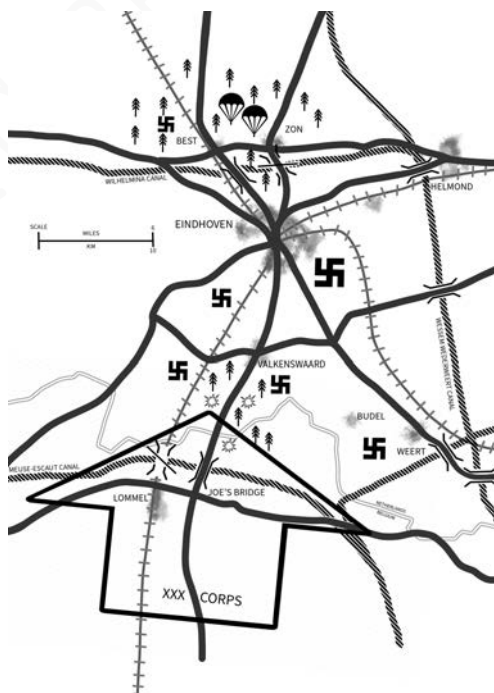
Germans who had retreated from the main road were surprised and chased out of Budel.

Some 25 pounder artillery batteries were brought forward to support the next day's advance past Valkenswaard.

An RAF message timed at 1500, but not received until the evening said that all bridges on the route were intact. Unable to make contact with 101 A/B the Irish Guards did not know if Eindhoven, their first day's objective, had been captured.

As it was already dark they were ordered to wait until morning before advancing further.

XXX Corps advance



German Forces – South – D-Day

German reaction to the events was somewhat mixed, they had not expected massive landings of airborne troops so far behind the front line.

What they had expected, was an advance by XXX Corps towards Eindhoven, so had already reinforced the mix of troops with a sacrificial Luftwaffe Penal Battalion 6, fresh in from Italy and still dressing in tropical uniform astride the main road, strengthened with Fallschirmjaeger, grenadiers from 9SS and 10SS unit, the 559 Anti-Tank Battalion and with Jagdpanzer IV tank destroyers and some static artillery.

The bombing and artillery barrage rolled down the Valkenswaard road knocking out every towed anti-tank gun around the village of Borkel, close to Belgian-Dutch border, before they could fire a shot. The German parachutists located alongside the road were not affected and with a demonstration of great discipline let the enemy advance well into their positions before they sprang the surprise attack on the tanks, destroying nine. A second infantry ambush further down the road and Jagdpanzer IV's to the side took out more. It did not stop the attack, but managed to slow the advance allowing Kampfgruppe Walther to re-assemble south of Eindhoven overnight.

General Student had been out on the balcony of his HQ near Vught, 20km (13 miles) west of the road Eindhoven-

Nijmegen, to watch the Allied air armada pass overhead, remarking that he wished he had such resources in 1940.

Student's force had been cut in two by the airborne landings, his Fallschirmjaeger were both west and east of 101 A/B, and it would be difficult for him to control the force east of the incursion. His force was also very dispersed, spread thinly along what had been the front line.

Student was well aware from the losses his paratroopers had suffered in Crete in 1941 that in the first hours, paratroopers were very vulnerable so took personal control. Quickly making up two battalions from a training unit in 's-Hertogenbosch, Student sent one to Sint Oedenrode, the second to Veghel. Other troops were sent in twelve lorries with three 20mm anti-aircraft half-tracks to Zon via Best.

An 88mm anti-aircraft unit based near Best, Flak Abteilung 424, had engaged part of 502 PIR advancing from the woods and were saved when lorry loads of infantry arrived from 's-Hertogenbosch to reinforce them. They cleared the area around Best of Americans before nightfall.

Around Zon, the small number of German troops of Training Regiment "Herman Goering" could only stop the bridge being captured by exploding the ready charges, which they did.

By coincidence, one of the first parts of Fifteenth Army units from the Scheldt area was arriving in the area by train that afternoon. Detraining the 59th Division at Boxtel and Tilburg and despite being short of personal weapons and with almost no ammunition or support weapons, the first unit was directed by Student to Best, with orders to attack Zon next day.

Initially, German units were unaware of the activities of both American and other German units as there was no co-ordination and confusion reigned in the Netherlands.

A lucky find, a folder belonging to American, Lt. Prentiss containing details of the Market battle plan was found before he could completely burn it. His glider, carrying men from Browning's HQ had crashed near Student's HQ, one man had died in the crash, the rest were captured. The folder, which should never have been taken to the Netherlands, contained details of the 101 A/B mission, it was read, translated, understood and a summary disseminated to German commanders in the field that evening. "... 101 A/B has the task of occupying the roads and bridges between Veghel-Oedenrode and Zon. These are to be kept open for British troops – XXX Corps – who are to attack through Holland and Germany." More importantly it gave details of future reinforcement and supply drops.

Allied Air Forces – D-Day

All morning fighter bombers had been attacking known anti-aircraft positions, barracks, and rail connections however the German forces did not consider the activity anything unusual, they had become used to the “Jabo’s” hassling them.

3,887 aircraft, being 1,544 transport planes, 1,240 fighters and 1,103 bombers with 478 gliders participated on Market Garden D-Day to transport 20,000 soldiers on the first lift.

101 A/B were allocated 502 transport aircraft, 82 A/B got 530 and 1 A/B just 475, with Browning using 38 aircraft for his HQ, from the British 1 A/B allowance.

Nearly all of 101 A/B arrived on D-Day.

Most of 82 A/B arrived on D-Day.

HQ Royal Artillery of 1 Airlanding extract equipment from their Horsa glider near Wolfheze



1 A/B would need three days for all their men and supplies to be delivered so would be most vulnerable to German

attacks on their DZ/LZ's, their 8 mile (13km) approach route to Arnhem, an activated German air defence and changes in the weather, as well as depriving the force of most of their active soldiers as many of the first day troops would be needed to defend the DZ/LZ's and counter attack German activity. If transport aircraft losses were the predicted 40%, many of the 1 A/B troops would never make it to Arnhem. The 1 A/B landing however was very good, with no aircraft or gliders lost,

Aircraft losses on D-Day were 23 fighters and bombers, 35 transport aircraft and 13 gliders with 23 other gliders making forced landings. At less than 100 losses, these were very light compared to the feared losses of 700+. Some aircraft did however receive hits, those carrying 101 A/B had 25% of their C-47's damaged.

The 230 attacks in one hour by fighter bombers in direct support of the XXX Corps advance in the afternoon worked well, red smoke being fired to indicate the enemy positions and yellow smoke friendly vehicles, enabling XXX Corps to continue their advance late afternoon.

It was discovered that the gridded maps used by some fighter/bomber pilots were different to those being used by XXX Corps air controllers, leading to difficulties in aircraft finding their targets.

VIII and XII Corps – D-Day

XII Corps on the left flank started nine hours later, in the dark, putting the 53 (Welsh) Infantry Division leading units over the Meuse-Escaut Canal to make a small bridgehead then making a Class 5 raft to take small vehicles over by 0500.



Universal carrier of 53 Div crossing on raft

The other XII Corps bridgehead, established on 14 September nine miles to the west at Aart by 15 (Scottish) Division had been strongly opposed despite Operation Flood being launched to reinforce and try to expand that bridgehead, battalions were suffering 8% casualties a day.

VIII Corps on the right had not yet crossed the Meuse-Escaut Canal as their infantry had not yet arrived. South of the canal, reconnaissance were surprised to find some Russian and French troops, in assorted uniforms, using German weapons and equipment, defending the two small towns of Bree and Bocholt against the Germans.

Part of VIII Corps had been lent to XXX Corps, including artillery, 15/19 Hussars and 231 Brigade infantry which were employed to clear the woods to the east of the XXX Corps advance to Valkenswaard.

Local reactions to the landings – D-Day

In the Arnhem area, the reception given to troops, as they marched towards the bridge, was noisy and personal, with kisses, drinks and food being pressed on the marching soldiers. Enemy fire caused the crowds to scatter and there were a few civilian casualties. Assistance was given in moving equipment from the DZ/LZ's and medical help was given to injured/wounded soldiers.

In Nijmegen, initial concern during the morning bombing, after the accidental bombing of the city by Americans in February 1944 was overcome when transport aircraft were seen. Some orange clothing appeared and local resistance members made plans. Civilians were threatened in the city by nervous Germans as the locals realised the Americans had landed elsewhere. Civilians still plundered a German store and train wagons. Near the LZ's locals helped with carts to move equipment and to act as guides for the Americans. Fighting moved into the city that night.

In Zon and Sint Oedenrode, after the fighting had finished, the locals wanted to party and sing, with orange a predominant colour. Once again, carts helped move equipment, locals helped the injured soldiers, people volunteered as guides and scouts and helped build a walkway across the canal at Zon.

The overall opinion was that liberation was imminent.

Chapter 3 - Monday 18 September 1944 D+1

1 A/B – D+1

1 Airborne had managed to get a force under Lt Col Frost of over 500 men on the north end of Arnhem Bridge, all other bridges across the Nederrijn had been lost. They also had two Battalions lined up against a German blocking force between the Bridge and Oosterbeek, to the west of the city.

Other men were picketing the DZ's and LZ's to protect them for the reinforcements and supplies expected later in the day. Overnight the 1 A/B commander Urquhart had gone missing, (trapped in a house surrounded by German troops with his No 2 Lathbury, who had been seriously wounded). Command having fallen to Brigadier "Pip" Hicks commander of 1st Airlanding Brigade. Communications were still down.

At the bridge, jeeps had arrived during the night towing four 6 pounder A/T guns and ammunition, which were a welcome reinforcement. The battle started early on the cold grey morning, a column of German trucks attempted to cross from the south, they were shot up and a number of prisoners were taken.

At 0930 Frost was greeted by an SS Reconnaissance unit of 30 vehicles, 22 armoured, heading north from Nijmegen, initially hoping it was XXX Corps, they were slow to open fire, it drove onto the bridge and apart from the first five

eight wheeled Puma armoured cars crossed fairly safely, avoiding the mines on the road, the vehicles following were slower, a Humber armoured car, nine half-tracks and eight lorries were shot up using 6 pounder A/T guns and hand held PIATs, with the troops in halftracks and lorries gunned down as they tried to dismount. 12 enemy vehicles were left flaming wrecks, joining the other wrecks now blocking the northern ramp of the bridge. The battle lasted two hours.

A German tank, from the driver training school, approached from the east and got under the bridge, where it was destroyed by a 6 pounder A/T gun, it became another road block.

Additional German armoured fighting vehicles were then picked off, one by one, by the 6 pounders. All day, German 20mm, 40mm, Self-Propelled Guns and Mortars bombarded the British troops in the buildings around the north of the bridge. That night Germans set houses on fire to provide light. A radio link was established, with 'B' Company still near the pontoon bridge and another using the Artillery net, allowing Frost to call for Artillery support fire from Oosterbeek when needed, he was just within the 75mm guns 5 mile (8km) range. The Germans were using radio transmitters to block out 1 A/B frequencies and English speaking radio operators to interfere with the British communications.

1 and 3 Para tried throughout the day to get through, or around, the German line blocking the roads to the bridge. Losing men, each battalion was reduced to about 100 men each, each attempt failed.

In the centre and east the Germans had managed to get eight Battalions to oppose the then three Para Battalions. The lack of a radio link with the men at the bridge meant the British could not coordinate an attack from both directions to punch a hole in the thin German line.

Reinforcements were expected by air before noon. The Germans were aware of the plans, so arranged for 30 fighters to be over the DZ's at the appointed time. A delay in England due to fog meant the German fighters had returned to base before the C-47's arrived five hours late with 4 Para Brigade and other units in 92 C-47's with 49 Horsa and 9 Hamilcar gliders containing anti-tank and artillery guns, which was much less than the originally planned 126 C-47's and 296 tugs and gliders.



Recovering a supply basket

German ground troops had got close to the landing grounds, The King's Own Scottish Borderers ("KOSB ") resorting to the use of bayonets, enabling the reinforcements to land with few casualties, increasing the Arnhem force by 2,000 men in three Battalions. 33 Stirling bombers arrived later with parachuted supplies, however of the 38 tons dropped, only 12 were recovered.

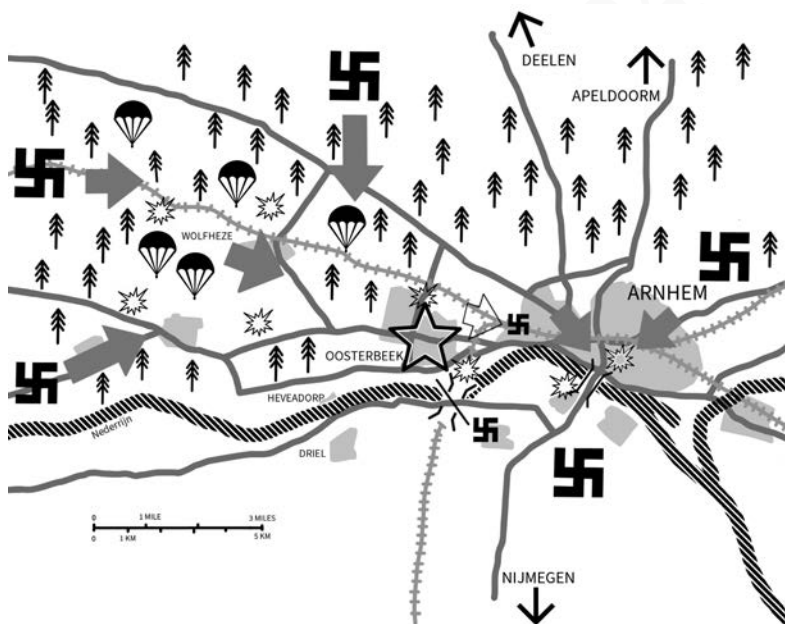
An attempt by newly arrived 4 Para, led by Brigadier Shan Hackett to move into Arnhem however failed, due to the four new Battalions being sent initially into the same 200 yard suburban front that two British Battalions were already fighting in. They pushed back the strong build-up of German forces, including SS troops with 60 reported tanks but lacking surprise, were stopped 1,400 yards from the Bridge, despite getting into hand to hand fighting.

1 A/B HQ was relocated to the Hotel Hartenstein in Oosterbeek, 100 yards from Model's former HQ at Hotel Tafelberg. A chain ferry, being used by civilians, was seen crossing the river all day, however nobody in authority realised it could be used to move troops to the south side of Arnhem Bridge to reinforce Frost.

With Urquhart and Lathbury still missing there was a late evening argument between Hackett and Hicks as to who should be in command as Hackett was senior and was not

happy with the general situation and the competence of Hicks.

The first 48 German prisoners captured had been found to come from 27 different units, in fact in Arnhem, there were German soldiers from 42 units present.



*1 A/B defend drop zones, move into Oosterbeek
and try to get more men to the bridge D+1*

German Forces – North – D+1

Model had relocated Army Group B HQ to that of II Panzer Corps yesterday afternoon and with his communications operational, was in a good position to manage the battles.

The concern that the XXX Corps advance would succeed resulted in the self-destruction of the Third Fighter Division's control centre at Deelen airbase. Elsewhere the Allied plan to cross the Rhine and form a bridgehead for an assault directly into Germany, was discounted, based on the information from captured Allied documents which enabled the creation of defensive plans very quickly.

In simple terms the plan was to “box in” 1 A/B west of Arnhem, slow down the advance of XXX Corps and eliminate 1 A/B when their relief failed. To this end, a strong block by 10SS on Nijmegen Bridge was the key.

Small units and individual men from the west and north of Arnhem had been arriving on bicycles, civilian lorries, cars, fire engines, and by horse and cart. Six battalions were created and fed into the Arnhem DZ/LZ area, many were cut down after running into ambushes before order was restored and gradually as the day moved on, they started to push back the airlanding brigade from some DZ/LZ's.

SS Captain Graebner, 9SS reconnaissance, who had been given his Knights Cross yesterday, made a poor decision to

cross Arnhem Bridge from the South, losing 12 of his 22 armoured vehicles, his own life and many of his men.

Unable to use the bridge at Arnhem, an engineering unit of 10SS crossed the Nederrijn river onto the Island, east of Nijmegen, using a ferry at Panterden and travelled to Nijmegen early morning where they helped build defences for the bridge and wire up the pre-laid explosives with detonators. 29x88mm flak guns and an assortment of 20mm light flak guns were already located around the Nijmegen bridge and some of these were now emplaced so they could be used in a ground support role. The engineers were followed by 200 dismounted tank crew, also from 10SS.

100 troops crossed to the Island at midday using the Huissen ferry, west of Arnhem, crossing the Island they surprisingly found no Allied troops, so moved to Lent to guard the northern ends of the Nijmegen bridges. Other 10SS engineers had started building a raft capable of taking a 40 ton tank at the Panterden ferry ramps, completed that day and propelled with ropes and poles, it enabled four 28 ton Jagdpanther IV 75mm tank destroyers to cross to the island late afternoon and overnight to join the Nijmegen defences, a slow process, subject to aerial attack during daylight.

Two pieces of intelligence information were being used, one being the battle plans of 101 A/B found by Student which more importantly gave the dates and timings of air drops, allowing 20mm anti-aircraft guns to be located near the

DZ/LZ's as well as providing the Luftwaffe with timings to make intercepts, using the Germans at Dunkirk to provide the final one hour warning to the waiting pilots. The second, also found yesterday, this time at Arnhem by 9SS, was an air drop instruction book, giving the daily patterns and colours for panels that were laid on the ground to tell aircraft where to drop their supplies. Sets of these panels had also been found and when displayed in German controlled areas found that food, ammunition and medical supplies were duly delivered to where the panels were laid.

German forces around Arnhem amounted to fourteen battalions against what was now six British, four were fighting against the one British at the road bridge. The attack to push the British off the western drop and landing zones had been going well and was almost complete when planes flew overhead dropping hundreds more parachutists in the rear of the German attack, encouraging the British on the ground in front to counterattack. Using captured Bren-guns to boost their firepower, the Germans formed a number of hedgehog all round defence groups and tried to retreat. They had no reserves so many were killed or captured as the British regained control of the landing ground.

An order issued by the Supreme Commander West, Field Marshall von Rundstedt was read to all German troops...*the conflict in the west has spilled over into the German homeland in this latest attack. Commanders are therefore to be fanatical in the extreme...*

82 A/B – D+1

U.S. 82 Airborne had secured the heights south east of Nijmegen, 508 PIR were holding the landing ground, east of Nijmegen and the allied right flank against expected attacks by German forces. Overnight a German train drove straight through 82 A/B lines, a second train was not so lucky, a bazooka being used to good effect and after many hours of searching the woods, the fleeing German troops ended up as prisoners. 504 PIR had captured the major bridge at Grave and one bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal at Heumen.

Expecting an attack on the DZ/LZ, most troops had stayed on guard duty, as did troops at the bridge at Heumen and at Grave Bridge. This however did release some troops who were given three overnight objectives:

(1) Bridge 8 at Malden and 9 near Hatert were already destroyed when 504 PIR approached them, so they moved on. The next was a double road and rail bridge near Neerbosch but as troops drew near to Bridge 10 at 0330 they were met by German defensive fire, which continued for the rest of the night. At 1030 demolition charges blew the rail bridge, the collapse of which damaged the road bridge. 504 PIR captured the damaged road bridge at 1100.

(2) 82 A/B needed to force Germans back from Mook, which was close to the Heumen bridge and (3) Try for the Nijmegen road and rail bridges.

A Company, the maximum Browning would allow Gavin to use in the city, was sent forward, making contact in the streets with German outposts near the roundabouts, around 1000. G Company, 3 Battalion 805 PIR managed to push the Germans back slightly, before coming under sustained artillery fire and having to fall back. The conclusion reached was that the Nijmegen bridges were held in force, armour had been seen and the enemy appeared to be SS troops.

Gavin met the local resistance leader who asked for weapons to arm his 600 men. Some weapons were provided and they were asked to try to stop the main bridges in Nijmegen being destroyed.

German troops assaulted the 82 A/B Groesbeek LZ at 0630 coming from Wyler, aiming to capture the heights. They had over 3,000 men, backed with artillery and half-tracks with flak guns.

Hamilcar glider



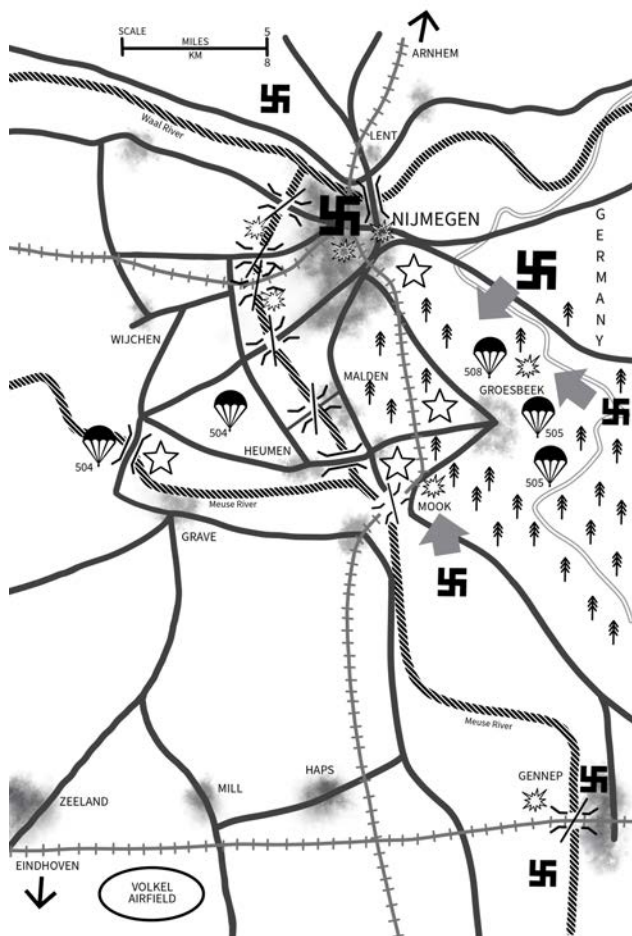
Despite their lack of infantry skills, the Germans managed to push the Americans back in places until the Americans brought up reserves and then in mid-afternoon gliders started to land on the LZ in the German rear.

The reinforcements, which had been delayed by fog in England, landed on top of the battle in 385 gliders, out of 454 that had taken off, between 1530 and 1600 followed by a supply drop of 250 tons from 135 B-24's which resulted in 80% of containers being recovered. 1,800 men, 8 A/T guns, 30 out of 36 howitzers plus 200 jeeps and 120 trailers arrived safely. These reinforcements would hopefully provide enough troops and artillery to now capture the Nijmegen bridges. This event had panicked the German troops who fled, losing all the gains they had made, leaving some flak guns and 149 men who were taken prisoner.

A German attack was mounted from Mook, 6 miles (10km) to the south against 505 PIR and the Heumen bridge.

A third attack at the border town of Beek, 3 miles (5km) due east of Nijmegen, secured by 508 PIR just before Germans marched in to occupy it, would change hands several times in the next 24 hours.

82 A/B had received help from 97 sorties flown by rocket firing Typhoons and Tempests during the day.

82 *A/B D+1*

German Forces – East – D+1

Yesterday, Model had issued orders to assemble a force to oppose the Nijmegen landing. 406 Division HQ had relocated close to Kranenburg, east of Groesbeek, where they arrived very early morning, meeting three alarm battalions made up of Luftwaffe troops, untrained in infantry tactics, and three batteries of artillery, captured Russian 143mm howitzers and sundry other troops. Putting them together to form a small division, they went into an immediate 0630 attack.

General Feldt formed a line from Zyfflich (east of Beek) south through Wyler to a point east of Groesbeek which contained three Kampfgruppen of around 700 men each.

All three Kampfgruppen attacked westward, aiming for Beek, Wyler and Groesbeek which took them across the landing grounds. The central group had armoured cars and halftracks mounding light flak guns. A fourth group with 350 men were further south and attacked Mook, aiming for the bridge at Heumen.

406 Division used 3,400 men in the attack. Supported by the three batteries of artillery, 24 mortars, 130 machine guns with five armoured cars and three half-tracks mounting 20mm flak guns. Most were amateurs, untrained in infantry tactics, except the elderly WW1 veterans, against what they thought were British paratroopers, unaware they were

fighting experienced Americans. Progress was slow. Encouragement was given by asking the veterans to show the youngsters how it was done.

An 82 A/B unit was surrounded in Wyler, then US aircraft began to circle overhead and gliders began to land amongst and behind the German soldiers, the last straw was an attack by 505 PIR charging downhill across the landing area. The German soldiers fled in panic, it proved hard to stop them.

The German attack had diverted the Americans from Nijmegen, where 82 A/B only tried one attack in Company strength, which was defeated by artillery. 10SS engineers in the city used the opportunity to demolish church spires and factory chimneys to reduce observation posts, to lay many mines and for everyone to dig in, including new arrivals, with four Jagdpanzer IV's dug in at Hunnerpark, below the Valkhof tower on the approach to the road bridge.

Late afternoon 406 Division was told that 3 and 5 Fallschirmjaeger Divisions would join them soon, however each division had a strength no more than a weak battalion. Model had an argument at 406 HQ insisting on a renewed attack on Groesbeek next morning, but eventually had to bow to the logic of delaying the attack 24 hours.

A massive east west railway bridge across the Maas river at Gennepe, leading directly into Germany, 20km south of Nijmegen was destroyed, over fear of its possible capture.

101 A/B – D+1

101 Airborne, having landed north of Eindhoven with 6,641 “Screaming Eagle” men, with the task of keeping 15 miles (24km) of road open, had watched the bridge at Zon blown up, however elsewhere they had captured intact, lots of small bridges over rivers and canals as far north as Veghel.

506 PIR, under orders to capture Eindhoven, had spent the night on the road 4 miles (6km) north of the city so now advanced south against small pockets of resistance, including some with 88mm guns north of the city. Managing to enter the city they spread out and began a clearing operation. 506 PIR only found around 100 enemy troops, however it was not until 1700 that the city was declared free of the enemy.

At 1130 a British armoured car met 506 PIR south of Zon and using their No19 Set, radio contact was made with XXX Corps who they learnt were 5 miles south of Eindhoven.

Having lost the bridge at Zon, General Taylor decided an attempt should be made by 502 PIR to attack westward towards Best, aiming for alternative bridges, the leading Company met a larger German force and as both sides reinforced it became a hard fight, during which a posthumous Congressional Medal of Honor was earned for bravery. Pvt Joe Mann was in a platoon that had been cut off in fighting the night before, he was already wounded and

had both his arms in bandages when he threw his body on a grenade to save his comrades. The commander of 3 Battalion, Robert G. Cole was killed by a sniper on the landing ground, not knowing at the time, that he was to be the only other 101 A/B Medal of Honor recipient of the war, having won it for actions in Normandy. During this fight the Americans had no artillery support, relying on two 81mm and five 60mm mortars.

Severe fighting east of Best ensued, with the Americans taking 1,000 prisoners, killing 300 of the enemy and destroying fifteen 88mm guns, but the Germans near the canal at Best were too strong and when the Americans got within 100 yards, the bridge was blown, so the attack was called off.

A German attack on Zon from the south east resulted in a Panther tank getting close enough to fire at and damage the temporary small bridge the U.S. engineers and locals had built, before being chased away. The temporary bridge was then demolished by the Americans to prepare for the building of a Bailey Bridge. A Bailey Bridge was a 1940 designed British kit construction system that used modular design standard parts and a lot of bolts to hold it together, the bridge could be made stronger by doubling or quadrupling the sides. Rafts made from barrels were used by U.S. troops to cross the canal in the meantime.

Further north around Veghel, engineers were building a strong bridge out of locally found materials with the help of the Dutch Underground. This was to supplement the narrow wooden bridge already captured, enabling two-way traffic to traverse the canal there. Light German tanks and troops were seen moving around, however 501 PIR sent out patrols in all directions to counter them. Eerde, close to Veghel was a village with sand dunes to the west, the Americans had occupied the village and used the windmill as an observation post.

Under attack most of the day from the sand dunes, the German forces eventually forced the Americans to retreat to Veghel. Veghel was also under attack most of the day from Schijndel.

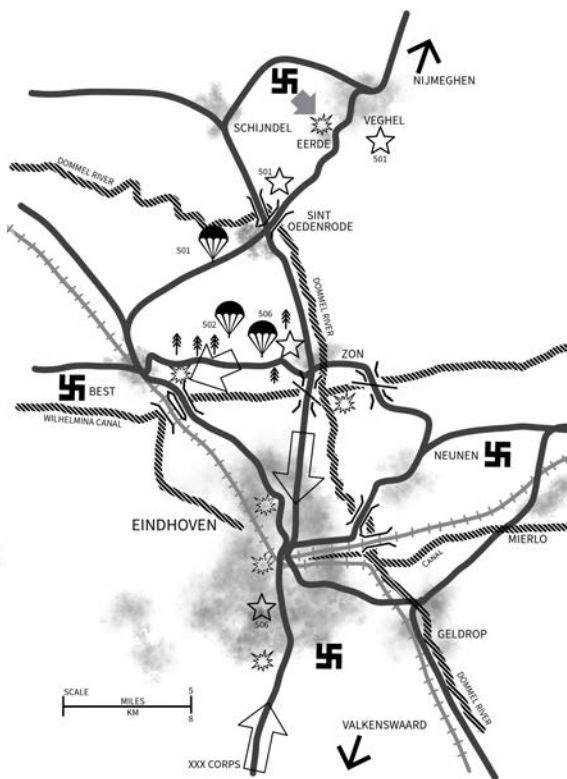


*Resistance members
with 101 A/B in Veghel*

In the afternoon, reinforcements on 450 gliders, of which 428 gliders arrived carrying 2,579 men mainly of the 327 Glider Infantry Regiment, with two battalions of artillery, engineers, medical services, 146 jeeps and 109 trailers.

A parachute supply drop also occurred however only 50% of 250 tons of parachuted supplies dropped in parapacks by

125 B-24 Liberator bombers were recovered, some having broken apart in the drop, showering the soldiers below with the contents. The route the planes took on D+1 had been changed to a northern one avoiding the intense fire from guns in front of the XXX Corps front.



101 A/B area D+1

German Forces – South – D+1

Model had yesterday ordered the formation of ad-hoc *Kampfgruppen* from troops available in each area, using whatever was available and for these units then to move to attack the paratroopers wherever they were found.

Attacks were planned to be mounted from the west and east between Eindhoven and Nijmegen with the intention of cutting the XXX Corps forward units from their supplies. The Eastern force, currently being strengthened by the recently formed and fully equipped Panzer-Brigade 107 (“107 Pz Bde”), the strongest unit available, it had been heading from Poland to Aachen to oppose the Americans when their seventeen trains were diverted towards Eindhoven, the lead units were commanded by Major Berndt-Joachim von Maltzahn, and were unloading in Venlo and Roermond as these were the only stations with ramps, some trains being delayed by the Dutch railway workers strike. Ordered to attack the Allies in Eindhoven and Zon with whatever had arrived, tomorrow at dawn.

In the Western force, the town of Best received their first reinforcements comprising trainee infantry, police and Flak forces which were merged into *Kampfgruppen* ‘Rink’ and used to attack eastwards towards Zon, running into the 101 A/B who were attacking west towards Best. A battle took place with the German troops being pushed back and losing some artillery whilst slowing up the American advance.

A second German attack on Zon, including some 59 Infantry Division troops, also failed. As did another Kampfgruppen attack directed further north against Sint Oedenrode.

The defence would depend on getting men and materials into place quicker than the Allies could deal with them. In accordance with Model's orders of yesterday, press gangs were introduced to round up and direct men on leave in three areas of nearby Germany to create ersatz battle units.

South of Eindhoven, facing XXX Corps, Major Kerutt used his initiative to form a blocking position south of Aalst on the road to Valkenswaard. A small bridge near Aalst was defended by four 88mm guns. Remnants of the weak battalions who had fought yesterday, 11 static 75mm anti-tank guns and additional troops with a 20mm anti-aircraft platoon. They created several killing zones. The surviving self-propelled Panzerjaeger IV's were located to the side so they could shoot and move. Initial success was turned to defeat as the British infantry, armoured cars and then tanks outflanked the static German positions which were also shelled by 25 pounder artillery. The American paratroopers had already taken Eindhoven, so the British and Americans linked up and First Fallschirmjager Army was cut in two.

A small force crossed the Meuse-Escalut Canal and attacked the Ayrshire Yeomanry near Pelt, before being pushed back.

XXX Corps – D+1

XXX Corps forward units, Irish and Grenadier Guards, had spent a wet night at Valkenswaard, other troops were clearing the road from Belgium and the woods either side of enemy troops. A night time tank and infantry attack on Budel to the East at 0430 had caught an exhausted German Paratroop battalion sleeping, the British lost four tanks in a four hour long battle before the Germans escaped with half their men east to Weert. A short Bailey bridge was built over the Dommel river just south of Valkenswaard to supplement the existing wooden bridge.

At 0530 reconnaissance units were sent out on side roads, west and east looking for routes around Eindhoven, the main body would move at 0645 directly towards Eindhoven itself.

TAC signs were set up along the “Club Route” to assist the drivers, bearing a white playing card club on a black background. A possible alternate eastern route was given the name “Heart Route” and marked accordingly



XXX Corps - Valkenswaard

The right flank unit, using the Heart Route had found small wooden bridges incapable of taking tanks and then met determined resistance, so returned to the main route.

The main route, the “Club Route” led straight to Eindhoven, however during the night the German forces had created other blocking positions and more ambushes along the route. Helped by the countryside with thick woods close to the route, they could only be taken out using infantry and armoured cars outflanking them through the woods, a slow and time-consuming exercise. Daimler scout cars discovered two 88mm guns near Aalst, they were fired at, but managed to disengage and report back.

A delay occurred as the lead units expected fighter bombers before they could advance. The planes did not arrive so the Irish Guards advanced around lunch time, the fighter bombers were grounded by fog.

The point of XXX Corps were now outside the range of the artillery based in Belgium so some batteries of 25 pounder artillery had been moved forward overnight to support the advance when static German positions were identified.

Hard fighting supported by artillery fire using an accurate map of enemy positions supplied by a manager of the Philips company in Eindhoven and the threat of encirclement, made the German force retire, the Irish

Guards moved into Aalst at 1700 where an Eindhoven telephone operator connected them to the Americans at Zon.

Captain Balding of the Household Cavalry on the left flank managed, via a number of diversions to reach Eindhoven, where he met up with 101 A/B and discovered the Zon bridge was down. Reporting back by radio from his Daimler Armoured Car at 1230, backed by a phone call to a doctor's house at Zon, the 101 A/B engineers give the exact measurement which enabled the bridging units, back in Belgium, to bring forward the correct pieces necessary to build a Class 40 (suitable for heavy tanks) Bailey Bridge across the canal. The route the recon unit had taken west of Eindhoven was not strong enough for tanks, as one Grenadier Guards tank found when it collapsed a bridge.

Further defences held them up until the Germans withdrew. Advancing to Eindhoven they met 101 A/B at 1800, 20 hours later than planned. From there, XXX Corps units tried to drive quickly through the city, but were delayed by jubilant residents, with many wearing orange frocks or orange arm bands.



XXX Corps in Eindhoven

A Grenadier Guards tank unit moved east carrying US Paras riding on the tanks to check the towns of Geldrop and Mierlo for enemy troops, their reconnaissance unit reporting “Sugar Sugar” (SS) tanks near Helmond.

The second half of the Guards Armoured Division, the Coldstream and Welsh Guards had crossed over Joe’s Bridge mid-morning and spent most of the day double parked in long lines on the “Club Route” road around Valkenswaard, being shelled from the east, leaving room for the engineering lorries carrying Bailey Bridge parts to pass them and struggle through civilian crowds to the front of the column, as no side route for tanks could be found.

All XXX Corps forward movement ceased overnight whilst engineers built their Class 40 Bailey Bridge at Zon to replace the swing bridge blown by the Germans.

The Americans had estimated that a 110 foot bridge was needed. 14 Field Squadron Royal Engineers arrived with a Triple Single bridge (three side panels for strength and one panel high) on lorries at 1930. The gap was proven to be 104 feet and the Americans had already cleared the site so by midnight Lieutenant Colonel Jones, who was using enthusiastic German prisoners to help with the construction was able to estimate that completion time would be 0600.

XXX Corps TAC HQ moved to 2 miles south of Zon.

VIII and XII Corps – D+1

XII Corps on the left had completed their Class 9 bridge (suitable for a medium lorry with trailer) over the Meuse-Escaut Canal by dawn and were pushing infantry over the canal, they managed a slow advance northwards through poor attacking terrain, from their bridgehead. The other bridgehead at Tenaard still suffering high casualties.



The 53 Division Class 9 bridge

VIII Corps on the right were still missing most of their infantry, 3 Division was on route from the Paris region, motoring 40 miles every two hours before resting for 15 minutes, which was a fast convoy speed.

50 Division went back to VIII Corps at 1200, in accordance with the “Garden” plan. The small German attack on Neerpelt did not halt the VIII Corps 3 Division midnight assault crossing of the Meuse-Escaut Canal at Sint-Huibrechts-Lille, 5 miles (8km) east of Joe’s Bridge to create a bridgehead.

The Dorsetshire Regiment of 231 Brigade of 50 Division, had helped clear the road to, and then taken over the defence of Valkenswaard.

In Valkenswaard an unusual building was discovered to the north of the town, looking like an L-shaped oversized farmhouse, it had a 2.5m thick pitched roof of reinforced concrete, under this structure and even more concrete, was a large bunker that had been stripped of equipment. It was recognised as a communication centre with external aerials in the garden. Additional bunkers containing a generator, fuel and water storage. A large barracks was located in the wing of the “farmhouse”.

It was after the war before intelligence units worked out that this was an intercept centre, recording radio telephone conversations between London and the USA. Using a tape recorder, something the Allies did not have, the Germans could record a scrambled conversation and replay it through each of the small possible scramble combinations to unscramble it. Once in “clear”, it was typed up, translated, and the text of the message transmitted by telex to Berlin.

Many unscrambled intercepts were clear enough to recognise the voice of the speaker. Conversations included requests for specific supplies to be put on the next transatlantic convoy and one conversation between Churchill and Roosevelt discussed the July 1943 offer by the new Italian government to change sides once Allied troops landed in Italy, this particular intercept gave the Germans weeks to prepare orders to disarm the Italian army and secure key locations, which they did with remarkable speed when the time arrived.

Allied Air Forces – D+1

Airlifts were scheduled to take off at 0700, a total of nearly 2,500 aircraft would be involved however mist over airfields in England delayed flights by 3 to 5 hours by which time there were heavy rainclouds over Belgium, restricting the Southern approach route resulting in a new briefing for those pilots before setting off. Troops and supplies would now be arriving mid-afternoon.

Many of the transport aircraft were towing gliders with vehicles and guns, both artillery and anti-tank, aboard, jeeps and trailers. The first resupply missions began dropping panniers of food and ammunition by parachute. Amongst the specialist equipment to be delivered were 4 gliders destined for Arnhem with two RAF mobile radar warning teams and their equipment aboard.

Having captured information about resupply missions, the Germans had aircraft ready to intercept. 20 to 30 German Bf109 fighters were seen strafing the Arnhem DZ/LZ's but then left and missed the delayed transport aircraft arriving. 90 fighters later tried to attack the route but were kept away by strong allied fighter defences.

Of 250 B-24 bombers supplying US A/B units, 8 were lost and 4 badly damaged later when they crashed on landing. Only 35 Stirling bombers supplied 1 A/B, with 2 lost.

Chapter 4 - Tuesday 19 September 1944 D+2

News

The SHAEF communique of the day, No. 164, mentions the operation in a blunt and uninformative way:

“The landing of Allied airborne troops in Holland continued yesterday. Supplies were also landed and positions were consolidated and strengthened. Operations are proceeding, and in one area our ground forces have already linked with the airborne troops.”

Elsewhere in the communique, looking at the Canadian and First and Third US Armies, there is talk of strong and stiff opposition.

In America, newspapers ran headlines like “Sky troops threaten to flank west wall”, “Big Sky Army in action beyond Rhine”, “Germans rush in reserves”, “Airborne Army seizes 13 towns”, “British and Air Army unite”, “Northern end of Siegfried Line turned by US Airborne Army”.

Eisenhower broadcast an appeal over the BBC asking the people of the Netherlands to rise up against the Germans and use covert action to damage the enemy’s transport.

1 A/B – D+2

1 British Airborne still had a force under Lt Col Frost of around 500 men, including wounded, on the north end of Arnhem Bridge, they were surrounded and under attack day and night. The dosage of Benzadrine tablets, designed to keep you awake and alert, was increased with some soldiers suffering side effects.

A major attempt by 1 A/B to fight through to the bridge was mounted at 0400, with two battalions of troops on two routes entering a prepared German killing zone, where the paratroopers were being fired at from three sides, including infantry on the high ground to the north and from anti-aircraft guns on the southern bank of the river, they took very heavy losses, although it inadvertently released Urquhart who re-joined his HQ at 0700.



South Staffordshire Reg.

An attack to try to outflank the German blockage to the bridge, by the South Staffordshire Regiment, was met by a counterattack by German Infantry supported by assault guns which coincided with their running out of PIAT ammunition. The Germans overran them and then rolled on

into 11 Para who were in the open and unprepared, in effect, the two Battalions were destroyed.

1 A/B were now on the defensive. During the day the Germans in the west began to push the paratroopers east, closer towards Oosterbeek and off the DZ's.

1 Polish A/B should have arrived on their DZ near Elden south of Arnhem bridge, whilst their gliders landed north of the river, a strange plan as the parachutists would be separated from their heavy support weapons, but bad weather in the UK resulted in a cancellation of the mission, even though it was a bright sunny day in Arnhem and the chain ferry across the Nederrijn at Driel was still operating. The Polish Brigade was restricted on aircraft allocated to tow gliders so could not fly their artillery to Arnhem, it would travel by sea via Normandy.

The 46 1 Polish A/B gliders carrying anti-tank guns and ammunition did however arrive, with some other British gliders, by error and without much fighter escort. Me 109's tore into them as did the anti-aircraft guns. The ground was not much safer, as 4 Para Brigade were retreating across the LZ after a failed attack, followed by counter attacking German troops. All German infantry weapons opened up on the gliders as did Nebelwerfer multi barrel rocket launchers. The Poles that survived were in shock, opening fire at both the Germans and British Paras before realising their mistake; Most of the equipment in the gliders was lost.

1 A/B, with about 8,000 men, lots wounded, had lost their offensive capability, Urquhart decided to consolidate close to the HQ, centred in Oosterbeek, giving up many of the DZ/LZ's. With their backs to the river they were also surrounded and outnumbered by German troops, backed up with artillery and armour. 1 A/B had no reserves left.

163 aircraft dropped supplies, mainly on a DZ now under German control and lost 18 planes in the process with a further 97 damaged by flak. A second drop on a new DZ that 1 A/B had managed to radio in was sadly overrun by the time 33 Stirling's towing gliders arrived late afternoon, 12 gliders broke tow ropes and those that made it landed on the German controlled LZ. The Germans collected 367 of the 388 tons dropped.

The thorn the Germans wanted removed was the hold on the bridge. They badly needed the bridge to send tank reinforcements to Nijmegen. Having tried all out assaults in the bridge area, they now decided to systematically destroy each building in turn. Using tank, anti-tank and artillery to demolish the structures, they also brought up flamethrowers and phosphorous grenades to burn the obstinate men out of their holes. Many houses were burned.

2 Paras responded with incredible courage, whenever an attack was beaten off a cry of *Waho Mahommed* could be heard over the sound of shell bursts, a cry learned in

Tunisia. Water and food had run out, as had all medical supplies. Dead and wounded men were everywhere.

The radio net between the bridge and the airborne artillery near Oosterbeek church was no longer working however the 22 set now decided to work and Frost could talk to Urquhart who had escaped his confinement. It was debated as to who should relieve whom, as both groups were surrounded.

The Germans brought up a 15cm gun, three shots made large holes in the HQ attic but when the gun did not fire again, they looked out and saw no gun, just a large crater, apparently a Para mortar shell had exploded the guns' ammunition.

At 1800, the Paras heard from the BBC that the Paras have been relieved. The Germans were not aware of this "fact" and carried on as normal.

At 1930 the first two Royal Tigers arrived to join the party, driving over the wreckage on Arnhem Bridge and opening fire with their 88mm guns at a range of 25 yards making 6ft holes in walls with each shot. Life was now very hard for the 400 remaining Paras at the bridge.

German Forces – North – D+2

German units were continuing to arrive from all directions, some directed from Germany with heavy equipment including tanks direct from factories painted in yellow undercoat. Battle groups were organised including Knaust which was given the responsibility of defeating Frost at the bridge. HQ's were also established on both flanks.

The timely arrival of the diverted 280 Assault Gun Brigade, enabled the defence west of the bridge in the shape of an upside down L with the east west line on the rail lines and yards, with the long side going to the old rail bridge along the raised track, to be strengthened with armour. Across the river waited some 9SS armoured cars and half-tracks. This resulted in two assaulting British battalions suffering very heavy losses when fired at from their flanks.

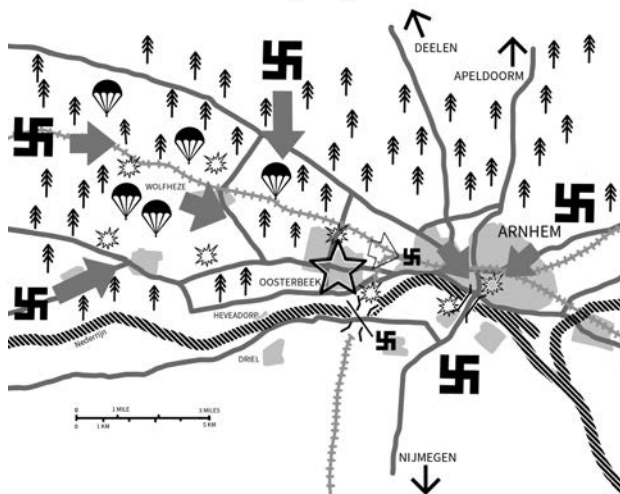
The infantry further west, also supported by assault guns, managed to block and then overrun and destroy two more British battalions seizing Wolfheze, capturing 800, 18 jeeps and 15 anti-tank guns. The LZ on which the Polish gliders landed was raked with machine gun, artillery and mortar fire, with most of the gliders being destroyed on the ground.

Late in the day, two Panzer VI tanks, arrived in Arnhem, all others having broken down on the 80km drive. They were brought close to the bridge area where they began pounding the houses occupied by the paratroopers that were not

already burning, until one of the tanks was damaged by an anti-tank gun and the second tank developed mechanical problems and had to be withdrawn.

A Flak Brigade of 5 battalions of anti-aircraft guns arrived at Arnhem, towed by tractors and gazogene (wood gas powered) lorries, mainly 88mm with a number of 20mm and 37mm guns, they have taken 2 days to travel from the Rhur and helped take a heavy toll on the British transport planes.

As well as destroying four battalions of paratroopers, a total of 1,700 prisoners were taken during the day. German losses were fairly high and a number of the assault guns were lost.



Arnhem area D+2

German Forces – East – D+2

More German artillery had crossed at the Pannerden ferry to support the troops holding Nijmegen bridge overnight, including 10SS Artillery Regiment, who had acquired extra guns from an abandoned train at Arras and had 72 tubes, twice the normal compliment. They also set up a novel grid map system for spotters in Nijmegen to call for shoots on targets close to their lines that enabled all the guns to fire quickly and accurately to break up attacks. This new idea proved highly successful and would come to be adopted elsewhere by the German army. The Valkhof watch tower next to the Nijmegen bridge provided a good lookout point.

German defenders in Nijmegen had burnt houses overnight to protect their position in the city and to provide light. They expected a fairly quiet day, until the British tanks arrived, however as 10SS troops were holding the northern ends of both Nijmegen bridges and protected by artillery, they were confident they could continue to hold them.

East of Nijmegen, two battalions of German paratroopers, the remnants of the experienced 3 and 5 Fallschirmjaeger Divisions, had safely arrived. Model, on a personal visit to their HQ, had been persuaded to delay the attack planned against 82 A/B landing grounds around Groesbeek, so they were given the day to form up into a battle group with other troops, before they would be committed tomorrow.

XXX Corps – D+2

The Guards Armoured Division, leading XXX Corps had spent the night on the road from Belgium to Eindhoven where they awaited the completion of the Bailey Bridge at Zon. At 0615 the bridge was completed and B Squadron the Household Cavalry was sent north along the roads controlled by 101 A/B, followed by the tanks of the Grenadier Guards.



Bailey Bridge in operation at Zon

The centre of the XXX Corps column advanced up the road from Belgium, through a thick low morning mist, where only tank turrets could be seen above the fog.

Driving past Sint Oedenrode, Veghel, Uden and Zeeland, covering 30 miles in two hours, the Grenadier Guards had met slight opposition near Uden before meeting 504 PIR of 82 A/B at Grave, arriving around 0900. The vehicles at the rear of the leading column going flat out to try to keep up.

A conference to design a plan for future action was held at Overasselt north of Grave, with Browning, Gavin and senior Guards officers, it was a shock for XXX Corps to be told Nijmegen bridge had not been captured as they had expected to drive straight through to Arnhem. Spanning the Waal river, the 1879 railway bridge on the west was 2,200ft (675m) long, the 1936 road bridge, crossing from the centre of the city, was the largest single-span bridge in Europe. Both had been dropped into the river by the Dutch defenders in 1940 and rebuilt by 1943.

Accumulating men and equipment for the next move, two companies from the Grenadier Guards advanced to Nijmegen via the Molenhook bridge at Heumen which had been captured by American paratroopers at dusk on the 17th, despite fierce German resistance. The Guards met up with 2 Battalion 505 PIR to attack the river bridges.

A second meeting with senior officers present took place at Browning's HQ at noon.

The Guards in Nijmegen lost two tanks to artillery before they even started their attack. At 1500 the first probing

advance was information gathering, the second attack managed to get to the roundabout, 400 yards from the road bridge. A Humber scout car with two Engineers inside and a Dutch guide, Jan van Hoof, on the roof was hit by an anti-tank gun, none survived.

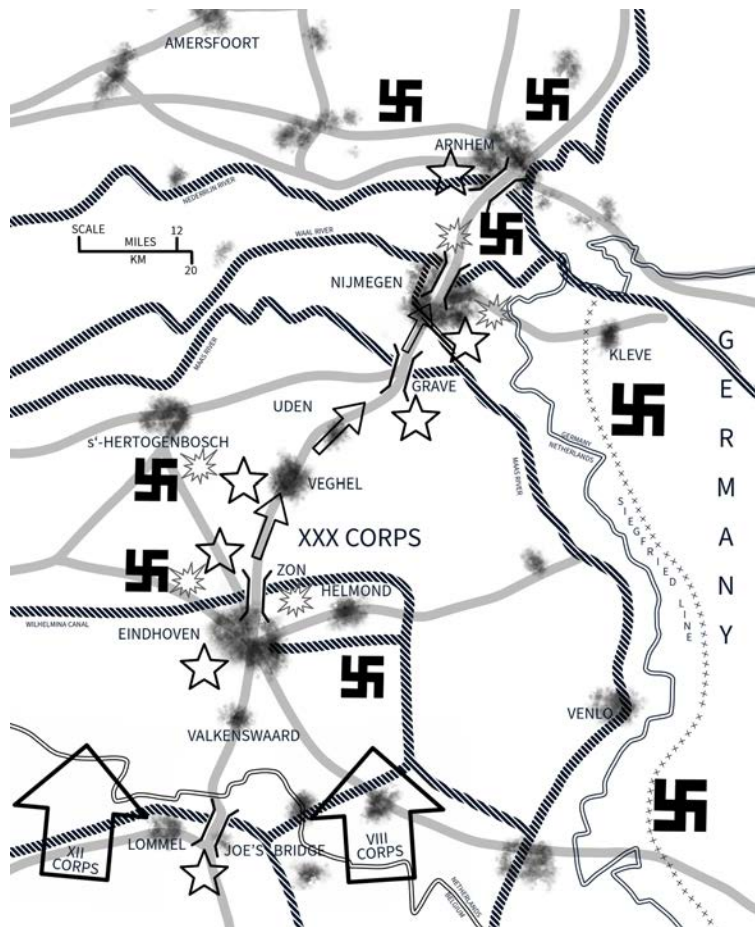
A third attack also failed. Fighting continued until it was dark, the burning buildings, every 5th being set on fire by the Germans to provide light, showing the abandoned tanks, armoured cars and scores of corpses.

Guards Armoured rear unit, the Welsh Guards, had been used to sweep east of Eindhoven with 101 A/B paras before heading north, arriving at Grave in the evening, they parked up double and triple banked beside the road.



XXX Corps

In the afternoon, the area around Sint Oedenrode had been subjected to artillery and mortar fire by Germans, causing some concerns and traffic holdups. Neither side of the “Club Route” had flanking defenders, the allied territory being little wider than the width of the single road to Grave with large gaps between the scattered groups of 101 A/B.



XXX Corps advance to Nijmegen D+2

German Forces – West – D+2

General Kurt Student was pleasantly surprised how they were being allowed to attack the Allies whenever and wherever they wanted, they would now cut the highway and watch the XXX Corps column's strength die slowly as there were no major flank attacks to widen the road.

Allied vehicles were reported moving between Zon and Sint Oedenrode, heading north, and four march battalions of Fallschirmjaeger troops plus 1036 Division were ordered to block the highway.

German supplies here were terribly short, almost no fuel, and ammunition for only a few hours fighting.

A battalion led the way down the railway line from Schijndel towards the station at Veghel, the lead troops walking into a trap and were cut down by American machine gun fire, before additional forces were brought up. Using two 88mm guns to take out American snipers, progress was made, with the Americans forced back.

General Kurt Student was personally in the front of this attack when an order was received to fall back on Schijndel. The attack was stopped so that the men could protect against a reported attack being made in their rear led by British armoured cars. The Allied attack did not exist and the German force had lost an opportunity.

101 A/B – D+2

U.S. 101 Airborne had captured the city of Eindhoven and met XXX Corps. Overnight at Zon, the 110 foot Triple Single “Class 40” Bailey Bridge was built within 8 hours.

101 A/B had captured lots of small bridges over rivers and canals as far north as Veghel, engineers at Veghel had realised the bridge over the Zuid-Willems Canal was too narrow for the British tanks, so constructed, using local help, an additional wooden bridge to the side of the existing lifting bridge. 101 A/B held the route north open for XXX Corps.

The Germans were blocking the 2 and 3 Battalions of 502 PIR that had been trying to reach Best. Another attack by 502 PIR with part of 327 Glider Infantry Regiment and newly arrived XXX Corps Cromwell tanks from 15/19 Hussars changed the situation, a German collapse resulted in 300 dead, 1,400 prisoners, the capture of fifteen 88mm guns and an open route to Best, however late afternoon 15/19 Hussars Cromwell tanks were pulled back to fight off a German attack on Zon bridge.

501 PIR in Veghel decided they needed to push the Germans away from Eerde, just west of Veghel, 3 Battalion were moved in their direction. Plans were made for tanks to help with the attack when they arrived.

A late switch of tugs from 82 A/B to 101 A/B resulted in 385 Waco gliders setting out with both artillery and anti-tank guns, however because of the weather, some turned back and many got lost. 17 gliders ditched in the English Channel, 17 C-47's were shot down. Only 209 gliders landed. 101 A/B had been holding on with no artillery. Of the 68 gliders with guns sent out, 40 arrived, 20 were howitzers. Many gliders carried trailers with ammunition others held men. 1,341 men were landed safely. The rest of the gliders were scattered by fog across England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands or shot down. It had been planned to bring ten large Hamilcar gliders with bulldozers, cranes and graders to construct a forward airfield on LZ W. Engineering works were to be undertaken by the 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion.



101 A/B search crashed glider for crew

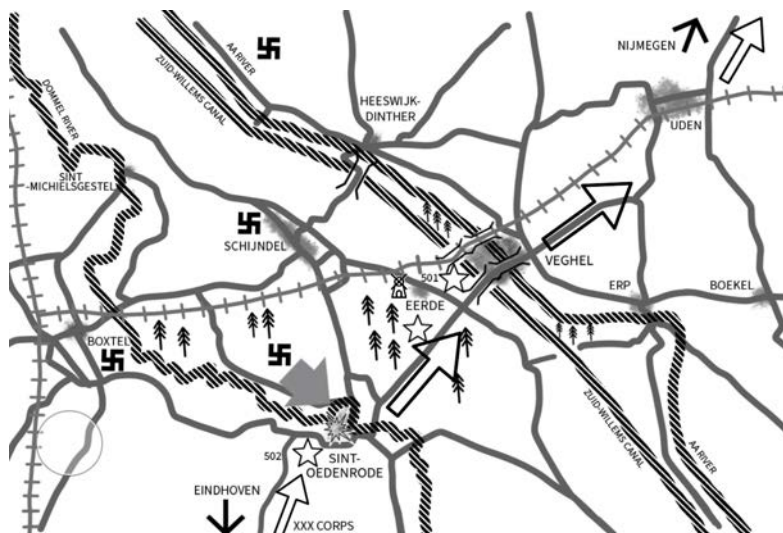
Within three hours of landing, some of the glider borne gunners from 81 Anti-Aircraft Battalion were in action helping 506 PIR repel an attack by 107 Pz Bde Panther tanks and infantry from the east of Zon. XXX Corps traffic on the "Club Route" stopped when an ammunition lorry on

the new Bailey Bridge caught fire. The Germans were driven back after a 57mm Anti-Tank gun and a bazooka knocked out two of the German tanks. By noon the Zon bridge was cleared, with traffic moving again.

3 Battalion 506 PIR were sent west of Eindhoven to widen the corridor, towards Best, 2 Battalion 506 PIR explored east towards Nuenen and Mierlo with tanks from 44 Royal Tank Regiment (44 RTR), they met German tanks and pulled back into Eindhoven in the evening.

Sint Oedenrode came under attack mid-afternoon from the north, but with the help of an Irish Guards Sherman which had stopped for repairs and could not go faster than 5mph, the commander, Sergeant James McRory and the driver were the only crew members, so two 502 PIR became tank crew and gun operators, the German infantry supported by three 20mm flak guns were fired at by the tank then pushed back by 1 Battalion 502 PIR who also took 53 German prisoners.

German JU-87 and JU-88 bombers attacked Eindhoven during the early evening of the 19th, causing 227 civilian deaths and 800 wounded, fires were hard to extinguish with the water main damaged. 506 PIR returned to the city to help rescue civilians. The bombing and the resultant fires damaged the XXX Corps column parked in the city, with eighteen ammunition lorries exploding for hours afterwards adding to the casualties and blocking the road.



101 A/B positions along XXX Corps route D+2



Bomb damage in Eindhoven

82 A/B – D+2

U.S. 82 Airborne were holding the heights south of Nijmegen, they had captured the major bridge at Grave, one bridge (No7) over the Maas-Waal Canal at Heumen and a second damaged bridge (No10) on the main Grave-Nijmegen road. The plan made last night by Gavin was changed by Browning so that instead of attacking the Nijmegen bridge, they would wait on the heights east of the city.

The arrival of XXX Corps at Grave early morning, led to an inspection by the Household Cavalry of Bridge 10 which concluded its damage was such that it could not be used in its present state, for armoured vehicles.

At the meeting near Grave the airborne had explained that they needed help to capture the two bridges over the river Waal, bridges 17 and 18. 508 PIR had already been repulsed three times from the road bridge, Gavin explained that the 10SS cordon around the bridge was not strong, estimated at 500 men but was well supported by artillery located on the Island, across the river, north of Nijmegen.

Supported by five tanks, the American infantry made an attempt on the rail bridge, whilst 20-30 Grenadier Guard tanks supported the US infantry attempt on the road bridge. Attacking at 1600, they quickly realised that opposition was strong with many 88mm guns dug in with good arcs of fire,

the German artillery was heavy and accurate and the buildings, deliberately set on fire, helped the defence. By 1900 the attack on the road bridge was stopped with the Americans overlooking the final approaches to the bridge. The rail bridge attack had also been stopped by strong opposition. The post office was captured, at the insistence of the resistance, but no switch to blow the bridge was found.

A supply drop by 167 planes carrying 265 tons failed, the containers being dropped from too great a height. Bad weather in England halted a planned landing by 258 gliders carrying 325 Glider Regiment.

A meeting was convened at 1900, with Horrocks present, to consider options. A plan suggested by Gavin was agreed and put into operation, whereby 3 Battalion 504 PIR, who had moved up from Grave, would cross the river in boats to attack the bridge from the north whilst 505 PIR and Grenadier Guards infantry fought through the city from the south. The necessary boats were somewhere near Belgium, their expected arrival, after noon.

A battle group of Coldstream Guards, 1st tank and 5th infantry, were put under the command of 82 A/B as a reserve, releasing more of 505 PIR. 508 PIR was given the responsibility of defending the eastern sector of the landing area. Borrowing a newly arrived tank helped 508 PIR move east of Beek to Wyler in Germany to improve the Groesbeek defensive perimeter.

German Forces – South – D+2

Not all of the German battlegroups were performing well, near Best, men from Fallschirmjaeger Battalion ‘Stephan’ were heard talking about surrender and a company was overrun, by lorried infantry supported by tanks, leading to a part withdrawal, the commander was removed.

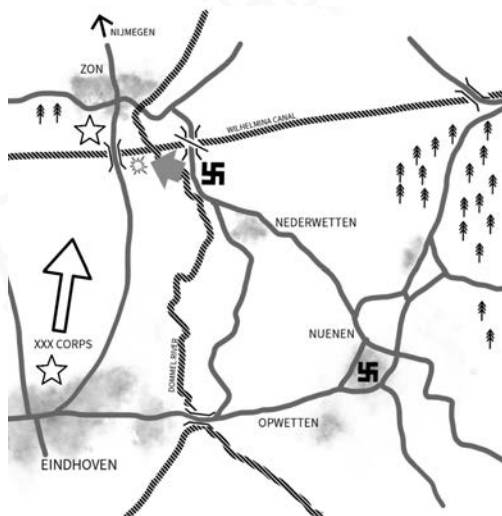
The overstretched 59 Division lost 300 killed and 1,400 prisoners, when it met XXX Corps tanks and had used up all their 75mm anti-tank shells and all their heavy artillery ammunition, it resulted in a rout, however other forces around Best held the defence line. A modified Cromwell with a 17-pdr gun, was captured from 15/19 Hussars near Best, giving experts an opportunity to inspect this new tank type and to then use it to defend Best.

107 Pz Bde attacked Zon bridge with the intention of capturing it and to then use it to cross the canal and move north to Sint Oedenrode. It had been hoped to co-ordinate the attack with 59 Infantry Division

A small reconnaissance force from the available 40 battle tanks drove west parallel to the canal on the south side, with German paratroopers from Helmond clinging to the Panther tanks. The weather which had heavy clouds kept the Allied aircraft away as they advanced on a narrow front. Zon came into view at 1715 and the lead tank opened fire at the church spire, the infantry advanced. Tank shells hit the school and

other buildings, then several lorries, including one that caught fire on the bridge. Coming under fire from a 57mm anti-tank gun on their right flank, north of the canal, one Panther that was almost on the tow path was lost, losing two more, one to a bazooka, before pulling back towards Nuenen. Another bridge over the Dommel river leading to Eindhoven was discovered further south, which would have allowed a flanking attack, but the reconnaissance commander believed a local who said the wooden bridge was weak and could not take heavy vehicles.

The German bombing raid on Eindhoven in the evening was a big success, blocking the road north for hours. All three cities were now literally burning.



East of Eindhoven D+2

VIII and XII Corps – D+2

XII Corps had two crossings on the left wing, one was struggling, opposition was very strong with the bridgehead at Tenaard, 15 Division had been attacked thirteen times in 5 days by battalion strength German units with Panzer IV tanks. It was better where 53 Division was crossing, west of Lommel, a Bailey bridge was under construction, the troops supported by artillery, including guns from 43 Division.

VIII Corps on the right now had the leading troops of 3 Division infantry available. The assault at Sint-Huibrechts-Lille used storm boats and artificial moonlight (from searchlights reflected off clouds). By 0100 they had a bridgehead, with engineers completing the Class 9 Bridge by 1000 and the Class 40 Bridge by 1930 that evening.



Bringing forward assault boats

Advance units moved north to Valkenswaard where troops bumped into Kampfgruppe Richter who were retreating east from Valkenswaard towards Weert at dusk. VIII Corps had taken Bocholt and Bree further east from the amateur Franco-Russian force. Troops were able to watch the Germans launching V2 rockets from woods a few kilometers to the east in Belgium.

German Forces – Luftwaffe – D+2

The Luftwaffe was increasing its presence with an additional 300 fighters being released from reserve. Americans spotted 425 ME109's and FW190's during the day.

9SS HQ had now received a radio system enabling them to talk directly to fighter commanders operating over Arnhem.



*Focke-Wulf
FW-190*

Of the 100 Allied bombers and 63 Dakotas flying in the Arnhem area today, 13 were shot down and 97 were damaged by flak or fighters.

Late afternoon, bombers attacked Allied artillery positions.

Using flares to illuminate Eindhoven, a very successful night attack was made by pilots, many of whom had been based in Eindhoven so knew the area. They caught hundreds of lorries moving slowly through the city, the ammunition on the lorries adding to the conflagration. Over 1,000 civilians were killed or wounded.

Allied Air Forces – D+2

The Allies fighter bombers only flew 73 sorties during the day, mainly due to the weather in the west.

On D+2, because of the cloud cover, Glider pilots reporting that they could only see four or five feet of the towrope and had to steer by the “angle of the dangle”. Most gliders carried loads above their recommended limit, often 800-1000lbs or 25-33% in excess, which put strain on the towing aircraft and towrope as well as needing a higher landing speed, resulting in a number of gliders losing their tows.

A tactical air reconnaissance identified a build-up of German forces in the Reichswald Forest in front of 505 PIR, resulting in Coldstream Guards tanks being allocated to 82 A/B reserve. 82 A/B submitted a request for air support for D+3, which was approved.

Because of low cloud, allied aircraft had failed to spot 107 Pz Bde moving to attack the Zon Bailey Bridge again, or to attack them.

Only the 10,000 strong British 52 Airlanding Division, part of 1 Polish Airborne Brigade and remnants of other units remained in the UK. A few gliders had crash landed on route and were now stranded in Belgium.

Chapter 5 - Wednesday 20 September 1944 D+3

1 A/B

1 British Airborne still had a small force under Lt Col Frost remaining on the north of Arnhem bridge, they were surrounded and under constant attack.

The rest of 1 A/B, started the day with about 6,000 men, with many wounded, they were 4-5 miles (6-7km) west of the bridge, centred around Oosterbeek. They had lost all of the DZ's and LZ's. They had their backs to the river and were boxed in by 9SS and attached German troops, backed up with artillery and armour.

*75mm airborne artillery
in action in Oosterbeek*



Around Oosterbeek was a loose defensive ring. It was only possible to create strong points, allowing infiltration. They were under tank, artillery, nebelwerfer and mortar attack. A posthumous VC would be awarded to 21 year old Lance-Sgt John Baskeyfield, manning 6-pdr A/T guns who knocked

out two tanks and two self-propelled guns, despite being wounded, near Oosterbeek church.



*6 pounder A/T gun
engaging a PzKpfw B2
(f) Flammpanzer tank,
which it later destroyed*

The remnants of 4 Para Brigade was outside the perimeter, fighting against tanks, some mounting flame-throwers, artillery, mortars and infantry. They attempted to regain the “safety” of the perimeter, 10 Para made it with assistance from Captain Lionel Queripol who later received a posthumous VC, but had only had 60 men left. 156 Para with 150 men charged with bayonets, they were then pinned down, but eight hours later they repeated the process again, but now they only had 75 men left. Some of them made it into the perimeter. 4 Para Brigade had only 500 of the 2,300 men who had landed 48 hours earlier.

It was becoming impossible to identify troops by the noise of their weapons as 1 A/B were using captured German weapons and newly arrived Germans were being issued British weapons and ammunition that had arrived by

parachute in place of the old French Army rifles that some of their sailors had been issued with as they arrived at Arnhem. Soldiers were also fighting to the sounds of Glen Miller music being played over German speakers, between appeals for the British to surrender.

1 A/B made contact with England using the PRO channel, the BBC radio transmitter at the Hartenstein in Oosterbeek, which had been working well for the last 3 days, informing London of the loss of the DZ's and telling them that British troops were in sight of the Arnhem bridge, but not in control of it. 1 A/B released 82 carrier pigeons during the battle, 14 of which arrived back in London with messages. 5 press reporters who had travelled with 1 A/B had used this transmitter to send reports daily.

At 0300 1 A/B had managed to get a message to Browning advising of a smaller supply drop zone and a revised drop area for the Polish paratroopers. This would be acted upon.

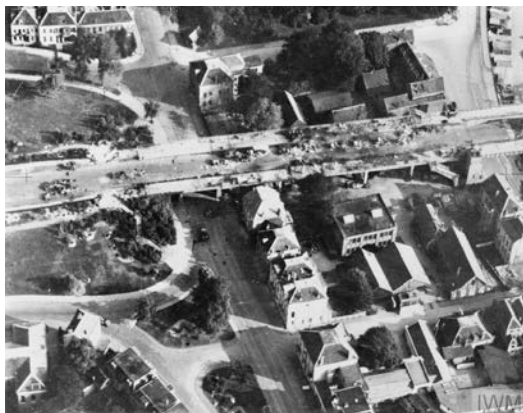
At the bridge Germans had been trying to fix demolition charges to the eastern side of the northern ramp supports, just in case the XXX Corps column arrived, several of their attempts were defeated by Lt. Grayburn, who was awarded a posthumous VC for outstanding leadership, however the Germans, by using close tank support, eventually managed to get the detonators connected to the explosives.

Frost was wounded by mortar fire at 1330, the situation was dire, radio contact was lost again, but the public telephone system enabled communications to be reconnected with 1 A/B in Oosterbeek. They knew that relief was close, XXX Corps was in Nijmegen trying to capture the bridge.

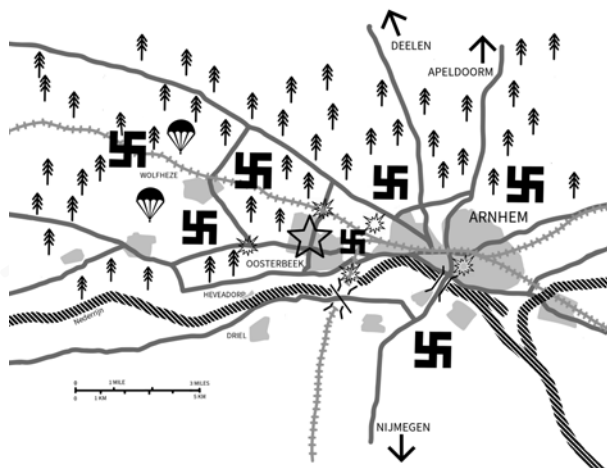
Agreements of short ceasefires were arranged so wounded on both sides could be recovered and later evacuated to hospitals, including Frost. Compassion was shown by the SS troops that was not expected by the British.

The buildings they were occupying were battered hulks, with many burnt out. Even so, they fought on, mounting small counter attacks where necessary. The Germans were getting very frustrated. The tanks, artillery, mortars, flame-throwers and grenades continued to batter the remaining positions throughout the day. Losses were high on both sides, 280 Assault Gun Brigade had lost 80% of their vehicles at the bridge. It would be a difficult night as the men were down to just 20 rounds per rifle, the 6 pounders and PIATs had ceased completely.

By evening the Germans sent a tank onto the bridge to push the wrecks aside allowing vehicles to drive unopposed across the bridge heading South towards Nijmegen. Even though a few men remained in place, **1 A/B had lost control of Arnhem Bridge.**



North ramp of Arnhem bridge



*1 A/B trapped in the area of Oosterbeek
down to the river D+3*

German Forces – North – D+3

Model had not only been “on the scene” when the landings took place, being in Oosterbeek on D-Day but, with his skilled commanders, very quickly organised a defence. Now, he reorganised the artillery at Arnhem, setting up ARKO 190 to coordinate the facilities and sending vehicles to collect more tubes. Model had also authorised the bypassing of army rules to speed up the supplies of replacement men and materials which could now be taken directly to the units needing them, rather than through distribution centres.

Non-essential civilians were ordered to leave Arnhem.

1 A/B troops were locked up in Oosterbeek and whilst a distraction, they were not going anywhere, even though they were still causing trouble, six German tanks had been lost today, two to anti-tank guns, two to mines, one was severely damaged and one had simply vanished. The German troops had taken 800 POW's today and been delivered 18 jeeps and 15 anti-tank guns, as well as lots of ammunition, motorbikes and mortars by glider. Parachuted supplies were being delivered to them every day at around 1600.

At Arnhem Bridge the surrounded Frost group, were all but out of ammunition and had almost been winkled out by Kampfgruppe Knaust. The Arnhem Bridge was now passable letting vehicles cross to the Island.

II SS Panzer Corps would continue to play a major part in the battle for the northern bridges. At Nijmegen, the large quantity of 10SS artillery on the Island had been crucial in defeating attacks. Continued reinforcement of the defence using the ferry had gone on day and night.

The hope was to use the Nijmegen bridge to assault the Americans and XXX Corps from the North. For that to happen the Arnhem bridge needed to be opened up to allow the heavy Royal Tiger tanks to cross the Island. This was achieved in the morning and everything was ready to combine the advance with further attacks from the East at Groesbeek, it was feasible that the Allies could be forced south of Grave Bridge.

To distract XXX Corps and 82 A/B in Nijmegen, major attacks were launched towards Groesbeek and Mook involving 3 Fallschirmjaeger Division troops, just arrived from Cologne, the now normal mix of experienced NCO veterans and 17 year olds, as well as 406 Division men who had made previous attempts here, supported with some artillery, a few 88mm guns, numerous 20mm AA guns on vehicles and mortars.

Initial successes pushed the outnumbered Americans out of Wyler with another prong getting into Groesbeek village and in a third attack the village of Mook was captured, however by 1600, little further progress was being made, as enemy tanks had been deployed to help the Americans.

82 A/B – D+3

U.S. 82 Airborne now had XXX Corps in their area, but had yet to capture a bridge over the river Waal (the main branch of the river Rhine). 600 wounded were in Nijmegen hospitals, a further 150 were missing or dead.

The plan made yesterday was to attack the Nijmegen bridges from the south with infantry, backed with tanks, whilst Paras paddled across the river to attack the north end of the bridges.

At 0830 in the west of Nijmegen, 504 PIR and the Irish Guards attacked towards the river, west of the rail bridge to make room for the river crossing, where the Irish tanks would provide direct fire and smoke on the northern bank.

The Germans did not seem to have any shortage of artillery ammunition and over 70 tubes to fire it. The rain and clouds would deprive the Allies of close air support to knock out or suppress the German artillery.

Grenadier Guards and 505 PIR infantry attacked between the two bridges, getting to the river then turning east into the narrow streets and German defences around the road bridge.

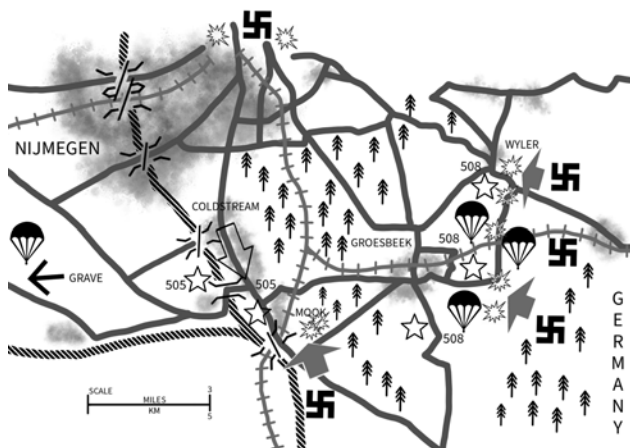
East of Groesbeek, the Germans had launched a major attack at 0630. Thousands of troops, including paratroopers, organised into four *Kampfgruppen* or battle groups,

supported by armoured cars and half-tracks mounting flak guns attacked in three directions with the intention of driving the Americans into Nijmegen. Against the outnumbered 508 PIR, the weakly held German village of Wyler and later Beek, were both lost. Groesbeek was infiltrated by German infantry with bitter fighting there.

Another attack was against 505 PIR in Mook and by 1500 the Germans had captured it, threatening the bridge at Heumen. General Gavin personally went to help 505 and called up reserves. Two of 505 PIR platoons surrounded at Riethorst south of Mook fought so well that the 505 PIR would be issued with its second Presidential Unit Citation with the bar "Nijmegen". A platoon of tanks and infantry from the Coldstream Guards was required to counter attack and stabilise the situation around Mook in the evening.

508 PIR managed to contain the attack around Beek and Wyler with help from a troop of Achilles tank destroyers, the British 17-pdr version of the U.S. M-10. During the fighting, 508 PIR took 483 prisoners but lost 179 killed, 479 wounded and 178 were missing. The Germans had missed an opportunity with the Groesbeek attacks, if they had bypassed the American strongpoints around Beek, Gavin believed they could have walked into Nijmegen.

Many of the supplies dropped that afternoon on the DZ north of Grave missed the target, landing in the Maas river.



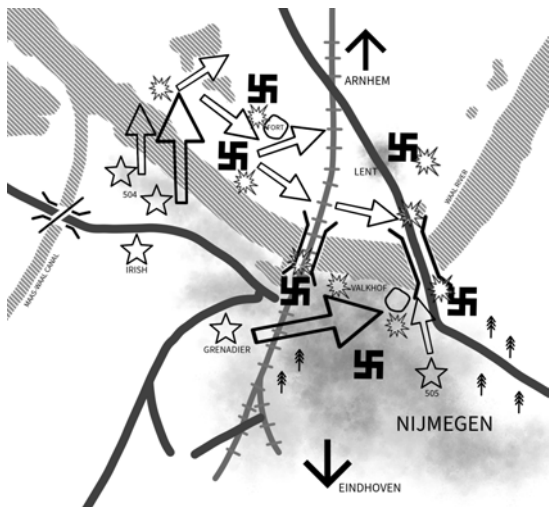
Fighting around Wyler, Groesbeek and Mook D+3

Meanwhile 3 Battalion 504 PIR had been waiting for the boats, expected after lunch. The lorries were delayed, losing one lorry with six boats that had taken a wrong turning in Eindhoven and been shot up by Germans, 26 canvas boats eventually arrived just before a few RAF Typhoon fighter bombers attacked and the 100 gun artillery barrage started.

It was a rush, the boats had to be assembled and carried to the water edge by 1500, watched by Browning and Horrocks in the nearby power station, smoke from Sexton 25 pounders and the tanks of the Irish Guards helped, but the men were very exposed as they paddled across, boats were lost to machine gun, 20mm anti-aircraft and mortar fire but most made it to the north shore.

The Americans who got ashore still had to move over 400m of flood plain, they were not in a mood to take prisoners and those Germans who fled, mainly a mixture of pensioners and 15 year old Hitler Youth, were the sensible ones. The Americans spread out, driving away German infantry and artillerymen, capturing an old moated fort where they had been firing a 20mm AA gun at the boats. Killing several hundred Germans on the rail bridge, they took the north end of that bridge where they hoisted a U.S. flag. Others worked along the rail line towards Lent, north of the road bridge. Engineers had paddled the eleven remaining boats back to collect more men. Five times they made the journey, then using a few local fishing boats, a second company were landed on the north shore.

Meanwhile, the Grenadier Guards and 505 PIR pushed slowly into the German defences around the road bridge. Then, mistaking a report of the US flag flying on the north end of the rail bridge as being on the road bridge, an order was given for a squad of tanks to try to cross the road bridge. It would soon be dark. At 1900, four Grenadier Guards tanks drove through the rubble, past the burning houses and over the bridge, firing everything as they went, German engineers started to fall out of the bridge ironwork as they were shot, anti-tank guns on the north side opened fire. Expecting the bridge to be blown, the tanks charged the anti-tank guns, two running them over, the other two tanks succumbed to damage and stopped on the bridge.



82 A/B river crossing and capture of the rail bridge with the Grenadier Guards crossing of the road bridge

3 Battalion 504 PIR casualties undertaking the crossing were 89 killed and 151 wounded. **It was one of the bravest unit actions of the war.** A message using the Phantom communications link informed GHQ and 1 A/B of the capture of the Nijmegen road Bridge.

Back at Groesbeek, the Americans had counter attacked, and forced the Germans to retreat, however it was not until 2000 that everyone was back in their original positions. Some firing continued all night. 325 Glider Infantry Regiment had not managed to take off from England, again, so avoided landing in the middle of the Groesbeek battle.

XXX Corps – North – D+3

To capture Nijmegen, the Irish Guards with 504 PIR were given the objective of clearing the power station to the west of the city, to open the area from which the river crossing could be launched. This task was completed by 1200 then from 1500 the Irish Guards tanks provided fire cover for the river crossing, the tank machine gun barrels overheating to the extent that the gunners could not stop them firing.

The Grenadier Guards Infantry with 505 PIR were given the morning task of capturing the old city. Having condensed the Germans into a 1,000m by 300m area along the riverbank they decided to attack from an unexpected direction, aiming for the river bank between the two bridges then turned east towards the road bridge. Many houses were burning, the Germans using flame throwers to set them alight, the Allies using phosphorous grenades. Slow success was achieved as the troops, supported by anti-tank guns, fought from house to house, aiming for the Valkhof tower.

When four Grenadier Guards tanks were ordered to cross the road bridge they did not hesitate, charging over the bridge, firing as they went, running over several anti-tank guns, avoiding concrete road blocks, two tanks made it to the other side, where they found themselves alone.

These two tanks carried on until they reached the railway viaduct where the lead tank, commanded by Sgt Robinson

met the 504 PIR men who had paddled across the river. Shortly afterwards they were joined by Captain Lord Carrington's Sherman tank whilst a British engineer officer with his Sappers went onto the bridge to cut wires and remove the extensive shaped explosive charges meticulously placed, painted green to match the girders and made ready to fire. 80 German engineers on the bridge surrendered to the British engineers.

The Nijmegen Road Bridge had been captured intact.



Damaged Nijmegen and the road bridge

The fighting continued in the city until 2200, the Guards infantry then needing a rest and their tanks needing to rearm and refuel before advancing again.

German Forces – Nijmegen – D+3

Around Groesbeek and Mook, the attacks had come close to success, with gains made. The men were ordered to dig in where they were, as another attack would be organised tomorrow to support a tank attack over Nijmegen Bridge into the city.

Nijmegen Bridge was defended on both sides of the river, mainly by 10SS men, with outposts south of the roundabouts near the road bridge and clear lines of fire along approach roads.

Combined arms assaults started to be made by the British tanks and both British and US infantry, they pushed in the forward outposts. An assault was also made against troops west of the railway bridge. The combined arms assaults backed by artillery continued, reaching the river between the two bridges, splitting the two German battlegroups and destroying the guns around Hunnerpark, then disaster struck.

The river was crossed in the west by 82 A/B in small boats, only a few anti-aircraft guns could depress their barrels low enough to shoot into the river and artillery support was lost due to effective counter battery fire and a failure of radio communications, with the radio in Nijmegen hit by machine gun fire. The positions on the north shore manned by 15 year olds and old men were overrun, some fled, many died.

Despite fierce house to house fighting in the city, the British and Americans could not be stopped. The railway bridge guarded by the Henke 10SS battle group of over 500 was surrounded, 300 died, the rest surrendering overnight.

With the antitank guns knocked out in Nijmegen, British tanks rushed the road bridge, the anti-tank guns on the north side could not stop them all, and the demolition charges were not triggered on either the railway or road bridges.



The Allies were now on the Island.

There were no reserves on the island available for an immediate counterattack.

A German casualty on Nijmegen Bridge

Sixty 10SS men left inside Nijmegen crept away in the dark, crossed the river on boats and joined their forces near Elst including the German commander SS Captain Euling who was later awarded the Knight's Cross for his work.

XXX Corps – South – D+3

XXX Corps was now strung out all the way from Belgium to Nijmegen.

The Grenadier and Irish Guards were already very busy in Nijmegen., defending and counter attacking.



Cromwell tanks of Guards Armoured move on to Nijmegen

Bridging equipment including pontoons had been moving up to Nijmegen past the Welsh Guards who were resting at Grave throughout the day.

43 Wessex, an infantry Division, would be needed to fight on the Island so they, along with 8 Armoured Brigade and the Royal Netherlands Brigade Group attached, were ordered forward, there were over 5,000 vehicles, each

carrying fuel for 250 miles and 4 days rations. The lead vehicle started at 0900 from Belgium, delayed by a minor attack on Zon, moving when the road was open, as there were intermittent artillery attacks near Sint Oedenrode, the leading unit of 130 Infantry Brigade arrived south of Grave after 100 miles (160km) of driving, where it halted for the night. The tanks of the Sherwood Rangers, part of 8 Armoured Brigade, joined the airborne at Groesbeek after a 78 mile (125km) drive. The rest of the column stretched all the way back to Belgium.

Radio protocol regarding security was noted as being poor, XXX Corps units using plain language over the air with map references and units being named.

B Squadron the Household Cavalry armoured cars roamed around looking for intelligence on the enemy. They explored west of Grave getting to the town of Oss where they discovered warehouses full of German food supplies.

Armour east of Eindhoven working with 506 PIR found German Panther tanks supported by infantry trying to infiltrate into the city at dawn. Typhoons and P-47 rocket firing fighter bombers destroyed several German tanks before turning their attention on the British tanks, causing orange smoke, indicating friendly vehicles, to be released before any damage was caused.

101 A/B – D+3

U.S. 101 Airborne were guarding what they had renamed as “Hell’s Highway” from Eindhoven to Veghel.

In the mist just after dawn 107 Pz Bde attacked Zon yet again, on the south side of the canal, German infantry managed to get to a point just short of the Eindhoven road. 506 PIR HQ asked for tank support. An hour later along the canal bank leading to the Bailey Bridge, came Panther tanks, halting traffic on the corridor.

Cromwell tanks from 15 Hussars appeared, responding rather late to a request made yesterday for assistance.

Without sufficient German infantry and after losing four tanks, some to fighter bombers, the Germans realised they would not get to the bridge, so withdrew. The aircraft then mistakenly attacked the Allied tanks, causing orange smoke to be released to try to stop the friendly fire. The Germans had come within 400 yards of 101 A/B’s prisoner of war cage containing some 2,000 captured German soldiers.

18 tanks of 44 RTR with Easy Company 506 PIR on board, followed up the retreating Germans, advanced east towards Nuenen, running into 50 German armoured vehicles, a fierce fight against 107 Pz Bde resulted in the Allies losing two tanks before they pulled back towards Eindhoven.

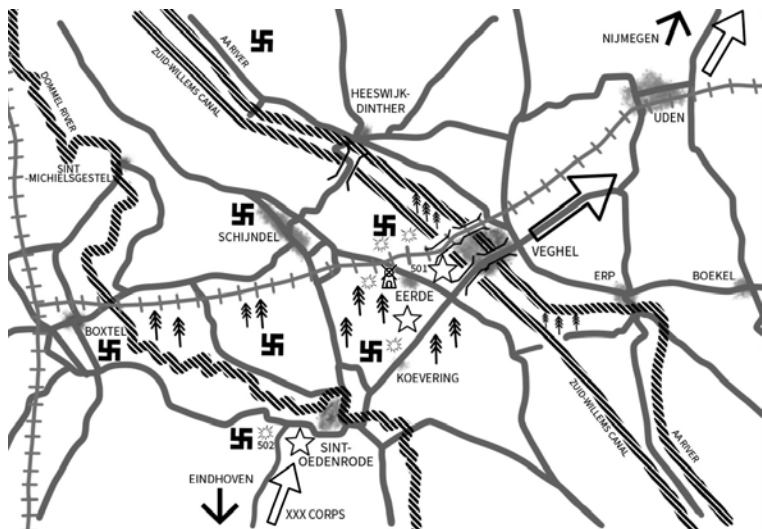
American and British medics shelter with wounded in a ditch, while a vehicle hit by artillery burns on the corridor, south of Zon



Furious at the intelligence failure to identify the 107 Pz Bde attack, Taylor moved his 101 A/B HQ from Zon to the moated Kasteel Henkenshage, Sint Oedenrode, where he found himself still under attack, by another group of German tanks. 501 PIR and a troop of 44 RTR came to his rescue. Fighting was also taking place near Koevering, between Sint Oedenrode and Veghel with several British tanks knocked out by German Panzerfausts.

Veghel now also came under attack, with infantry supported by 88mm guns, but 3 Battalion 501 PIR supported by tanks from 44 RTR managed to push the Germans west, away from the edge of Eerde.

The German attacks were getting stronger and 101 A/B was finding it had to rush men from one point to another, “wet-henning” was the description used by Montgomery.



101 A/B repels attacks on XXX Corps route D+3

Over 500 men who had failed to arrive in earlier gliders and planes were flown to Brussels airport. They and their equipment joining the 101 A/B sea-tail attached to XXX Corps arriving, even though days later than expected. 101 A/B had used a total of 933 gliders, of which 750 had landed within 1 mile of the designated landing zone.

501 PIR received intelligence from Dutch Resistance that Germans were planning a large attack from Schijndel, north of Eerde to cut the “Hell’s Highway” again. A plan was made for a spoiling attack at dawn.

German Forces – Centre – D+3

Student believed that Veghel was the most sensitive part of the Allies supply route, so would concentrate there. The shortage of supplies however would likely restrict German actions.

An attack launched at lunchtime against Sint Oedenrode with infantry and 20mm flak guns was defeated by 502 PIR supported by a mechanically damaged Sherman tank.

At 1600 59 Infantry Division west of Sint Oedenrode attacked both Sint Oedenrode and Veghel from Schijndel, the second was a repeat of the paratroopers' attack that had almost succeeded yesterday, before they had been ordered to withdraw.

The Germans had held ground near Eerde overnight and used this as a starting point, however the American 3 Battalion 501 PIR were now supported by British tanks. Whilst the battle was fierce and the fighting managed to interrupt the road temporarily, the Germans were not strong enough to hold their position so fell back, leaving the Americans in full control of the village of Eerde.

German Forces – South – D+3

In the southern zone, the cloudy weather and rain helped German movements in cutting of the road, thus depriving the Allied lead units of supplies, but 59 Division to the west was still desperate for fuel and ammunition and were not in a position to attack, having been defeated near Best.

On the Eastern flank, 107 Pz Bde were not unduly concerned about moving in daylight, with 250 anti-aircraft guns on their vehicles, every infantry half-track having a triple 15mm AA gun, a fact the allied fighter bombers respected.

Ordered to attack Zon again, just after dawn, led by infantry they successfully advanced towards the Eindhoven road. Halted by the Americans 107 Pz Bde approached the replacement Zon bridge with more tanks than yesterday and Luftwaffe support. Using the canal bank again, they got in sight of the bridge and dominated it until ten British Cromwell tanks arrived from the north with US infantry on board, crossed the Bailey bridge and attacked from the West.

Losing four tanks and still restrained by the waterway and a narrow front, the commander, von Maltzahn, deemed it necessary to pull back, towards Nuenen. Further fighting ensued as additional British tanks from 44 RTR joined the fight, 107 Pz Bde lost another 3 tanks, 12 Sd.Kfz half-tracks

and 150 men however the Allied force had been thrown back into Eindhoven with severe losses.

The main XXX Corps “Club Route” road had been cut for just a few hours, and the threat of more attacks had seriously affected XXX Corps movements. Now however the threat was reversed, 107 Pz Bde, still at 90% strength, having opposed XXX, with VIII Corps coming from the south, risked being trapped. It was ordered to relocate north of the canal, where they could deploy properly to cut the XXX Corps route. They moved east over bridges at Helmond abandoning further attacks on Zon.

Part of 107 Pz Bde was used to slow down the advance of VIII Corps east of Eindhoven and to allow the escape. The Pioneer Battalion working with Fallschirmjager troops slowed 3 RTR supported by infantry from 3 Monmouth to a crawl, making them fight for 9 hours for 2km of road from Geldrop into Mierlo.

High numbers of German fighter aircraft were observed during the day, a sight not seen for years.

VIII and XII Corps – D+3

XII Corps on the left wing, fighting against very strong opposition, now evacuated 15 Division from the Tenaard bridgehead. The bloody encounter inflicted losses on and kept experienced German forces occupied for a week that could have been used against XXX Corps.

The other XII Corps crossing near Mol was making better progress. Other troops, routing via Eindhoven to attack westwards, taking Bergeyk west of Valkenswaard and Wintelre west of Eindhoven airport, fighting a dozen messy actions across land varying between moorland, marsh and woods, always against Fallschirmjager 6, supported by SS battalions, artillery and Panzer IV tanks.

VIII Corps, 3 Division and 11 Armoured Division were moving across the completed bridge over the Meuse-Escaut Canal the main road went north to Valkenswaard. The Inns of Court Regiment, in armoured cars, explored east and reached Someren to find it occupied, many small bridges were too weak to take tanks, some collapsed.

Heavy units moved via Valkenswaard then north east to Geldrop where VIII Corps now threatened 107 Pz Bde, who decide to retire east over a bridge at Helmond to avoid being trapped by the canals.

1 Suffolk, further east, undertook another crossing of the Meuse-Escaut Canal then moved on Hamont on the Belgian-Dutch border where they discover several million German rations. 3 Monmouth and 3 Royal Tank Regiment (3 RTR) moved through Hamont, took Budel then turning north to reach Soerendonk.

50 Infantry Division around Valkenswaard becomes part of VIII Corps, as VIII Corps is made responsible for the first section of the corridor.

XII and VIII Corps were at last advancing however XXX Corps had no flank defence north of Eindhoven.



This original Class 40 bridge built by XII Corps is still in use, north of Mol on the N136.. It now has a 3.5 ton weight restriction.

Allied Air Forces – D+3

Virtually all aircraft are grounded due to bad weather somewhere, so little reconnaissance, almost no fighter bomber support, few re-supply missions and minimal reinforcements on D+3.

A XXX Corps Household Cavalry unit found an airfield 2 miles (3km) west of Grave, near Keent.

US glider pilots, unlike their British counterparts, were not trained to fight and were supposed to return to their base in England. Once XXX Corps arrived, many hitched rides back to Brussels, some, who had Class A uniforms under their overalls, went on to Paris, with one even getting to the South of France.

One problem experienced by XXX Corps in particular was the lack of aerial support in their advance. One of the rules of combat established by the Air Force commander was that there would be no fighter bomber aircraft allowed anywhere near the battles if C-47 Dakotas or gliders were expected over the area, lasting from two hours before to two hours after, this was made worse when expected supply flights were delayed by fog in England, resulting in the fighter bombers being banned for most of the day with the problems continuing as supply flights were needed after their planned completion on D+2.

Chapter 6 - Thursday 21 September 1944 D+4

1 A/B

1 British Airborne now had under 100 men capable of fighting on the north of Arnhem bridge and had been surrounded for days. Having survived the night, they made one last radio broadcast “out of ammo, God Save the King” which was picked up only by the Germans.

Having held the bridge for twice as long as expected, the remaining 145 men surrendered or tried to make a break for it. Over 500 had reached the bridge, 81 had died, few were un-wounded. The German units fighting at the bridge had reported 50% casualties in the battle.

To the west, in Oosterbeek, the remnants of 1 A/B were inside the perimeter. There were now around 3,600 troops of which 1,200 were infantry, the rest gunners, engineers, signalers and glider pilots. They hoped to hold a bridgehead that XXX Corps could exploit once they had brought bridging equipment forward. They needed ammunition and medical supplies but were desperate for both food and water. 2,500 civilians were trapped with them.

The Germans now had sufficient forces available to attack all sides of the perimeter, a major attack was launched against one flank which was repulsed using the light

artillery of the Division. A second attack elsewhere was counter attacked by the KOSB using bayonets.

Major Robert Cain had been fighting tirelessly, using a PIAT to try to stop German armour overrunning his men, his last bomb exploded prematurely, injuring himself, unperturbed he moved on to operate a 6-pdr A/T gun, hitting more enemy armour. He was to become the only person at Arnhem to be awarded a VC that was not a posthumous award.

Another attack was on the hill on the north riverbank opposite Driel, overlooking where the ferry had operated. The Border Regt. could not withhold the heavy infantry and tank attack, which included old French tanks converted into flamethrowers.

Control of the riverfront was reduced to just 700m. Neither side appreciated at the time how important the high ground that had just been lost would be.

Parachutists were seen landing south of the river near Driel, late afternoon.

One success achieved during the morning was made using a No19 Set (radio) of the Artillery Net, they made contact with an Artillery unit at Nijmegen.

German Forces – North – D+4

Yesterday had opened with high hopes for the Germans. Arnhem bridge had been opened up in the morning, giving the ability to move heavy vehicles south to assist Nijmegen and the road in 101 A/B area was cut in several places. Then the loss of the Nijmegen bridges just as darkness fell, spelt the end of the hopes to attack southwards.

Reinforcements were still coming to the area, 45 factory-new Panzerkampfwagen Tiger Ausf. B (Tiger II, or Royal Tiger) tanks, which represented 15% of the total German 1944 annual production of Tiger II's, had been entrained near Dresden with their crews of Schwere Abteilung 506.

Deelen airfield was used to fly specialist units from central Germany into the battle on JU52 transport planes, including two flamethrower trained pioneer battalions.

The Luftwaffe had at last achieved temporary local air superiority with a hundred fighters awaiting the arrival of supply drop aircraft. 25 broke through the fighter escorts, resulting in 13 planes being shot down.

Exploiting the failure of the British tanks to advance onto the Island, new plans were made with Elst becoming the new blocking position. Everything that 10SS could get onto the Island overnight was thrown against the bridgehead at Lent, north of Nijmegen.

Feeding in everything they had available, sixteen Mk IV Panzers with every man, including the Pannerden ferry crew, supported by all the artillery available and using the low mist, attacked the reinforced British lodgement north of Nijmegen bridge. The attack was blocked as the German tanks could only operate on the raised road and were highly visible and therefore vulnerable. It was lucky the British were unaware that this was everything the Germans had, between Nijmegen and Arnhem.

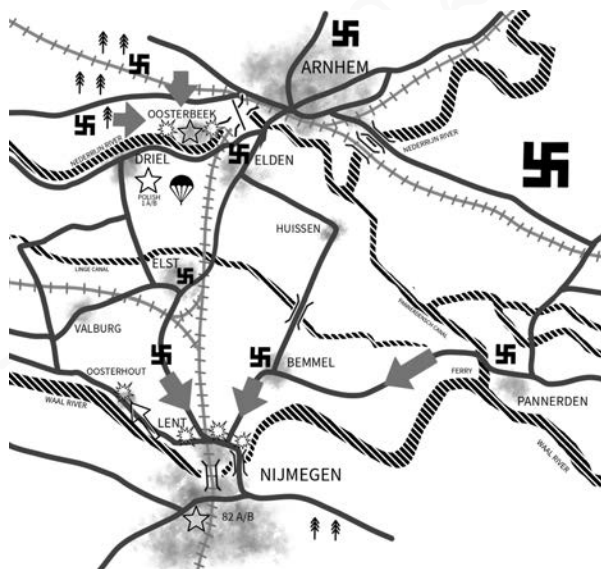
Realising German forces were not strong enough to recapture Nijmegen Bridge, orders were issued to re-positioned the panzer grenadiers, tanks and anti-tank guns on the low-lying land between Nijmegen and Arnhem, to block and destroy any movement on the road towards Arnhem.

Late afternoon, allied aircraft were reported heading for Arnhem, fighters were called up and anti-aircraft guns opened fire as planes delivered Polish paratroopers, 60% of the aircraft were hit.

The arrival of Polish 1 A/B came as a surprise and caused great concern that there would be major landings on the Island. German troops would need to block the Poles and force them westward. 2,461 troops were immediately deployed onto the Island from Arnhem reserves, a mixed bunch of five Battalions, Navy, Marine, Luftwaffe, Coastal

machine gun and Dutch SS. They were ordered to form a front using the raised railway line as their main defence to protect against an attack towards the road bridge from the west. Some artillery and a flak battalion went with them. Given the name “Sperrverband Harzer” they were told to link with the 10SS “Sperrverband Gerhard” in Elst.

The use of the air drop manual at Arnhem to divert supplies was still working well and a cheeky message sent by the Germans upwards using the panels, asked for an air drop of water resulted in water containers being delivered.



The Island D+4

Allied Air Forces – D+4

The Allies were still plagued with bad weather, only 50% of aircraft managed to find their drop or landing zones.

The most successful Luftwaffe attack of the battle saw 117 Stirling bombers who were dropping supplies attacked by FW190's. Fifteen Stirling's were shot down and a further 8 were downed by anti-aircraft fire before the American fighter escort, which had been delayed by fog, intervened. 15 of the 22 FW190's were shot down as they tried to get away however only 11 of the 271 tons of supplies were recovered by the British.

*Polish 1 A/B board USAAF
piloted Douglas C-47
transports at RAF Saltby*



In the afternoon, the German fighters also broke through the Polish airdrop fighter escort and got amongst the transport Dakotas, which resulted in a number being shot down as well as some being downed by anti-aircraft fire over the Island. 5 Dakotas being shot down in total.

119 fighter bomber missions managed to be flown in the 101 A/B area during the day.

1 Polish A/B – D+4

After waiting for days to fly into the battle, 1 Polish A/B parachutists took off in 114 C-47's and led in by Spitfires targeting flak positions, landed at 1715, not on their original Drop Zone south of the bridge, but further west, in and around Driel, south of Oosterbeek, 2 of the 3 Battalions were dropped with 1,033 men, most of whom landed close to the DZ. The lead plane carrying 1 Battalion misinterpreted a message as the code to return to base and 41 C-47's turned away. 5 transports crashed after the drop.

Guards units on the south of the Island had a grandstand view of the Germans opening fire with flak guns just in front of them. Some sticks of parachutists landing close to the Germans in Elst. Despite this, casualties amongst the paratroopers were light, 5 killed, 25 wounded.

They had flown on the understanding that at 0700 that morning that the pedestrian ferry at Heveadorp was operational and in British hands as they intended to cross to Oosterbeek, this was necessary as they would be dropping with no anti-tank guns, no artillery and no vehicles in an isolated area, they now discovered the chain ferry missing.

The Polish could not make radio contact with 1 A/B however the Polish liaison officer with 1 A/B swam the river to talk to the Polish commander Brigadier General Sosabowski. Reporting on the dire situation in the

Oosterbeek perimeter, it was decided to try to get men and supplies over the river that night by any means possible.

Those on the north bank tried to make rafts out of jeep trailers, but they sank. The use of telephone wire as a cable across the river proved too weak and kept breaking. The task was abandoned.



Brigadier General Sosabowski with General Browning

The Polish landing provoked the Germans into having to find yet more men to face the new threat, several thousand tired second rate troops from the Arnhem area were marched across the road bridge, to form up along the raised railway line east of Driel, to block an advance against the road bridge, this reduced the pressure on 1 A/B in Oosterbeek.

XXX Corps – D+4

XXX Corps was now across the road bridge at Nijmegen, which had acquired a new name for the British, “Grenadier Bridge”, fighting continued in the bridgehead of Lent and near the rail bridge which was still in German hands. 267 German bodies were recovered from the rail bridge.

Orders from Horrocks was to fight to Arnhem via Elst to Elden where the Polish 1 A/B were due to land and only if the road was blocked should an attempt be made to detour via Driel. This was the only concrete road on the Island.

There had been just five Guards tanks north of the bridge on the Island. Reinforced with British infantry. four 17-pdr A/T guns and more tanks, they first had to repel a major German assault by tanks and infantry covered by artillery. This was achieved, with the Germans losing a number of tanks.

Forward movement was planned for noon, aware the Germans had tanks and 88mm guns and had set up tank killing grounds on the flat open areas where British tanks would be confined to riding on the top of dykes like ducks in a shooting gallery. With the Irish Guards back in the lead again, moving past Oosterhout, the first four tanks were knocked out, blocking the road. The advancing infantry could not take out the German guns, the airborne artillery, in the form of Typhoon aircraft failed as the radio link with the bombers could not make contact, the aircraft were under

orders not to attack unless directed onto targets from the ground. The Welsh Guard tried and destroyed four German tanks before being stopped by nightfall. The direct route to Arnhem was currently shut to vehicles.

The British needed infantry. It would not be easy for infantry to move forward over the flat land, covered in apple trees, alongside the road which was why artillery was also needed, however most of the available shells had been used to assist the 82 A/B river crossing, the rest were used in defeating the mornings counter attack. Supplies had to be brought forward.

The only aircraft seen were German, including several brand new Me262 jet fighters.

Scout cars were sent over the bridge, instructed to head west and east to explore the Island, D squadron the Household Cavalry lost a number of White scout cars and a Daimler armoured car, it was impossible, that road was closed.

At 0935 a strange voice was heard on the radio net of the 64 Medium Artillery Regiment. It was asking for help and giving co-ordinates of targets outside the area of current firing and the radio operator did not know the current code words. A conversation in plain language asking personal information, including the names of wives eventually led 64th to believe they knew the caller and started to shoot their 4.5 inch guns on the coordinates given, from their location

south of Nijmegen. The targets were all around Oosterbeek. They had made contact with a 1 A/B artilleryman.

From now on, the 64 Medium artillery radio net would become the main communications route for XXX Corps to 1 A/B messages, as well as routing all artillery shoots necessary to provide assistance to the hard pressed Paras. That evening a battery of 155mm “Long Tom” howitzers were added to the regiment.

43 Division's 130 Brigade 4 Dorset took over the guard duties at Grave Bridge whilst 5 Dorset and 7 Royal Hampshire spent the morning scouring Nijmegen for Germans, none were found. Most locals were partying, a few were seen tidying the streets by disposing of German corpses in the river. 5 Dorset then crossed the road bridge to the small bridgehead on the Island.

214 Brigade, 43 Division, assembled west of Nijmegen after their overnight drive, with 7 Somerset crossing over to the Island, mainly using the railway bridge, late in the day.

B Squadron the Household Cavalry guarded Oss whilst RASC lorries loaded up rations in the morning, then, not wanting to turn the store into a battlefield, kept out of sight whilst Germans loaded up their rations in the afternoon.

82 A/B – D+4

U.S. 82nd Airborne was now providing a flank guarding operation. 504 PIR, reinforced with a squadron of newly arrived Sherwood Rangers Sherman tanks, who shared their ration packs with the hungry paras, tidied up around Mook and ejected the last Germans from yesterday's attacks from the area.

German attacks at Wijchen, just west of Nijmegen, were resisted.

Part of 504 PIR were in the new bridgehead north of Nijmegen when two German tanks and 100 infantry attacked from the west along Oosterhoutsedijk, Private John Towle using a bazooka, advanced alone, scored two hits causing the tanks to withdraw, then using one round to destroy a German squad in a house went after a half-track. Towle, mortally wounded, would receive the Medal of Honor.

The medical services with 82 A/B had not received any supplies by road, nor had they yet managed to evacuate wounded that needed additional hospital facilities, they had used up their 1,500 units of plasma and were now asking lightly wounded to become blood donors for the seriously wounded. Penicillin helped keep the field hospital death rate down to a very low 2.5%. Opening the airfield that had been

found at Keent would help with the evacuation of the wounded.

82 A/B's original task to capture nine bridges was over, with sufficient bridges now captured to allow XXX Corps to continue the advance.

*Princess Irene Brigade
defending Grave Bridge using
captured German AA gun*



The original intelligence belief that German tanks were in the forests east of Nijmegen had been proved to be a false interpretation of the information then available, it had contributed to the time and effort spent securing the landing zone and had caused delays in capturing the main Nijmegen river bridges.

82 A/B had no orders from Gavin or Browning to advance, so would not support a tank advance on the Island and despite knowing that the Guards infantry was still busy helping them in Nijmegen were still concerned that XXX Corps was not advancing to Arnhem quickly enough after their brave and costly effort to cross the river yesterday.

1 Airborne Corps – D+4

‘Boy’ Browning, commander of 1 Airborne Corps had achieved very little since landing on D-Day with 82 A/B. Browning was now employing 70 glider pilots as security in his new HQ, located in three nice villas on Sophiaweg on the outskirts of Nijmegen. Feeling frustrated, he wrote a private letter in which he said ‘My staff are almost more inefficient than I could possibly imagine now we are in the field’.

1 Airborne Corps had only made one request for air support so far, that was on D+2 but it had not been answered or acted upon.

Still suffering poor communications with his troops in Arnhem, where it was later discovered that the high iron element in the sand and buildings of Arnhem were causing interference. Browning was unable to influence what reinforcements and supplies were sent to whom and when, as this was a decision of 1AAA.

Asked on D+1 by 1AAA if he would like a Brigade from 52nd (Lowland) Division to be brought in by glider and landed as close as possible to 1 A/B, possibly on the Island, Browning, after consideration, had turned the offer down as Polish 1 A/B and 82 A/B glider infantry had not then been delivered and he thought 1 A/B was doing well. 52 Division had been scheduled to be landed at Deelen today.

101 A/B – D+4

502 PIR in Sint Oedenrode was planning an early move against the Germans towards Schijndel and despite friendly artillery fire falling short, at 0630 an attack was made against a monastery on the road north which was captured just before a German bombardment inflicted a hit against the 502 Regimental Command post wounding most of the staff. Fighting continued all day, with two British tanks helping against German 88mm and self-propelled guns. That evening 502 PIR was ordered to retire back to Sint Oedenrode, leaving the monastery to the Germans.

Having watched 43 Wessex drive past them yesterday, 101 A/B now watched a priority convoy of 483 lorries drive north, it was in fact so urgent that the HQ vehicles of the units in the column had to wait until they had passed before they could move on the road.

What was this “priority” unit? It was a bridging column, with enough equipment to cross the river at Arnhem. It had been ordered forward as it seemed increasingly unlikely that the Arnhem Bridge would be captured and that it would therefore be necessary to bridge the river, initially with a Class 9 and then a Class 40 bridge on pontoons. The units were 260th and 553rd Field Companies RE and 20th and 23rd Field Companies of Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE).

It did not mean that the road was free from attack, Sapper Samuel E Cole, an engineer, was stopped by mortar fire.

Getting out he asked an American under a nearby bush “How’s it going Mac” The soldier replied “It’s like dis, we got da road, but they got da verges”

The engineering column drove the whole length of the corridor and that night parked south of Nijmegen, ready to move forward.

Food was not a priority, 101 A/B had almost run out of rations and were now being supplied from the stores discovered in Oss which the Americans considered to be worse than British rations.

84 gliders brought in the last 400 men of 101 A/B.



1 A/B Seaborne tail and carrier of 4 Wiltshire, 43 Wessex A/T platoon wait for permission to advance along corridor on 21 September

German Forces – South – D+4

German attacks further south on the corridor during the day were very low key.

In the East, 107 Pz Bde had given up attacking Zon Bridge and been fighting a rear guard action against VIII Corps whilst trying to get over the only canal bridge still standing, to relocate north and avoid being trapped.

The rearguard of 107 Pz Bde held up the British advance for a second day in Mierlo, giving up just 1km in 8 hours, before the Pioneers fell back to the Nuenen area. 107 Pz Bde planned to meet up with Kampfgruppe Walther for a major attack westward tomorrow.

In the West at Best the defenders now found they faced 15 Scottish Division, rather than US paratroopers.

59 Infantry Division had been moving slowly north on the western side, trying to obtain additional men, equipment and more importantly, ammunition. It was planned that they would assault eastward tomorrow. They had occupied a monastery just north of Sint Oedenrode on the road to Schijndel but were attacked by American paratroopers, the fighting lasted all day with the Americans eventually forced to retreat back to Sint Oedenrode, the monastery being re-occupied, a good location to base attacks against the corridor tomorrow.

VIII and XII Corps – D+4

On the left, XII Corps had 15 Scottish Division move through Eindhoven before turning left and reaching the canal below the village of Best, ready to cross on the remnants of the collapsed bridges. 51 Division went the same route aiming for Oirschot, west of Best, which they crossed during the night.

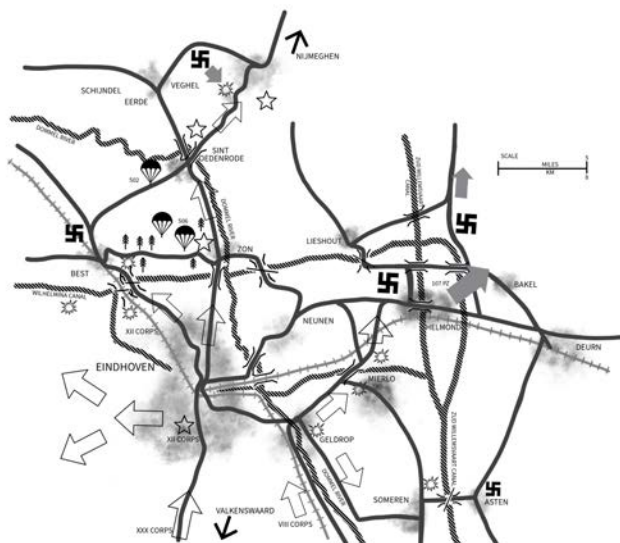
Also south of the Wilhelmina Canal, XII Corps 53 Welsh Division was clearing each village in turn with 7 Armoured Division helping. Middelbeers took two days of house to house fighting. One strange incident took place at Middelbeers where in a house defended by Germans, a woman was having a difficult birth. An SS soldier asked for a temporary truce and a doctor from 51 Highland Division to help the woman. After the child was born, the fighting continued.

Units of VIII Corps advancing northwards to the East of Eindhoven passed Geldrop where some riflemen had time to use the local barber's services. Two companies of 3 Monmouth entered Mierlo. 107 Pz Bde, which had been slowing VIII Corps down, withdrew east, VIII Corps tried, but failed to stop them leaving the area through Helmond.

Infantry units moved east towards Weert and the Wilhelmina Canal, where all the bridges were destroyed as they approached, they did however manage to liberate a

stock of two million eggs on route. A small bridgehead was made over the canal, so engineers could start bridge construction, the intention being to undertake an encircling attack on the German forces operating from Helmond that attacked convoys north of Eindhoven.

Miles Dempsey, commander of British Second Army visited VIII Corps HQ near Helmond to discuss progress and plans for the three divisions in the Corps.



XII Corps, XXX Corps and VIII Corps on D+4

Chapter 7 - Friday 22 September 1944 D+5

1 A/B

1st British Airborne was completely boxed in around Oosterbeek, controlling just 700m of riverbank, their defensive posts were subject to infiltration.

The Germans sought to destroy the paratroopers, Nijmegen Bridge had been lost and there was a risk of a link up.

The Polish paratroopers landing on the Island caused the Germans to divert some newly arrived tanks and over 2,000 infantry away from the 1 A/B encirclement and provided hope of relief.

The shelling and mortaring of 1 A/B continued all day, but tactics changed to those used at Arnhem Bridge. The Germans began to pick on one fortified area of the defence and hammered it to pieces before moving on to another area and repeating the process. This reduced the German vulnerability to the British anti-tank guns.

Urquhart received a message giving him permission to withdraw or even cross the river on the passenger ferry. The Phantom radio net was used to report the ferry sunk.

64 Medium Regiment Artillery had been shelling the Germans in the Oosterbeek area for a day now, the range of the 4.5 inch guns for the 55lb (25kg) shell was 11.6 miles

(18.7km), and the range was 11 miles (17.7km), they were being asked to hit targets a few hundred yards away from 1 A/B. Urquhart was extremely impressed with their skill.

One massive relief for the Paras was hearing these shells coming from the south over their heads and hitting the German positions. XXX Corps artillery ammunition was arriving at the front when the road allowed it, with a battery of 5.5 inch, which had a similar range but fired heavier shells weighting 82 or 100lbs (37 or 45kg), also now operating.

Directed by observers in Oosterbeek the coordinates were sent by radio through the 64 Medium radio net. German forces could now be disorganised whilst they assembled for attacks. 31 different fire missions were actioned today.

A number of civilians, including children were trapped in the perimeter, living in cellars, hungry, thirsty and scared.

1 A/B had now suffered 2,000 casualties and medical staff were swamped.

A small number of fighter bomber missions were flown to help 1 A/B during the day.

1 Polish A/B – D+5

The Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade had spent the night in Driel after clearing the few Germans out. They were unable to cross the river to reinforce 1 A/B, although two officers paddled over in a dingy to make contact. They had established a perimeter around the Driel, facing in all directions.

Their commander Sosabowski borrowed a lady's bike to move between his units. He was on the west of town at around 0830 when armoured vehicles were seen approaching.

A troop of the Household Cavalry, who had spotted three German Mk III's and driven past Panzer IV's before they could react, had made the link up, losing one vehicle to a Polish mine at Driel.

Welcoming the Daimler Armoured cars and White scout cars into the perimeter the vehicle radios were quickly used to enable 1 Polish A/B to talk to 43 Wessex and XXX Corps HQ's and to pass on a situation report.

Around 1200, a German attack by SS troops of Kampfgruppe Brinkmann was made on Driel from the east, reports of tanks and half-tracks with infantry arrived. Sosabowski took one of the armoured cars with him to the danger zone where the Paras only had PIAT anti-tank

weapons to defend themselves. It opened fire with its 2 pounder gun and machine guns. The Germans, believing that the 1 Polish A/B had been reinforced with armour, pulled back after losing a few vehicles. A second attack was also halted. 1 Polish A/B using a PIAT as a mortar, at maximum range, then halted a third. The German halftracks were not suitable for the marshy terrain and deep ditches.

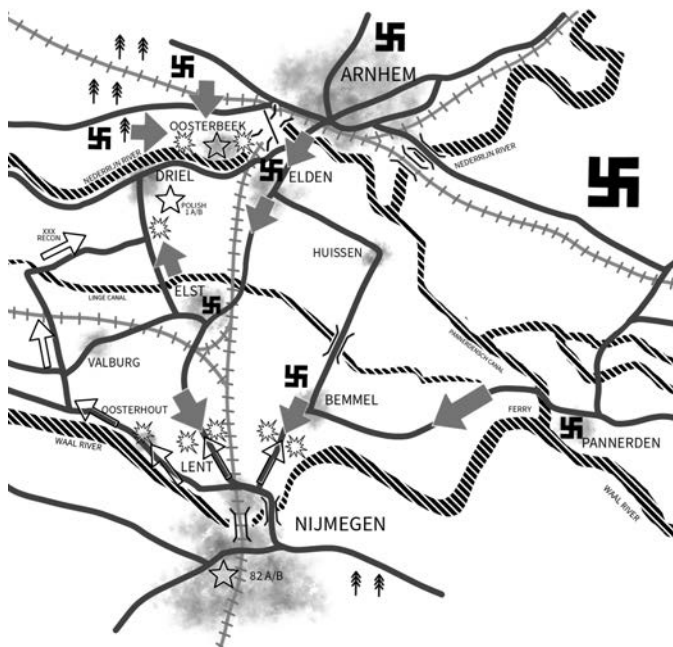
Senior 1 A/B officers who had paddled across from Oosterbeek borrowed the radio link in an armoured car to talk to XXX Corps and “in clear” explained the dire predicament in Oosterbeek to the British. The Germans, who had captured another armoured car and parked it in Elst, were using the radio to listen in, so were also told the problems.

At dusk a small 43 Wessex supply column arrived, taking 30 minutes to drive the 10 miles escorted by two Sherman tanks which ran onto mines laid by the Poles.

Plans were made to cross the river that night, it being impossible to show yourself on the high dyke during daylight if you wished to avoid the mortars and machine guns of the Germans who were now occupying the commanding positions on the heights opposite.

The attempt at Driel to cross the river with two DUKW's, each loaded with 2.2 tons of supplies and six two man rubber boats failed, the DUKW's became bogged down in

the mud on the South bank and only fifty two 1 Polish A/B managed to cross. There were 34 Polish casualties with both the Germans and 1 A/B firing at the boats.



The Island D+5

XXX Corps – North – D+5

43 Wessex Division took over the task of trying to get to Arnhem. At Nijmegen Bridge, a troop of C Squadron the Household Cavalry tried again at dawn to sneak past the Germans, they were aided by a thick mist and by driving slowly and quietly they managed to pass through the German lines without anyone firing at them. On being told of their success, a second troop tried the same procedure, unfortunately the mist lifted and they found themselves surrounded, the lead vehicle was destroyed and the rest fled back to the 43 Wessex lines. The first troop moved north across the Island to find the Poles where they managed to use their radios to good effect by providing a relay for the artillery shoots around Oosterbeek.

Two Brigades of 43 Wessex, 129 and 214 spent the day fighting to break out into the Island, most of 129 Brigade however was still on the road from Eindhoven and 4 Wiltshire encountered great difficulty on the direct road/rail line to Elst, even when joined by 5 Wiltshire.

Using up most of the available artillery ammunition 214 Brigade created a break through, Oosterhout was captured by 7 Somerset with 4/7 Dragoon Guards support and 5 DCLI following through. Late evening a few tanks, with 1 Worcestershire infantry and 10 DUKW's escaping west heading towards 1 Polish A/B, with a Sherman

unfortunately destroying a C Squadron Household Cavalry troop command scout car and the radio link, on route.



5 Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry, 43 Wessex

That night on the Island five German tanks had moved west from Elst, severing the route to Driel, a brief battle with Bren carriers on their way to Driel took place. Expecting the tanks to return to German lines, a trap was laid for the returning tanks, placing mines by the road and men with Piat A/T weapons, they waited. Six Piat bombs hit the first tank, the same number hit the second, the third reversed over a string of mines that had been pulled across the road, the remaining two toppled into ditches. Each tank was then given a grenade into its turret.

The Royal Netherlands Brigade had arrived with 43 Wessex and were ordered to guard Grave Bridge, which had been destroyed in 1940 by the Dutch and subsequently rebuilt by the German occupiers.

Repairs to the damaged main road bridge No 10 from Grave to Nijmegen over the Maas-Waal Canal, were completed, after 3 days of welding, to Class 70 standard by Royal Engineers giving an alternate route into Nijmegen and removing the threat of losing Heumen Bridge.

Major problems were reported to the south, 69 Brigade of 50 Division on the corridor south of Uden had been split by a German attack, concern was so great that it resulted at 1430 with orders to the tanks and infantry of the Grenadier Guards to reverse direction, back through Uden to Veghel, with the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers added to provide machine gun support.

The Coldstream Guards battle group were taken from 82 A/B command and sent to follow the Grenadiers, their aim was Volkel, south east of Uden.

German Forces – West – D+5

General Kurt Student was commanding the German First Parachute Army on the West flank. He created “Kampfgruppe Huber”, with three Battalions from 59 Division, a battalion of 105mm howitzers, seven anti-tank guns and four Jagdpanther. In support were paratroop infantry battalions, their target being to cut the Allies road and blow up the road bridge over the canal west of Veghel.

Facing Student in the East was General von Obstfelder, newly appointed with a new eastern flank HQ. He commanded troops from 107 Pz Bde, 9SS and 10SS Panzer Divisions, a large amount of artillery, and an independent tank group all organised into Kampfgruppe Walther.

Ordered to capture Veghel, from Erp and meet up with the western group, the eastern force of 30 tanks, and 200 vehicles were ready to cut the corridor. The weather was favourable, being hazy early morning. The two groups were not in radio contact, so trusted each other to obey orders.

By 0500 the Walther group were ready at their assembly points, undetected. The Huber group was missing part of their force, young paras, who were marching 63km in 48 hours with all their equipment, would arrive late and exhausted. There had also been a fight around Schijndel. Huber's start time was 0900. The two groups would try to make today a black day for XXX Corps.

101 A/B – D+5

U.S. 101st Airborne's 501 PIR at Veghel, was involved in a pre-emptive strike, during the night, they had moved two of their three battalions north west before crossing the Zuid Willems Canal and successfully attacked German Paras of the Fallschirm Regiment of Von der Heydte at Schijndel using newly arrived glider borne 105mm howitzers and a few XXX Corps Sherman tanks, inflicting 80 casualties and taking 418 prisoners.

Further south, 502 PIR organised themselves around Sint Oedenrode having pulled back from the monastery on the road to Schijndel.

Uden, north of Veghel was unoccupied. 506 PIR, because of progress made by VIII and XII Corps was at last able to move north from Zon. A company of 150 leading troops set off for Uden, safely arriving there at 1100, just in time to repel a German probing attack.

2 Battalion 501 PIR had stayed in Veghel alongside an anti-aircraft unit that was parked up to allow an urgent convoy to pass.

The attack by the rest of 501 on Schijndel had progressed well, until called off in the morning because of co-ordinated German activity from the east and west, by 1100 the eastern attack had cut the road from Veghel to Uden and the

Germans had turned south to attack 2 Battalion 501 PIR in Veghel. The civilians in Veghel began to panic.

Veghel was also under a second attack, from the West via Eerde, aiming for the bridges next to Veghel. 101 A/B commander, Taylor was on the spot and after seeing the crews of the 3.7 inch AA guns abandon their guns near the bridges, ordered the crews back and use their guns to engage the German tanks, which they did.

1 Battalion 501 PIR moved from Schijndel to Eerde, now under German control, where they fought all afternoon and by evening had captured the village, establishing a defence line along sand dunes south west of Eerde.

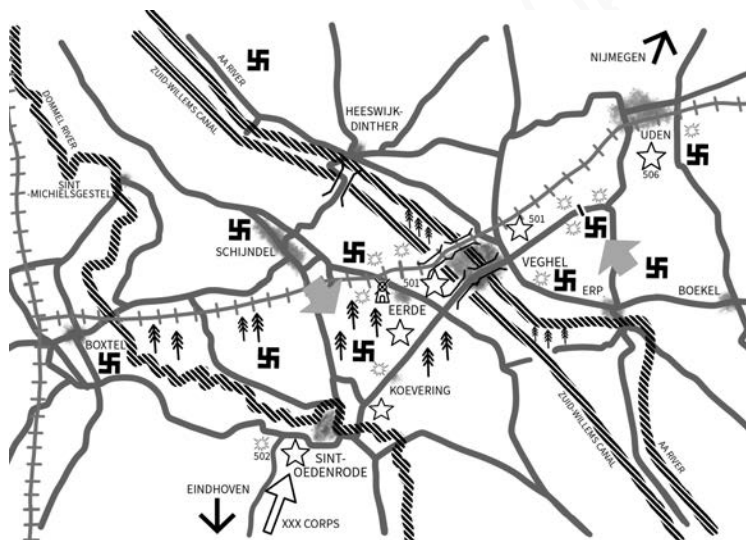
At 1430 3 Battalion 501 PIR abandoned Schijndel. Undertaking a fighting retreat and taking their 250 prisoners with them, guarded by the Dutch underground who were armed with German weapons, they moved into Veghel. Unluckily an artillery shell hit an 'O' Group (Officer Group meeting) killing or seriously wounding over 12 senior officers. 501 PIR set up a road block to the east on the Erp road, Erp now being in German hands.

Part of 50 Division had been caught, strung out on the road, additional truck borne 506 PIR men had been driving up the road with a squadron of British tanks when, seeing fighting around Koevering, they left a troop of tanks to fight the

western Germans, with 502 PIR, before 506 PIR and the remaining tanks pushed on to Veghel.

Part of 327 Glider Infantry Regt. was also moved north to oppose the attacks around Veghel arriving with A/T guns..

Blocking positions north and east of Veghel were in place and German attacks had been repelled with difficulty, but the Germans were still on the corridor north to Uden.



Germans cut route north of Veghel D+5

The start of the sea-tail of 101 A/B vehicles arrived, having landed on Omaha, 500 miles away, three days earlier.

German Forces – East – D+5

107 Pz Bde had relocated overnight. At 0900 107 Pz Bde supported by infantry advanced from the east. Erp, 4km (3 miles) east of Veghel, was quickly overrun. Panzers and Grenadiers from Kampfgruppe Walther then cut the road between Veghel and Uden, before turning south, making contact with 2 Battalion 501 PIR in Veghel. They were virtually unopposed and for the first time there was an armoured unit on the corridor.

The western group, Kampfgruppe Huber, comprising 3 battalions with Panther tanks and artillery swung towards Veghel, taking the village of Eerde, west of Veghel at 1100.

By 1400 they had opening fire on the bridge over the Zuid Willems Canal in Veghel and found themselves confronted by an AA unit deployed into an unusual anti-tank roll against them, with accurate rifle fire and a marshy area that limited attack routes. Student was present in this fighting and could see that they were within 1,000 metres of the bridge. Kampfgruppe Huber were not strong enough to take the bridge so Student changed the attack direction and went to cut the corridor south of Veghel.

Some troops managed to get onto the corridor, at the same time as a unit of 327 Glider Infantry Regiment, the Americans there were too strong for Kampfgruppe Huber.

Confusion reigned when 501 PIR returning from Schijndel bumped into the rear of Kampfgruppe Huber, fighting continued near the canal into the night, German soldiers fighting around an acid factory were seriously injured when acid escaped into ditches they were fighting from.

With Americans now taking back the villages north west of Veghel, units were encircled and under attack from all directions, Kampfgruppe Huber was almost eliminated.

Meanwhile the eastern group of Kampfgruppe Walther sent a probe towards Uden and made a major move towards Veghel, meeting desperate and quickly organised opposition. The advance into Veghel was halted by a battalion of 327 Glider Infantry Regiment when their A/T guns destroyed the first Panther, the rest then pulled back.

The Americans were then reinforced with British tanks and artillery and despite 107 Pz Bde running short of ammunition and three battalion commanders dead, the fighting continued through the night with part of the road between Veghel and Uden kept under fire.

The attacks had not achieved obvious lasting damage to the Allies on the ground, no bridges had been captured or destroyed. The battle would continue tomorrow.

XXX Corps – Centre – D+5

69 Brigade of 50 Division was cut in half by the German attack on the “Club Route” strung out in column of march rather than battle formation, they had to improvise to defend against the infiltration. A co-ordinated response was needed.

Allied command had failed to spot the massive build-up of German forces both sides of Veghel and so had not relocated armour and infantry in time to resist the attack, Most armour was around Nijmegen so it had to be brought back down the “Club Route”.

The Grenadier Guards were ordered south, down the road through Uden to Veghel, arriving after dark and having lost one tank to a Panzerfaust, the Grenadier Guards halted for the night in Uden. The Coldstream Guards moved most of their vehicles to the east of Uden preparing to turn south to attack Volkel.

44 RTR tanks, still in the south, and the other two Brigades, 151 and 231, of 50 Division were warned to move north from Eindhoven in the morning. Gen Horrocks later stated that Friday 22 September was his blackest day.

Control of 101 A/B changed from XXX Corps to Browning's 1 Airborne Corps.

VIII and XII Corps – D+5

XII Corps attacked Best with 15 Scottish Division. A Class 9 Bridge was completed by 0900 west of Best and later a Class 40 Bridge to the east, the Germans were now surrounded, the village had become a fortress. 53 Division with 7 Armoured were still clearing villages further south.

XII Corps should have been on a divergent line to that of XXX Corps heading north west, but needs must, so XII Corps moved parallel.

VIII Corps on the Eastern flank had been fighting all day, pushing the Germans north. The Suffolk Regiment walked into Weert, just over the Dutch border after it was evacuated by the Germans, having been previously bypassed.

The 11 Armoured 3 Monmouth with 3 RTR advanced from Mierlo to Helmond, finding the local Resistance had rounded up around 50 Germans, leaving the west side of the town free of the enemy. There was no means of crossing the canal to get to the Germans in the eastern suburbs.

Engineers were called forward to start building two Class 40 Bridges, one at Helmond and the other further north at Beek. It would be costly to build the bridges here against very strong opposition. 3 Monmouth and 3 RTR cleared the area north of Neunen and rested there overnight.

Further south, a brigade of 11 Armoured yesterday captured Someren and crossing the Zuid Willems Canal at lock gate 11, the Herefords had secured a bridgehead before Asten.

Overnight, using artificial moonlight made by shining searchlights onto the clouds, engineers build a Class 40 bridge over the top of the lock gate, starting at 2300, and even with a 90 minute pause during a German counterattack at 0330 where the engineers had to use their rifles, as the 250 yard bridgehead was compressed to within 30 yards of the bridge site, the bridge was complete by 0615, allowing 2 Fife and Forfar Sherman tanks to cross and attack Asten.

Losing the first three tanks to mines, the Fife's charged through fast with 4 King's Shropshire Light Infantry (4 KSLI) clearing the Germans out of Asten in a hard fight resulting in two Military Crosses being awarded for bravery.

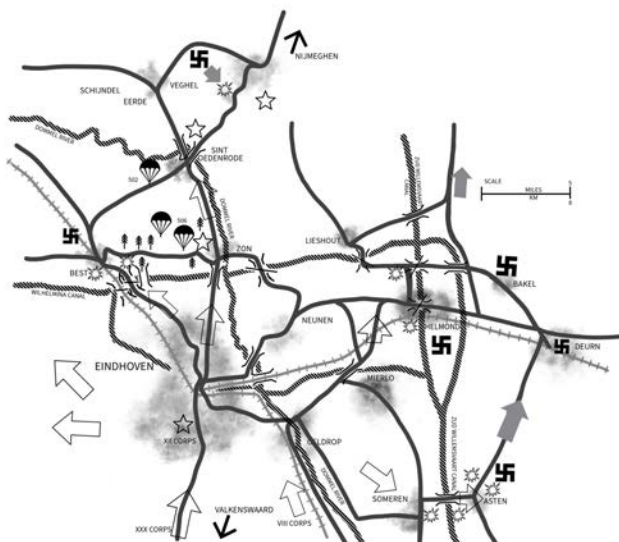


11 Armoured cross Someren Bailey Bridge

The engineers built a second bridge in just four hours in the afternoon as 2 Fifes and 4 KSLI moved north to take Ommel to make room for 23 Hussars and 8 Rifles to cross

the canal in the evening, taking over from 2 Fifes and 4 KSLI in Ommel, ready to be the leading force of 11 Armoured Division, 29 Armoured Brigade in the advance north tomorrow, it was not a restful night, being shelled and mortared and having a British loudspeaker vehicle broadcasting appeals to the Germans to surrender between renditions of Lili Marlene.

Dempsey met with the VIII Corps commander, O'Connor and told him he would be given responsibility for the corridor from Veghel to Grave along with control of 101 A/B tomorrow.



XII and VIII Corps advance across canals D+5

Allied Air Forces – D+5

Eindhoven airfield, designated B78 received No 124 Wing with four squadrons of rocket firing Typhoon aircraft, it would become immediately operational and would also receive Canadian No 143 Wing with a further three squadrons of Typhoon 1B's on 25 September.



Typhoon Mk 1B SF-T of 137 Squadron with full load of 60 pound rockets on B78 Eindhoven airfield

Requests for air support from 1 A/B had to be sent by radio through the Artillery Network and relayed from there to XXX Corps, then to 2nd Army, from there to RAF 83 Group in the UK before availability, timing and weather conditions were considered and if approved, lastly to the particular airfield. It was not surprising that air support requests from 1 A/B all but failed.

Improved weather in Belgium allowed fighter bombers based there to search out more targets, rocket firing Typhoons had found opportunities near Veghel where it was a bright sunny day.

In the UK, the weather forced most squadrons to stand down with no re-supply missions flown.

German Forces – D+5

German attacks against the corridor had managed to divert attention from the Island, with half of the Guards Armoured Division tanks withdrawn and now heading back south.

German forces on the Island had failed to drive back the Polish troops as they were now reinforced, but managed to hold their positions along the railway embankment and at Elst, blocking the advance to Arnhem. A British armoured car, captured in the night with a working radio, allowed the German signalers to listen in to the radio net.

1 A/B were being ground down in Oosterbeek, with little hope of reinforcement or evacuation although the landing of the Poles, and now the sight of Allied vehicles across the river Nederrijn at Driel, close to 1 A/B, in the late afternoon increased the urgency in reducing the pocket.

At midnight a train had arrived at Zevenaar to the east of Arnhem, it took all night to unload, but Schwere Abteilung 506 had arrived with 45 Panzer MkVI Royal Tiger tanks. These 68-ton monsters would be sent tomorrow to two locations, two companies with 30 tanks to Elden on the Island ready to help 10SS, whilst the third 15 would go to help 9SS in eastern Oosterbeek.

The corridor had been cut and all Allied supplies going north had been stopped. It was a good day for Germany.

Chapter 8 - Saturday 23 September 1944 D+6

1 A/B

1st British Airborne is still boxed in around Oosterbeek in two square kilometres, with their backs to the river Nederrijn, a branch of the lower Rhine. Friendly troops are on the southern side of the river, but with no bridge and with the Germans having the ability to fire on the possible crossing area over open sights, the Paras remained isolated.

Support from 64 Medium Regiment was reduced, only 25 fire missions in the day as ammunition was getting short with the supply route cut again and needing to make artillery shoots to help the fighting around Elst.

Exhausted, hungry, thirsty, running short of ammunition and fighting for their lives, 1 A/B is in desperate need of supplies if a 600m bridge is to be built over the river to enable tanks and supplies to be brought in to fight back and expand the bridgehead. This was not a situation that had been envisaged when the 1 A/B boarded their planes and gliders a week ago in England, those optimistic days were long gone.

Supply aircraft were given a new DZ that surprised them, so much smaller and ringed by the enemy. Very heavy flak was

encountered so descending to 300 feet the planes roared over the Germans who were even firing rifles at them, before dropping their loads. 36 and 48 Groups had been dropping the supplies to 1 A/B and so far they had lost 55 aircraft with 320 damaged by flak and 7 by fighters. Of the supplies dropped, under 10% were recovered by 1 A/B.

Extreme bravery had been shown by the aircraft crews in their attempt to help the Paras.



Outside Hartenstein Hotel 1 A/B try to attract the attention of supply aircraft

Lt. Col. John Frost, who had won an MC back in 1942 for leading troops in the successful Bruneval raid to capture secret components from a coastal German radar station, was now a wounded prisoner. His troops valiant effort to hold the northern approaches to the Arnhem Bridge had lasted three and a half days.

Just 22 fighter bomber mission were flown to help 1 A/B during the day

XXX Corps – North – D+6

XXX Corps was in possession of the cities of Eindhoven and Nijmegen and the towns between, but not all of the roads connecting them. Horrocks, who had had a black Friday, now took the decision to relieve 1 A/B via Driel, rather than try to take Arnhem.

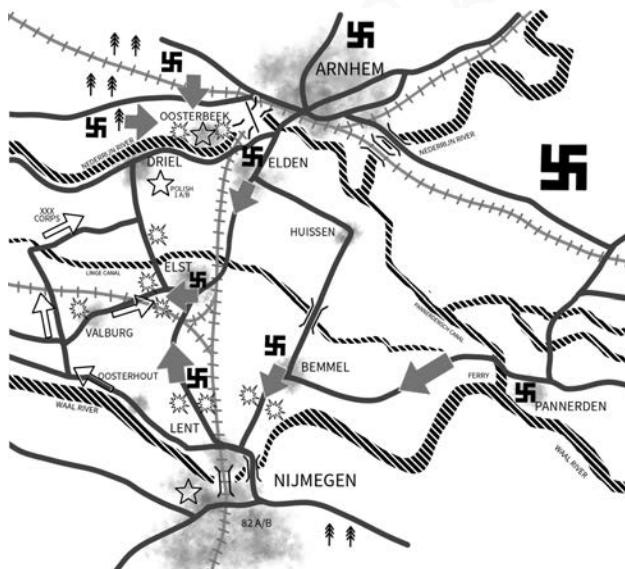
43 Wessex Division had started to arrive at the front in force, with orders to cross the river to reinforce 1 A/B.

The route directly west from Nijmegen Bridge on the Island was now almost clear of Germans, allowing two of the armoured cars with the Poles to return, after a short firefight, with two senior officers from 1 A/B for a conference with Horrocks, and Browning. The route would be used to send DUKW's with supplies to Driel and from there to Arnhem.

In pouring rain, 130 Brigade was ordered to Driel in DUKW's with some lorries carrying assault boats, they had to move past 214 Brigade in Valburg, the working space was small and it was all under constant German artillery and direct tank fire. DUKW's ended up in ditches, some received direct hits from artillery and tank fire, the Germans in Elst attacked west with tanks cutting the column in two, the Germans were repulsed by 214 Brigade and the front pushed onto Driel at 1130 but it was evening before the last battalion of 130 Brigade arrived. Very few boats were

available for the first unit, 5 Dorset to use, although more were on their way to Driel.

With 130 Brigade out of the way and the German attack repulsed, 214 Brigade could at last start their attack on Elst which began in heavy rain at 1600 with two battalions supported by tanks from 4/7 Dragoon Guards. They got close, moving across the flat open wet fields with 7 Somerset reaching the road from Arnhem to Nijmegen before it got too dark to continue, so they dug in for the night. A Welsh Guards attack on Bommel failed.



The Island D+6

1 Polish A/B – D+6

1 Polish A/B had two battalions in Driel, with a few men north of the river with 1 A/B, some had paddled over whilst others had had a bad glider experience, landing into an active battle a few days earlier.

1 Polish A/B had been reinforced yesterday by 5 Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry, part of 214 Brigade of 43 Wessex.

The Germans did not like 1 Polish A/B occupying Driel because of the possibility of both a flank attack on Elst and a river crossing to reinforce and expand the 1 A/B bridgehead. Tanks and troops were sent against 1 Polish A/B but the timely arrival of a troop of British tanks helped repel the attack.

A Household cavalry Daimler armoured car transporting a senior 1 A/B officer to Brownings HQ was involved in a firefight with a German halftrack, the senior officer acting as gun loader, after 8 rounds the armoured car got stuck in a ditch and the officer completed the journey in a scout car.

The missing 1 Polish A/B Battalion arrived in the Netherlands, they parachuted in near Grave and would have a long march to get onto the Island.

That night more boats arrived. There were Canadian boats and engineers near Nijmegen, but the British engineers had no faith in the large Canadian boats, so they were not

brought forward. Instead, the remains of the canvas boats used by 82 A/B in their river crossing were brought up together with two-man rubber dinghies for 1 Polish A/B to use. Inexperienced with these boats, the Polish engineers struggled, as 82 A/B had done, with assembling and using them.

Crossing the river, lit up by a burning building, with the river swept by machine gun, mortar and artillery fire, the Poles managed to get just 153 men across in the sixteen boats. There were casualties.

The small number of Polish soldiers now fighting around Oosterbeek were having a marked effect in the attitude to collecting the wounded. Previously both Germans and British had held many local ceasefires to collect the wounded and remove them to hospitals, now with the Polish soldiers in the area, the Germans were finding that cease fires to call forward stretcher bearers were no longer possible.

The Polish capital Warsaw was undergoing an uprising against the Germans with the Russians resting nearby and not doing anything to support the city, leaving the Germans free to destroy the buildings and its inhabitants. 1 Polish A/B would have much preferred to parachute into Warsaw. Without that option, they would settle for just killing Germans in the Netherlands.

German Forces – North – D+6

It was a nice wet rainy day, excellent for keeping the Allied fighter bombers away and yesterday had been a good day in the centre of the battle, the corridor was cut all day, distracting the Allies and restricting supplies heading north.

In Arnhem, civilians in the inner city were ordered out, taking just what they could carry, most headed north.

Around Oosterbeek, the German troops were exhausted and six tanks had been lost in the built up areas, some to mines, others to anti-tank guns, one had simply vanished, the Germans did not know where it was. Progress was really slow. Both sides were under heavy artillery fire and the house fighting was causing heavy losses on the German side for little gain, although the twelve six-barreled 28/32cm Nebelwerfers, which had been firing at the British since the 17th were increasingly affecting the mental health of those on the receiving end.

*SS Polizei in woods
around Arnhem landing
zones*



Kampfgruppe Knaust, was one of several groups, including 10SS, on the Island that was in difficulty. The one legged Major Knaust had part of his force dug in on the railway embankment, with others blocking the road from Nijmegen at Elst.

Two German fighter squadrons were called in and strafed 1 Polish A/B before being chased away.

Knaust could see the British moving in strength on his right flank. Artillery and direct tank fire was not stopping the vehicles that could be clearly seen driving north to Driel, so an attack using infantry and tanks was mounted towards Valburg, it did not go well, most of the attacking tanks were lost and as the weather improved, British fighter bombers attacked.

A tank force near Elst, which could not deploy in the soft terrain, were turned into scrap when rocket firing typhoons located them.

British infantry, now identified as 43 Wessex, supported by tanks, were now assaulting Elst from the west and advancing, despite artillery causing them casualties, reaching the concrete road on the outskirts of Elst as darkness fell. The presence of an infantry division was worrying.

82 A/B – D+6

In the 82 A/B area, the missing 1 Battalion of 1 Polish A/B landed by parachute near Grave and after assembly, marched north to join their commander on the Island. Engineering units with bridging equipment remained south of Nijmegen.

Near Grave, at 1500 439 C-47's brought in 406 Waco gliders for 82 A/B carrying 2,900 men of 325 Glider Infantry Regiment. 1 Polish A/B landed by parachute. 60% of supply drop cargo was recovered.



Parachutes landing near Grave

The perimeter of 82 A/B had been strengthened with the addition of 8 Armoured Brigade as their reserve which enabled the low lying polder directly east of Nijmegen around Beek to be cleared of Germans by 508 PIR. Elsewhere German land attacks had faded away.

The Royal Netherlands (Princess Irene) Brigade took over the guarding of the Grave Bridge and the area to the North West, releasing more 82 A/B troops in the area. Most of 82 A/B were now resting and recuperating. German air attacks on Nijmegen Bridge continued.

101 A/B and XXX Corps – Centre – D+6

The Germans had cut the road between Veghel and Uden and Taylor wanted it open.

506 PIR had moved north from Veghel towards Uden and surprisingly, found the Germans had almost vanished. The Grenadier Guards with the Northumberland Fusiliers met 506 PIR at 1500, the road would soon be open, so a plan was hatched to encircle 107 Pz Bde, using the Guardsmen coming from the north and 506 PIR with its attached 44 RTR tank unit, both swinging east. Two Brigades of 50 Division had moved north to help protect the east flank.

The Coldstream Guards had delayed their start, then made a wider swing east. They took their objective, Volkel airfield and the town after a hard fight, suffering heavy casualties. German prisoners were taken as far east as Oploo and Sint Anthonis by A Squadron the Household Cavalry.

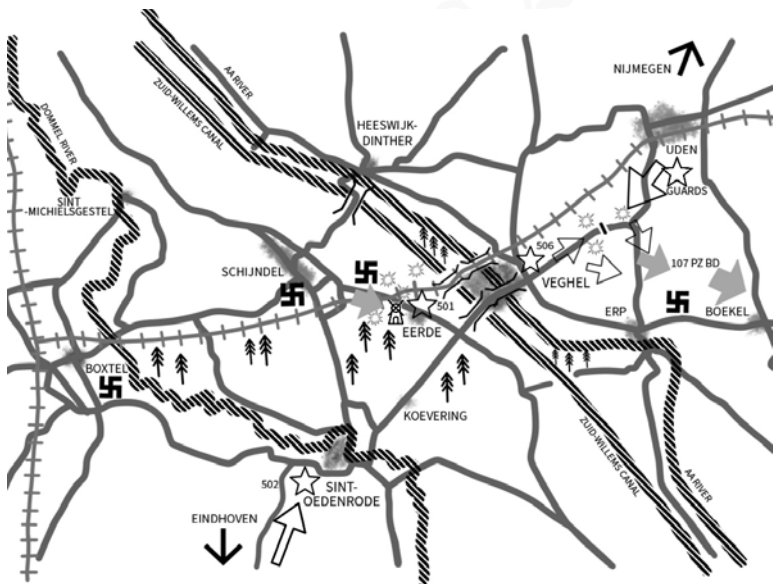
At Eerde, 1 Battalion 501 PIR were attacked but hand to hand fighting pushed the Germans back.

The last 101 A/B glider landing arrived safely, bringing in a field artillery battalion. They also met with the remaining 1,077 men and 400 vehicles of the sea-tail who drove in overnight. 101 A/B was now complete, and Dempsey told Taylor that his command was now under the command structure of VIII Corps.

German Forces – Centre – D+6

West of the corridor, the battered 59 Division witnessed 120 gliders landing between Zon and Sint Oedenrode, claiming to have shot down two transports and eight gliders.

Kampfgruppe Huber had lost most of their men yesterday. Reinforcements arrived, footsore and poorly trained battalions from Fallschirmjäger Regiments 2 and 6. They were ordered to take Eerde with four Jagdpanthers and assault guns as support, then carry on to Veghel.



Fighting in Veghel area D+6

Fallschirmjaeger Regiment 6, which was the first unit to assault the U.S. on Utah beach on 6 June and despite fighting continuously for three months still had 1,000 original troops amongst their unit, took over from the shattered Kampfgruppe Huber but were not optimistic, and whilst they knew Americans had abandoned Schijndel and were defending both sides of Eerde were unaware of what was happening east of Veghel. Starting at 0700, several battalions tried to get to Veghel, by noon they were stalled near Eerde, the small arms and hand to hand fighting in difficult terrain was costly, the poorly trained men were no match for the experienced 101 A/B. They were ordered to dig in.

The eastern group, Kampfgruppen Walther had stayed close to the corridor overnight, attacking Veghel again in the morning then, despite receiving two additional battalions of SS troops in the afternoon, found they were losing too many men and vehicles and were also worried about their right flank, under attack by Guards Armoured.

The Walther battle group retired east at noon, their strong anti-aircraft defences had managed to shoot down several Allied aircraft during the day. Leaving the corridor, where they had planted many mines, they hoped the road would stay closed until midnight.

The corridor stayed shut for 36 hours but 107 Pz Bde was now a spent force.

VIII and XII Corps – D+6

In the west, 15 Scottish Division of XII Corp made a 3 battalion attack, followed by a 2 battalion attack on Best village, resulting in hand to hand fighting in the houses, capturing the railway station but failing to capture key defensive positions like the cement factory.

VIII Corps on the Eastern flank ordered the whole of 11 Armoured Division to cross the canal by returning south and using the Someren/Asten bridges, rather than risking building a bridge at Helmond, before moving north towards Deurne against opposition from 7 Fallschirmjager Division, where they could threaten to outflank the Germans who had been attacking the corridor at Veghel.

At the Someren/Asten bridge, 23 Hussars and 8 Rifles attacked at dawn from Ommel heading to Deurne via Vlierden, they were followed by the 2 Fifes and 4 KSLI via Liessel and at 1000 were backed up by 3 Monmouth and 3 RTR.



Infantry and Sherman tanks in Asten

Outside Liessel a skirmish saw German Uhlans on horseback charging 2 Fife and Forfarshire Sherman tanks, the outcome for these brave but foolish cavalry was predictable.

Opposition was stronger elsewhere and 11 Armoured were held up just short of Deurne.

Reconnaissance units from VIII Corps had linked up with the corridor defenders of 50 Division and 101 A/B who were both now moved under the control of VIII Corps. For both, it was their second change of command in 2 days.

The main threat to the corridor had been the Group Walther attack, so two brigades of 50 Division moved east to Lieshout, then north to Veghel, then east via Erp to Boekel, following up the German retreat.

With German forces chased away from the corridor, a mass of vehicles carrying supplies could move to the front, 69 Brigade were released to continue their move to Nijmegen, but were now being asked to eat captured German rations including ersatz cream cheese in tubes, rancid margarine and meat that was off.

Chapter 9 - Sunday 24 September 1944 D+7

1 A/B

1 A/B, of whom 50% had never seen combat before this battle, were in deep trouble. Exceedingly fit, highly trained, with an average age of 27, they had been taught to fight for 2-4 days before relief. Few had envisaged the possibility of being isolated and surrounded a week after landing.

Urquhart, their 42 year old commander, only appointed to command 1 A/B in January 1944, was not an airborne man, he was however an experienced Brigade commander, having fought in Sicily and Italy, and it was these skills that the Paras now needed.

*Under mortar fire at 1 A/B
HQ, Hartenstein Hotel*



The German forces seemed to be suffering from weariness as offensive actions reduced. The XXX Corps medium

artillery hitting their positions and today's 81 fighter bomber missions may have contributed to their fall in morale.

An evacuation of some of the 1,200 British wounded was proposed, as it was, amongst other things, impossible to undertake surgery with no water available to the British surgeons. SS General Bittrich, commander of II SS Panzer Corps agreed and from 1500 for two hours 250 seriously wounded were transferred on vehicles with 200 walking wounded, mainly to the St. Elisabeth Hospital, including Brigadier Shan Hackett who had leg and stomach wounds. The Germans used the break to collect their own wounded from the battlefield.

Bittrich permitted British medical staff to continue treatment of patients and bring in their wounded even after the German advance had put the British field hospital behind German lines. This unusual step being taken by him after hearing about other SS members killing a number of captured wounded British soldiers in a hospital.

The Dutch Resistance surprisingly was still able to cross the lines and offered again to help fight the Germans, the offer was refused but they were asked and agreed to help escaped and wounded airborne men and specifically to help rescue Brigadiers Lathbury and Hackett from the St Elisabeth Hospital.

German Forces – North – D+7

General Model was becoming pessimistic; “the situation of Army Group B’s northern wing has continued to deteriorate” and only delays have been achieved.

The arrival of German Royal Tiger tanks in Oosterbeek caused a change in tactics, 9SS made up tank protection squads and greater efforts were made to identify the anti-tank guns. At dawn, the 88mm guns from the 15 Mk VI Panzers opened up. There were some limitations to the use of the 68 ton monsters, their tracks ripped up the cobblestones and the long gun barrel was difficult to turn with so many trees along the streets.

Shockingly, one of the new Royal Tiger’s was destroyed at the bottom of Weverstraat, next to the Openbare Lagere School, a mortar round having landed on the air vent for the fuel tank, causing it to burst into flames. It became easier to use these machines as almost static pillboxes, using the gun to batter holes in buildings, opening them up to men with flamethrowers, even so, little progress was made during the day.

Consideration was given to employing the ‘Goliath’, a remote controlled tracked mine, packed with 60kg of explosives, from Panzer Company 224, to demolish houses.

The forced evacuation of civilians in Arnhem commenced. With the front line so close, the Germans did not want any civilians in the city, people had to leave quickly with whatever they could carry.

The arrival of the Royal Tigers was causing unexpected problems, as culverts and small bridges were collapsing under their weight.



German troops in Arnhem

The weather was still working in favour of the Germans, with rain in the afternoon keeping the fighter bombers away.

Unusual attacks were now being mounted against Nijmegen bridge. German aircraft, known by their code name "Mistel", using piggyback aircraft, a Messerschmitt Bf 109's mounted on a JU 88's whereby the unmanned JU 88, which was packed with two tons of explosives in a shaped charge would be aimed and released by the Bf 109 to hopefully crash on target in an attempt to destroy the major bridges that had been lost. Aircraft managed to hit Nijmegen bridge with bombs, but not sufficiently to close it. Aircraft losses were high.

XXX Corps – D+7

At 1000 Horrocks arrived at Driel in an armoured car, much to the surprise of Sosabowski as the road via Valburg was still under German fire. Climbing to the top of the church steeple they had a clear view of the problem, the river and Westerbouwing heights on the north bank occupied by Germans. 1 A/B had under 1,000yds of riverfront left in their enclave. It was realised that there were only two options, major reinforcement of 1 A/B or their evacuation.

A meeting then took place at 1130 south of Driel at Valburg with Horrocks, Sosabowski, Browning and Thomas, commander of 43 Wessex Division. Sosabowski wanted a divisional attack, but the river equipment was not available and as most of 43 Wessex were busy fighting around Ede, there was no one else available. Two Battalions would have to make the attempt that night, one from 43 and one Polish.

Horrocks left the Island to attempt the drive south to Sint Oedenrode to meet his army commander, General Dempsey.

43 Wessex was fighting for Elst, 214 Brigade supported by 4/7 Dragoon Guards and artillery started their attack again, close enough to get into the housing, it became a house by house, room by room, hand to hand battle, with German tanks supporting the defenders. It lasted all day, casualties were heavy but 1 Worcester and 7 Somerset had managed to inflict so much damage on the Germans that they pulled

back, moving north to Elden with their remaining armoured vehicles, just two miles from Arnhem Bridge.

A weakened Welsh Guards are still on the Island, fighting with American 82 A/B against the isolated German forces north of Lent in Ressen and Bemmelen, under artillery fire and the occasional German fighter aircraft.

The missing battalion of the Polish A/B marched into Driel.

1 Polish A/B were still defending Driel and awaiting boats and men to cross to Oosterbeek. 4 Dorset and the newly arrived 1 Polish Battalion would cross at two locations, followed by 2 Polish Battalion. Sosabowski was not happy with this. 43 Wessex were trained in river crossings and to his way of thinking the whole of 130 Brigade should cross the river and bridging should be started. He had lunch with Browning in Nijmegen and was told that the corridor was cut and bridging equipment and boats could not get through. This was not exactly true. Sosabowski was also told that there were still plans to land troops at Deelen airfield, north of Arnhem in two days, with a further lift into the airport the day after.

The order for the Polish troops was put into writing and received by them at 1700. By 2100 they were ready to cross when a counter order was received, the crossing had been cancelled, due to the lack of boats. The majority of the boats used by the 1 Polish A/B the previous night had been left on

the river bank and been shot to pieces during the day. The few boats remaining were all given to 4 Dorset who were told to take a smaller number of men over the river, as their job would now be to hold the northern riverbank to allow 1 A/B to evacuate.

4 Dorset began their crossing at 0100, ten men to a boat, plus two engineers and enough supplies to last four days. By 0230 320 had attempted the crossing before it was halted due to enemy fire. Some landed under the Westerbouwing heights which was occupied by Germans. Not many of 4 Dorset would make it into the perimeter. At 0400 three DUKW's managed to get into the river, but got stuck on exit and only half of the supplies were recovered.

Order and counter order were beginning to cause confusion. The four engineering units with bridging equipment, including boats, in the column were ordered at 1200 to prepare to move to the river's edge at Driel, before the order was cancelled. 24 Royal Canadian Engineers were then alerted to undertake an overnight river crossing with their boats, before that order was also cancelled.

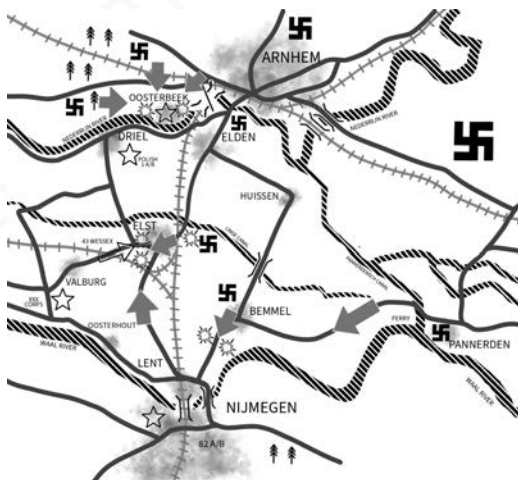
The Household Cavalry mounted a raid on the town of Oss, west of Grave where they had found large warehouses containing millions of German rations. The storekeeper did not mind what was taken, so long as it was signed for. As Germans were also regularly turning up for their own

rations, the ledger of authorised withdrawals soon alternated between British and German signatures.

These rations came in useful as there were enough to feed both XXX Corps and VIII Corps for two weeks.

The Guards Division tanks sent south to deal with 107 Pz Bde had, together with part of 50 Division which was already on the corridor, forced the Germans away from the “Club Route” and onto the defensive further to the East, so opening up the corridor. No further attacks on the corridor were expected so the corridor was filled with moving supply lorries heading north.

The sea-tail of 52 Division, whose main body had not flown in, now arrived, an infantry battalion, artillery and engineers. They were ordered to defend the area south west of Grave.



The Island D+7

101 A/B – North - D+7

A battalion of 506 PIR of 101 Airborne were joined in Uden by 321 Glider Field Artillery Battalion. Moving south they mopped up the few remaining German units in the area, opening up “Hell’s Highway” from Uden to Veghel.

Coordinating with the Coldstream Guards, who had had to return south to help restore the control of the corridor and were east of Uden, at Volkel. The Guards moved south capturing Boekel and Erp, killing and capturing large numbers of Germans. The severely battered 107 Pz Bde moved east away from the corridor.

Everyone hoped “Hell’s Highway” would not be threatened from the east again.

The corridor was open and vehicles were moving again.

501 PIR was occupying Eerde providing protection from the defeated enemy to the west. This fight however was not yet over.

The activities of 101 A/B, as with other divisions, were being reported by embedded press, including highly respected Walter Cronkite who had arrived by glider on D+1.

VIII and XII Corps – D+7

On the left, XII Corps troops, were moving north parallel to the Corridor, the town of Best was still held by the Germans and was proving a hard place to capture, it would be another month before this “fortress” town eventually capitulated.

7 Armoured Division were moving north, their object was to protect the centre line and left flank.

In the east VIII Corps 11 Armoured Division 29 Brigade were pushing North, liberating the town of Deurne, east of Helmond by 1500 using a twin pronged attack, each attack using the tried and tested system of one infantry and one tank Battalion working closely together, 23 Hussars with 8 Rifles and 3 RTR with 3 Monmouth.

The 2 Fifes with 4 KSLI pushed on to Bakel before nightfall.

The advance north tomorrow would see 11 Armoured advance 20 miles to link with XXX Corps at Cuijk just south of Nijmegen, with 1 Herefords freeing the eastern part of Helmond and 13 Royal Horse Artillery firing their first salvo into Germany. VIII Corps had forced the remnants of 107 Pz Bde to withdraw from the corridor and reposition with their backs to the Meuse river, to protect the Dutch/German border.

German Forces – Centre – D+7

Model was worried by even more gliders arriving yesterday. He requested more troops from Germany, knowing they would not be provided, then reorganised the Army, First Fallschirmjaeger (Parachute) Army was given four Corps including II SS Panzer Corp. Student was ordered to concentrate on the corridor. 85 Division HQ was established in Schijndel.

Colonel Walther, at his HQ in Bakel, just north of Duerne had received a phone call, his adjutant impersonating the Dutch post master learnt that VIII corps was in Deurne. Walther set up a blocking force and relocated his HQ further east to avoid the expected attack.

There was no hope of attacking the corridor from the East since 107 Pz Bde had lost 323 men and had only 26 tanks and 133 half-tracks left, it had been forced away by Guards Armoured outflanking them. With 11 Armoured in Deurne the left flank was also at risk, so efforts were directed into slowing VIII Corps and moving back to the Meuse river.

In the West, everything available was thrown into ad hoc units. The ability to create units from disassociated men at this stage of the war, that would fight well, may have had something to do with the number of “verruchte Helmuts” or crazy Helmuts that seemed to exist in every platoon, men who had lost everything, their family, sweethearts and

homes destroyed by bombing. Fighting now with deadly recklessness and determination.

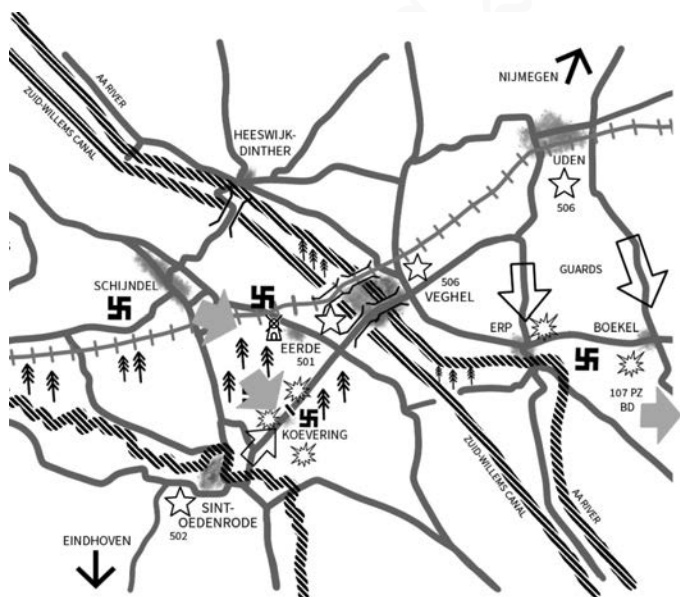
These units from the remains of 59 Division and Fallschirmjaeger 6 were made up into four small battalions and thrown eastwards at a suspected weak point, following extensive scouting the evening before. The four battalions supported by a few Jagdpanther tank destroyers, aiming for the same objective, the bridges at Veghel.

Advancing through the mist, the infantry arrived at the area comprises large sand dunes and combat commenced at 1000 against 1 Battalion 501 PIR. The American outposts in the dunes were overrun. Nine 44 RTR tanks were called forward to the Eede windmill. A Jagdpanzer's 88mm smashed the turret of one, a second was also hit and exploded, and a third was hit by artillery near the railway station and caught fire, the rest backed off leaving the U.S. infantry to fight alone in the dunes. The fighting became vicious hand to hand, however the experienced Americans eventually came out on top. A German battalion swinging left along the canal got to within 700m of the first bridge.

Based on the reconnaissance information, a Jagdpanther took a side road and got next to the main highway, Allied lorry drivers bailed out into ditches as a machine gun was opened up on them, ammunition lorries exploding, three British tanks sent to investigate the noise were brewed up.

By 1500 two pieces of German armour with a mixed battalion under the command of Major Jungwirth were at Koevering, a small hamlet, where they were presented with static lorries, nose to tail. At 1900 with the help of an 88mm gun, and light flak guns, there were soon 50 trucks burning. Two replacement Sherman tanks were captured and put into German service, then part of Fallschirmjaeger 6 reinforced this road block.

502 PIR failed to oust the Germans. The men planted mines and dug in for the night on the corridor.



Koevering Veghel area D+7

101 A/B – South - D+7

The unexpected attack on Eerde had been difficult to halt, the Germans had been very aggressive, A Squadron 44 RTR was called to help but lost three tanks near the windmill to a hidden Jagdpanther at 1100. The infantry had to push the Germans from the dunes. By the end of the day the village was still in American hands. An attempt by the Germans to bypass Eerde to the east along the canal bank was stopped by 501 PIR, 700m from the Veghel bridges.

506 PIR in Veghel were protecting the town from an attack from the east.

A German self-propelled gun began shooting vehicles on the corridor, halting the traffic, then late afternoon the Germans, using an undefended minor track they had discovered between Sint Oedenrode and Eerde were able to infiltrate through the woods from the west to Koevering and at 1900 cut the road again, with German infantry and some guns reinforcing the incursion. Trucks were burning on the corridor. 502 PIR from Sint Oedenrode could not move them.

With “Hells Highway” cut again, this time between Sint Oedenrode and Veghel near Koevering, it was necessary to bring more armour and infantry to assist the paratroopers. 506 PIR was ordered to move south from Veghel at 0300.

Chapter 10 - Monday 25 September 1944 D+8

1 A/B

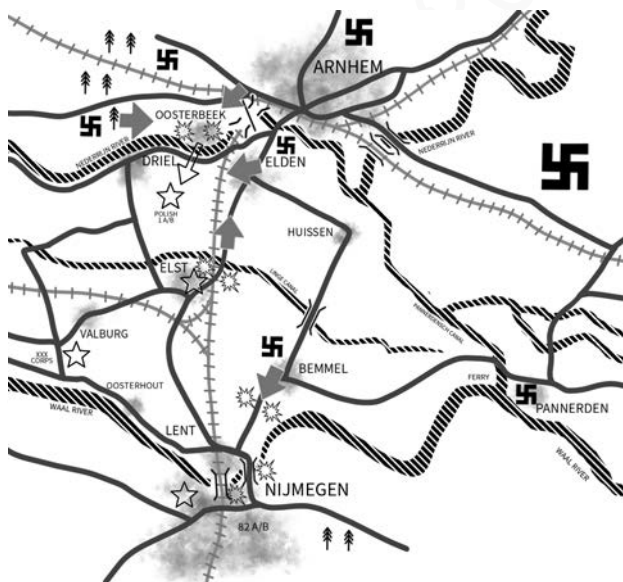
In 1 British Airborne area, overnight some of the 4 Dorset who had crossed over the river managed to reach the perimeter. Of the 320 that had entered the river, around 100 had reached 1 A/B, 200 had been captured, were dead or missing. Those that had made it reinforced the Border regiment on the western perimeter.

Amongst those that made it was Captain Zeke Rose with his forward observer team and Major Grafton with his HQ, a radio team and an artillery plan, which from Oosterbeek church speeded up and therefore doubled the number of fire orders, using the whole of the resources of 43 Division.

Letters brought with 4 Dorset asked Urquhart if he wanted to withdraw from Oosterbeek. At 0808 Urquhart spoke to 43 Wessex by radio saying “Yes” and that “Operation Berlin”, the evacuation, had to be tonight. By 1030 Urquhart had explained the evacuation plan to his commanders in the Hartenstein Hotel, which was now under sniper fire. Having studied the 1915 Gallipoli evacuation in detail as a young officer, Urquhart understood the problems and methods of a silent withdrawal whilst leaving the impression the forward positions were still manned.

Gunners were fighting as infantry in their positions, with 75mm guns now being fired over open sights at ranges as short as 50yds in an attempt to hold the Germans back, this produced one success when they managed to destroy their first Panzer VI “King Tiger” of Panzer Abteilung 506.

The Germans had managed to infiltrate and push back the east flank near the river, that situation would need to be secured to enable the evacuation to take place, using grenade and bayonet.



Evacuation to the Island D+8

XXX Corps – Day – D+8

At 0700 XXX Corps commander, Brian Horrocks was hopping mad, he had not been warned of another possible attack on the “Club Route” and was now trapped in Sint Oedenrode at the 101 A/B HQ, unable to get back to his own TAC HQ.

Horrocks discussed the situation in Arnhem with his boss, Miles Dempsey and later recalled that the decision to withdraw 1 A/B was made at 1000. At 1100, at the HQ of 50 Infantry Division, Dempsey met with Montgomery who quickly decided to approve the withdrawal of 1 A/B. Orders to that effect were issued at 1215.

Orders reached 24 Royal Canadian Engineers south of Nijmegen to move onto the Island and help with the evacuation.

West of Sint Oedenrode towards Olland, an 8 Hussar tank drove through a hedge into an 88mm position, turning quickly and increasing speed to 30mph it managed to jump a drainage ditch 21ft (6.4m) wide to make its escape. A Sherman was only designed to cross an 8ft (2.4m) trench.

North of Sint Oedenrode, the road had been cut again, 7 Armoured and 50 Infantry Division were ordered to send a battle group north to meet 101 A/B who were fighting southwards, to get the road open again. The static traffic

caused delays and it was afternoon before 50 Division arrived at Koevering.

The Coldstream Guards were sent to Oss to guard the stored food supplies as more men in XXX Corps in the northern zone would now need to eat German rations from the depot in Oss as supplies of British food and cigarettes were running short due to the road being closed so often. The capture of a jam factory in Elst from 10SS adds variety to the diet for some on the Island.

Part of the Grenadier Guards also headed west, but south of Oss, meeting a strong German force near Heesch where heavy fighting now took place, the Guards losing more men than they had lost in Nijmegen.

The airfield at Keent, just west of Grave, designated airfield B-82, would become operational tomorrow.

On the Island, the East Yorkshire Regiment, part of 69 Brigade 50 Division, fought eastwards from the Welsh Guards position in Lent and took Bommel, moving the Germans further from the Nijmegen road bridge. 129 Brigade of 43 Division tried to force the main road northwards to Arnhem, but came under intense fire on the raised roadway, meanwhile 214 Brigade swung westwards before heading north and although blocked by Germans for a time managed to connect with the Poles at Driel before nightfall.

German Forces – North – D+8

10SS on 29 June had entrained from Russia for the Normandy front, with 18,000 men, they had 170 tanks, 287 half-tracks and around 3,500 other vehicles. It suffered severe losses against the British in July and in August where they fought a delaying action in eastern France at Cambrai, were down to around 3,500 men and a dozen armoured vehicles. Retiring to the Netherlands, they had received few reinforcements and little equipment. Some sections had been seconded to assist defending Eindhoven and then fight 101 A/B, others had been fighting against 82 A/B and XXX Corps at Nijmegen and now on the Island. 10SS had long ago lost their ability for major offensive action, but their experienced men were still capable in defence.

Kampfgruppe Knaust was in Elst, on the Island, they were blocking the main north/south road and were being attacked from the west. They fought hard all day and despite the arrival of Royal Tiger tanks from Arnhem, gradually lost more and more houses in the town until the battered remnant of the force decided to pull back north with their few remaining armoured vehicles. The Allies now controlled most of the road from Nijmegen to Arnhem. Aerial attacks on Nijmegen Bridge continued through the day and would later be joined by German combat swimmers laying mines in repeated attempts to destroy the bridge.

Around Oosterbeek, the Germans now had 110 artillery pieces that systematically raked “Der Hexenkessel” or

Witches Cauldron, the 1 A/B area, for the eighth day. More and more prisoners were coming forward, their morale broken. 9SS had been pulled back into reserve and inexperienced German reinforcements replaced them but suffered excessive losses against the now experienced Paras, so small groups of experienced soldiers took over the assaults from east and west, each group attacking just one house at a time, supported by a Royal Tiger. In the east the perimeter collapsed and was pushed in, making the Cauldron just 600m wide. The fighting, was becoming more and more hand to hand as the defenders desperately tried to hold their perimeter.

The strength of the fighting and the volume of counter battery fire convinced the German commanders that the bridgehead was being defended for reinforcement overnight. Fears were raised over possible crossings to east or west as the northern bank was weakly held by the lowest quality troops, increasing enemy fire and pontoon carrying trucks were noted 3km west of Driel, at Heteren. At 2100 the incoming artillery fire increased and switched to the Germans manning the front line of the Cauldron.



Knocked out Panzer III in Oosterhout on the Island

101 A/B – D+8

101 A/B were still fighting. The Germans were dug in across the corridor north of Sint Oedenrode, an area called Koevering. The broken American telephone wires were repaired, then cut again, but not before a phone conversation had taken place during which a plan was agreed to a coordinated attack from both directions.

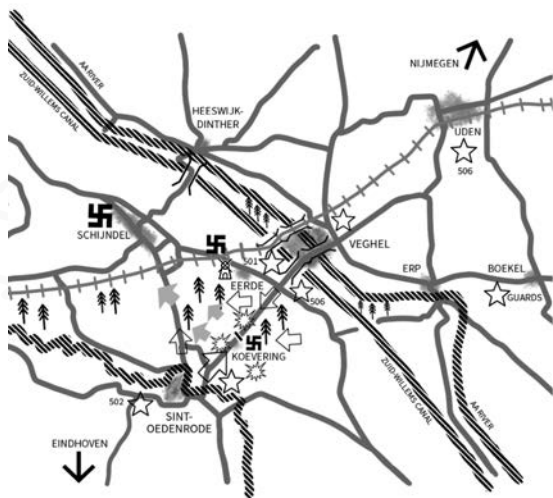
Two battalions of 506 PIR swept down the road from Veghel to arrive at the column of burnt out vehicles in the afternoon and saw that the British drivers had had their small cookers out to make tea when they were surprised whilst waiting for permission to move on.

A unit of XII Corps 7 Armoured somehow managed to get past the queues of trucks on the verges overnight, and arrived in the main square of Sint Oedenrode where they met an irate Corps Commander fuming as he could not get back to his advance HQ. Horrocks later managed to leave Sint Oedenrode with a section of Durham Light Infantry carriers to travel by a cross-country eastern route to Nijmegen as the main road to Veghel was still cut.

As yesterday's fights and the advancing VIII Corps had eliminated the threat from the East, 101 A/B had men to spare to be able to move through the minor roads and box the Germans in on three sides on the corridor.

The Allies met at Koevering by 1940, two battalions of 506 PIR from the north, one of 502 PIR and the battle group of 50 Infantry Division with supporting U.S. artillery from the south, they had fought a bloody battle with no quarter asked for or given. It had been hard to use artillery as the Germans were mixed up with 101 A/B. The Germans had retreated west after dark.

506 PIR turned west in the darkness, the two battalions moving to clear the area of Germans were joined by a Sherman tank. It was a while before someone noticed that the tank had a swastika painted on it. Someone climbed onto the rear plates and hammered on the turret resulting in the German crew opening up and quickly surrendering to the Americans. A lost tank had been recovered.



Koevering Veghel area D+8

German Forces – Centre – D+8

The Western force of the Germans had managed, through determination and small-scale attacks, to keep the Americans busy around Eerde and Veghel yesterday. They also kept the corridor cut at Koevering, however they were in a dangerous position.

By evening they were almost completely surrounded, the German paratroopers could not be reinforced, as there were simply no more German troops available, the barrel was empty. Being isolated, with no hope of relief, they received permission during the night to withdraw and those that could, slowly did so under cover of darkness. The remaining Jagdpanthers towing artillery and anti-tank guns, as the troops fell back towards Schijndel.



Jagdpanther

The mixed battalion commanded by Major Hans Jungwirth had managed to hold onto one part of the road for over 24 hours. Suffering heavy losses, mainly due to artillery fire, they had managed to mine the road area so well that it would be over 12 hours before the American and British

engineers managed to clear them and the wrecked vehicles, to allow traffic to move freely again.

West of Oss, the German 712 Division, ordered to move east to get back to Germany were surprised when they bumped into the enemy, but managed to destroy three British tanks before a major tank attack by the British Guards, backed with artillery, caused over 250 German casualties.

107 Pz Bde having pulled back from Veghel used the town of Gemert to assemble, before leaving to form a new defence line further east just before 11 Armoured, part of VIII Corps, entered the town.

The ability to pull individuals and small groups of troops together and incorporate them into active motivated attack formations had worked wonders for a week by breaking the corridor repeatedly, whilst the German formations at the tip of the XXX Corps advance had blunted the whole attack.

The German position now changed. Tired, severely depleted and not strong enough to attack, let alone evict the Allies from anywhere, it was necessary to revert to a defensive stance, whilst continuing attempts to destroy the road and railway bridges at Nijmegen.

XXX Corps – Night – D+8

Some of the Canadian engineers were stuck near Sint Oedenrode, the road at Koevering being cut, others fortunately were further north and arrived on the Island at Driel, with their boats. These Storm Boats were much larger than the small rubber dinghy's that had been used so far, made of plywood they had 50hp Evinrude outboard engines. Weighing 500lbs or more, they were very hard to carry in pitch darkness through the mud to the edge of the river.

16 paddle craft operated by 43 Wessex engineers and 21 Storm Boats with Canadian engineers participated in the Oosterbeek evacuation, using two crossing points, "Operation Berlin" took place on a very dark night with heavy rain, ideal to mask the noise and sight of the boats.

Led down to the Nederrijn river edge by glider pilots in boat load groups, following parachute tape where the route was not clear, the men gradually moved away from the front line, the furthest away men moving first. Wounded men took their places to fire rifles and Bren guns and keep the pretence of slit trenches being occupied.

A major artillery barrage, starting at 2100 boxed in 1 A/B, landing on the German defences, discouraging them from activity. Tracer rounds fired by anti-aircraft guns across the river helped the boats to navigate in the dark.

Some of the routes to the river ran close enough to German positions that their voices could be heard. With boots wrapped in cloths and equipment tucked inside clothing to reduce noise, the troops climbed into the boats in perfect order and were ferried across. Some casualties were suffered on route, a few being killed or captured, others wounded, with some of those staying behind whilst other wounded were helped into boats.

Once 75 men from 4 Dorset had evacuated, those Storm Boats were moved further up river to speed up the main force crossing.

Compared to the slow rate of reinforcement over the last few days, "Operation Berlin" the evacuation, which started at 2100, was complete by 0230 having brought 2,398 men to Driel.

The Germans, many newly arrived replacements, were slow to move in, not having realised the Paras had left, the British artillery ceased at 0800 but it was mid-morning before the Germans entered the Hartenstein Hotel.

When at last the German artillery stopped, the silence seemed unreal.

***We should never forget the price of living in peace.
That price has been paid with the lives of soldiers.***

Chapter 11 – Casualties

In 1 A/B, 11,920 men had flown into battle, of these 1,174 were killed, 5,903 were captured or missing, around a third of the captured were wounded, 1,892 were evacuated.

1,262 glider pilots participated, 219 were killed, 511 were captured or missing and 532 were evacuated. 1 Polish A/B had 203 casualties out of 1,689.

The American 82 A/B lost 1,432 men, with 101 A/B losing 2,110.



XXX Corps lost 70 tanks and suffered 1,480 casualties.

144 transport aircraft had been lost. 190 Squadron RAF had suffered the highest losses of aircraft, losing 12 Stirling bombers with 38 killed and 15 prisoners flying 98 sorties towing gliders and resupply missions.

The flanks had worse terrain to fight over and less supplies and you cannot disregard the losses each suffered. VIII and XII Corps had 3,784 casualties between them, which demonstrates the bravery of the flanking units.

Model reported a low 1,100 dead and 2,200 wounded around Arnhem on 27 September. German casualties in all these battles are hard to determine, but are likely to total

6,000-8,000. The Wehrmacht survivors were given 10 days leave, the SS were told their holiday would come after the final victory was achieved. There is a German cemetery, Duits Mel Kerkhof, south of Lommel in Belgium, the only German cemetery in the Netherlands is located at Ysselsteyn, east of Eindhoven.

The number of Dutch Resistance men and women and Dutch civilians who died in the battle at Arnhem was around 450, many more were wounded. 150,000 Arnhem civilians were evicted and more would die as a result of retaliation, forced labour and starvation in the winter of 44/45.

British air and ground troops are buried in Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries in the Netherlands including those at Valkenswaard, Mierlo, Uden, Mook, Nijmegen and Oosterbeek, as well as in a number of local church graveyards.

Many fallen American soldiers rest in the Netherlands American Cemetery, located east of Maastricht.

* * *

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them*

Lawrence Binyon

Postscript

The battles had been hard fought with the occasional element of honour and respect by all sides, even so, atrocities were reported, committed by Germans and Dutch SS against civilians, such as the shooting of a fireman when he complained in Nijmegen about the deliberate setting fire to houses, or the the shooting of unarmed men and boys wearing orange armbands. The Dutch resistance were also accused of summary executions. There were accusations from both sides of not taking surrendering enemy soldier's prisoner and the killing of wounded and prisoners.

Allied publicity (UK and US) was centred around 1 A/B activities, upsetting the US Airborne divisions, who hardly got any mention for the brave and hard work they had undertaken. A debate took place over whether "Market Garden" was a success or failure and the British-American relationship was damaged as a result.

A German Luftwaffe intelligence report, produced in October 1944 noted Market Garden was a worthwhile plan and acknowledged that had it worked, the German forces would have had great difficulty stopping the Allies breaking out into the North German plain.

Eisenhower in his memoirs said he never regretted approving Market Garden.

German naval experts managed to destroy the Nijmegen rail bridge and damaged the road bridge using frogmen on 29 September. On 7 October Allied bombers destroyed Arnhem Bridge.

During October and November, difficult battles took place to clear the land bounding the Scheldt estuary leading to Antwerp harbour. After clearing river mines the first ship docked on 28 November. The opening of the port greatly reduced the Allies logistics problems.

1 A/B was returned to England on 30 September whereas 82 and 101 A/B were kept in the front line until British units were released from the fighting north of Antwerp in late November for their rest and recuperation. They had suffered a doubling of their September casualties and some, like their British colleagues, used their time in Nijmegen for private enterprise, looting empty houses and even using bazookas to open bank vaults. The Allies paid Nijmegen a large sum in compensation for the damage, after the war.

Boy Browning left 1AAA and was assigned as Chief of Staff to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten in the far east. Sosabowski was fired by the Polish government in exile.

On 1 October Model launched a major attack against XXX Corps from Groesbeek to Nijmegen and on the Island. Casualties mounted but the Germans achieved very little.

The two US alternatives to Market Garden went ahead with hardly a pause. The First US Army envelopment of Aachen began mid September and after a pause ended with a victory on 21 October, but led nowhere due to the risk of flooding should the Germans breach dams in the Hurtgen Forest, the battle in that forest had begun on 19 September and would see the Americans suffer over 30,000 casualties before Christmas. Patton's Third US Army attempt at capturing Metz which began in September resulted in victory by mid-December at a cost of 40,000 casualties. Neither produced the promised quick, cheap, victory.

Germany surprised the Allies with a major assault 250km (150 miles) south, through the Ardennes forest in mid-December 1944, aiming for Antwerp. The first units to be sent to help repel the German attack were from SHAEF reserve, the resting 82 A/B and 101 A/B.

Fighting on the Island continued all winter. The Island, like much of the Netherlands, being severely flooded over winter after the dykes were broken.

The very brave Dutch men and women who helped hundreds of 1 A/B soldiers evade capture and later return to Allied lines must be highly commended.

The Allies were impressed by the bravery shown when Dutch railway workers went on strike at the request of the

Dutch government in exile. They would not work until the end of the war, despite rail workers being shot. 30,000 of them went into hiding.

Occupied Netherlands suffered a severe famine affecting 4.5 million in the winter of 1944/5, exacerbated by the rail strike and the German retaliation of refusing to allow boats to transport food. Rations were reduced to 500 calories a day, 1/6th of that of UK civilian men. An estimated 18,000 died.

It was not until 4 February 1945 that the last village in Belgium was liberated. The last V2 rocket landed in Britain on 27 March 1945, killing 34 year old Ivy Millichamp.

The Market Garden battles enabled the British and Canadians of 21st Army Group in Nijmegen to attack from Beek and Groesbeek east into Northern Rhineland, the narrow and often flooded area between the Waal and the Rhine rivers, starting early February 1945, as Operation Veritable, the British crossed the Maas at Gennep, just south of Nijmegen, building in 8 days the longest Bailey pontoon bridge of the war, at 4,004ft (1.22km), forming a pincer operation with US Ninth Army crossing the river Maas further south near Maastricht codenamed Operation Grenade.

Two British and one US Corps crossed the Rhine east of Nijmegen in Operation Plunder in late March 1945, the aim

to cut off the industrial Ruhr area (the original objective of Market Garden). 1AAA had one last battle when they launched their delayed crossing of the Rhine. 1AAA using the 6 British and U.S. 17 Airborne in a successful “Operation Varsity”, the last airborne operation of the war, landing close enough to the front that the 4,000 allied artillery pieces used in the battle could support them on landing.

The ruined and heavily looted Arnhem was finally liberated by British Infantry and Canadian Armour during the four day “Operation Anger”, concluding on 16 April 1945.



Arnhem 14 April 1945

Adolf Hitler died by suicide on 30 April 1945. German forces in the northern half of the Netherlands signed the surrender document on 7 May 1945.

British Battle Honours awarded – Neerpelt (3 Regiments) Niderrijn (35), Arnhem 1944 (6), Nijmegen (4), Veghel (1) and Best (4). Five British VC's were awarded for individual bravery one RAF pilot and four to members of 1 A/B. Four were posthumous awards.

505 PIR received a Presidential Unit Citation for distinguished actions in Nijmegen. Two US Medals of Honor were awarded posthumously for outstanding bravery.

Phase 1		D-Day	D+1	D+2
ARNHEM	DZ/LZ	1 A/B land	1 A/B fighting	1 A/B fighting
	Oosterbeek	1 A/B	1 A/B	1 A/B
	City	Fighting	Fighting	German recapture
	Arnhem Bridge	North -1 A/B capture South -German	North -1 A/B fighting South -German	North -1 A/B isolated fighting South -German
ISLAND	Driel	Unoccupied	Unoccupied	Unoccupied
	Elst	Unoccupied	Unoccupied	Unoccupied
	Lent	German	German	German
NIJMEGEN	Bridges	German	German	German fighting
	City	German	German	82 A/B + XXX Corps fighting
	Groesbeek DZ/LZ	82 A/B land	82 A/B fighting	82 A/B
	Heumen Bridge	82 A/B capture	82 A/B	82 A/B
	Mook	Unoccupied	82 A/B fighting	82 A/B
	Grave Bridge	82 A/B capture	82 A/B	82 A/B
CORRIDOR	Upper Corridor	Unused	Unused	Open
	Veghel to Uden	Unoccupied	Unoccupied	101 A/B
	East of Veghel	Unoccupied	Unoccupied	Unoccupied
	Veghel	101 A/B capture	101 A/B fighting	101 A/B fighting
	West of Veghel	101 A/B land	101 A/B fighting	101 A/B fighting
	Sint Odenrode to Veghel	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B
	Lower Corridor	Unused	Unused	Open
	Sint Oedenrode	101 A/B capture	101 A/B	101 A/B
ZON	Zon	101 A/B capture	101 A/B fighting	101 A/B fighting
	Zon Bridge	Destroyed	Being rebuilt	Bailey Bridge built 101 A/B fighting
	Zon DZ/LZ	101 A/B land	101 A/B	101 A/B
	East of Zon	Unoccupied	German fighting	German fighting
	Best	German fighting	German fighting	German fighting
EINDHOVEN	City	German	101 A/B capture	101 A/B
	West of city	German	German	German
	Geldrop	German	German	German fighting
	Mierlo	German	German	German
	Nuenen	German	German	German
VALKENSWAARD	Town	XXX Corps capture	XXX Corps	VIII Corps
	West of town	German	German	German
	East of town	German	XXX Corps	VIII Corps
WEATHER		Day clear, night wet in NL	Fog UK a.m.	Fog cloud NL and UK.

Phase 2		D+3	D+4	D+5
ARNHEM	DZ/LZ	German fighting	German fighting	German
	Oosterbeek	1 A/B fighting	1 A/B fighting	1 A/B fighting
	City	German	German	German
	Arnhem Bridge	North -1 A/B isolated fighting South -German	North -1 A/B defeated South -German	German
ISLAND	Driel	Unoccupied	1 Polish A/B land	1 Polish A/B fighting
	Elst	German	German fighting	German fighting
	Lent	German fighting	XXX Corps fighting	XXX Corps fighting
NIJMEGEN	Bridges	82 A/B + XXX Corps capture	XXX Corps	XXX Corps
	City	82 A/B + XXX Corps fighting	82 A/B + XXX Corps capture	82 A/B + XXX Corps
	Groesbeek DZ/LZ	82 A/B + XXX Corps fighting	82 A/B	82 A/B
	Heumen Bridge	82 A/B	82 A/B	82 A/B
	Mook	82 A/B + XXX Corps fighting	82 A/B fighting	82 A/B
	Grave Bridge	82 A/B	43 Wessex	43 Wessex
CORRIDOR	Upper Corridor	Open	Open	Cut-Open
	Veghel to Uden	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B fighting
	East of Veghel	Unoccupied	German	German
	Veghel	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B fighting
	West of Veghel	German fighting	German fighting	German fighting
	Lower Corridor	Cut-Open	Open	Cut-Open
	Sint Odenrode to Veghel	German fighting	German fighting	German fighting
	Sint Oedenrode	101 A/B fighting	101 A/B	101 A/B
ZON	Zon	101 A/B fighting	101 A/B	101 A/B
	Zon Bridge	101 A/B fighting	101 A/B	101 A/B
	Zon DZ/LZ	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B
	East of Zon	German fighting	Unoccupied	VIII Corps
	Best	German fighting	German	German fighting
EINDHOVEN	City	101 A/B	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	West of city	German	Unoccupied	Unoccupied
	Geldrop	German fighting	VIII Corps capture	VIII Corps
	Mierlo	German	German	VIII Corps capture
	Nuenen	German fighting	Unoccupied	VIII Corps capture
VALKENSWAARD	Town	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	West of town	XII Corps	XII Corps	XII Corps
	East of town	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
WEATHER		Fog UK a.m.	Fog and rain	Clear sunny

Phase 3		D+6	D+7	D+8
ARNHEM	DZ/LZ	German	German	German
	Oosterbeek	1 A/B fighting	1 A/B fighting	1 A/B evacuate
	City	German	German	German
	Arnhem Bridge	German	German	German
ISLAND	Driel	1 Polish A/B	1 Polish A/B	1 Polish A/B
	Elst	German fighting	German fighting	XXX Corps capture
	Lent	XXX Corps	XXX Corps	XXX Corps
NIJMEGEN	Bridges	XXX Corps	XXX Corps	XXX Corps
	City	XXX Corps	XXX Corps	XXX Corps
	Groesbeek	82 A/B	82 A/B	82 A/B
	DZ/LZ			
	Heumen Bridge	82 A/B	82 A/B	82 A/B
	Mook	82 A/B	82 A/B	82 A/B
	Grave Bridge	Princess Irene	Princess Irene	Princess Irene
CORRIDOR	Upper Corridor	Open-Cut	Cut	Open
	Veghel to Uden	German fighting	101 A/B + XXX Corps	101 A/B
	East of Veghel	German fighting	XXX Corps	VIII Corps
	Veghel	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B
	West of Veghel	German fighting	German fighting	101 A/B fighting
	Lower Corridor	Open	Cut-Open	Open-Cut
	Sint Odenrode to Veghel	German fighting	German fighting	German fighting
	Sint Odenrode	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B
ZON	Zon	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B
	Zon Bridge	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	Zon DZ/LZ	101 A/B	101 A/B	101 A/B
	East of Zon	Unoccupied	Unoccupied	Unoccupied
	Best	German fighting	German fighting	German fighting
EINDHOVEN	City	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	West of city	XII Corps	XII Corps	XII Corps
	Geldrop	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	Mierlo	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	Nuenen	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
VALKENSWAARD	Town	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
	West of town	XII Corps	XII Corps	XII Corps
	East of town	VIII Corps	VIII Corps	VIII Corps
WEATHER		Fog then rain NL	Rain	Heavy rain at night

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* Recommended reading for greater details on these battles

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