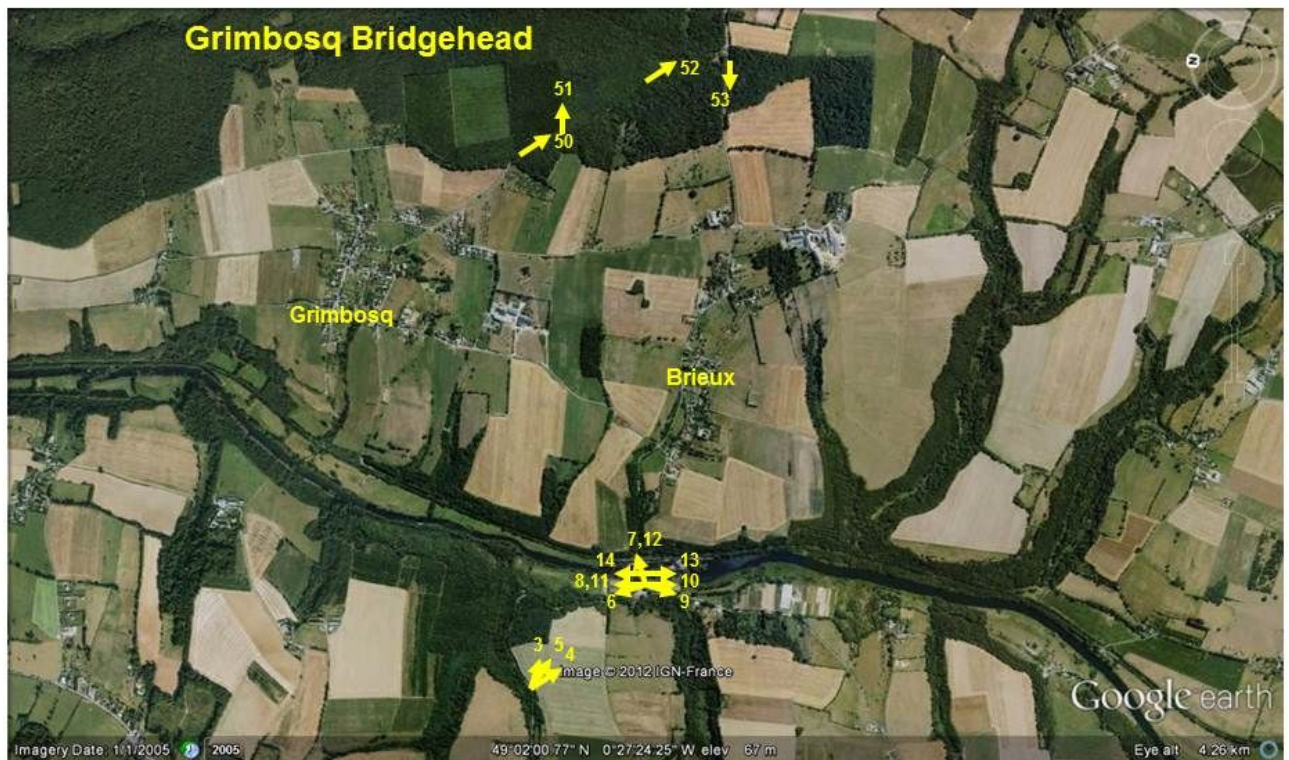
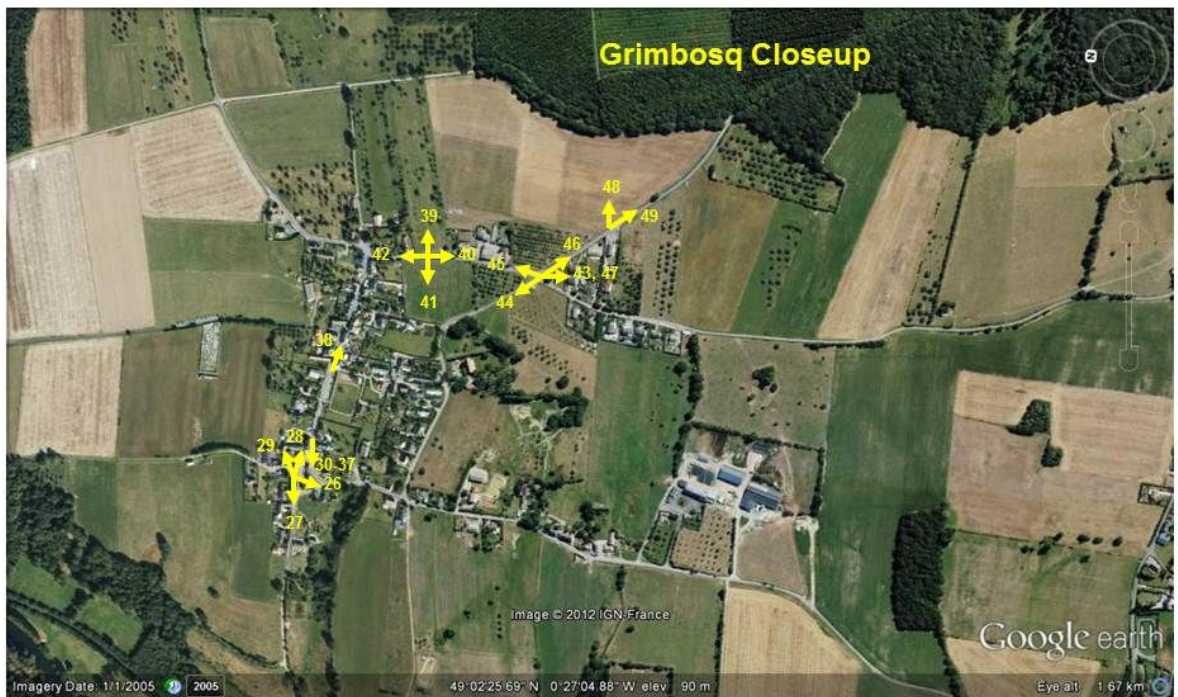


### **Grimbosq Battlefield Tour**

RMD and our UK contingent are working up a scenario about the battle of the Grimbosq bridgehead in Normandy. We wargamers often forget that when we push our toys around the table, the actual battle was fought over real towns, hills, and rivers, and some of the scars of these battles still are visible. Mr. Davies took a tour of this battlefield and made lots of photographs to show what the battlefield really looks like. The first few photos show where the photos were taken.









**Here are the photos themselves**

01 – The valley of the River Orne was a considerable military obstacle, with very few practicable crossing points for a modern, mechanised army. This photo, taken at Clécy, a few miles upstream from Grimbosq and Thury-Harcourt, clearly demonstrates how defensible some crossing points on the Orne were.



02 – As 01 above.



03 – The southern half of the bridgehead at the villages of Le Bas and Brieux, seen from British positions west of the Orne.



04 – As 03, but looking toward the south and Thury-Harcourt.





05 – As 03, but zoomed in on Le Bas and Brieux.



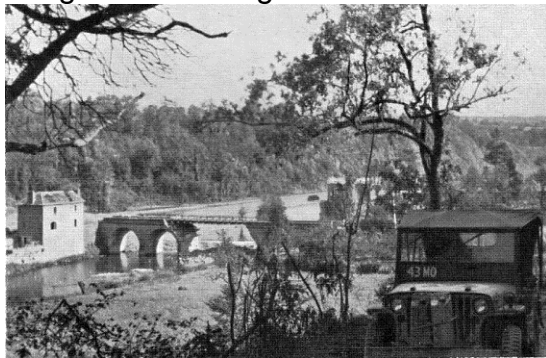
06 – The café at the western end of the Le Bas bridge.



07 – The same spot as 06, but looking east, across the bridge. The large building (a former water mill) is exactly the same as it was in 1944. The railway crossing is also still as it was.



07a – The bridge as it appeared in 1944. Note the light Bailey Bridge spanning the blown span. This Bailey bridge was sufficient to get light vehicles across, but a heavier Bailey had to be built alongside the original bridge in order to get tanks across.





08 – The same spot as 06, but looking north, down the Orne valley. It was in the further field that the first ford was found by the Staffordshire infantry.



09 – The same spot as 06, now looking south, up the Orne Valley.





10 – This photo was taken from the fallen telegraph pole visible in 09. Again, I'm looking south, up the Orne valley. Note the large pool created by the weir for Le Bas hydro-electric power station.



11 – Moving on to Le Bas bridge, there is this small memorial on the parapet. This is the only memorial to the Battle of Grimbosq.

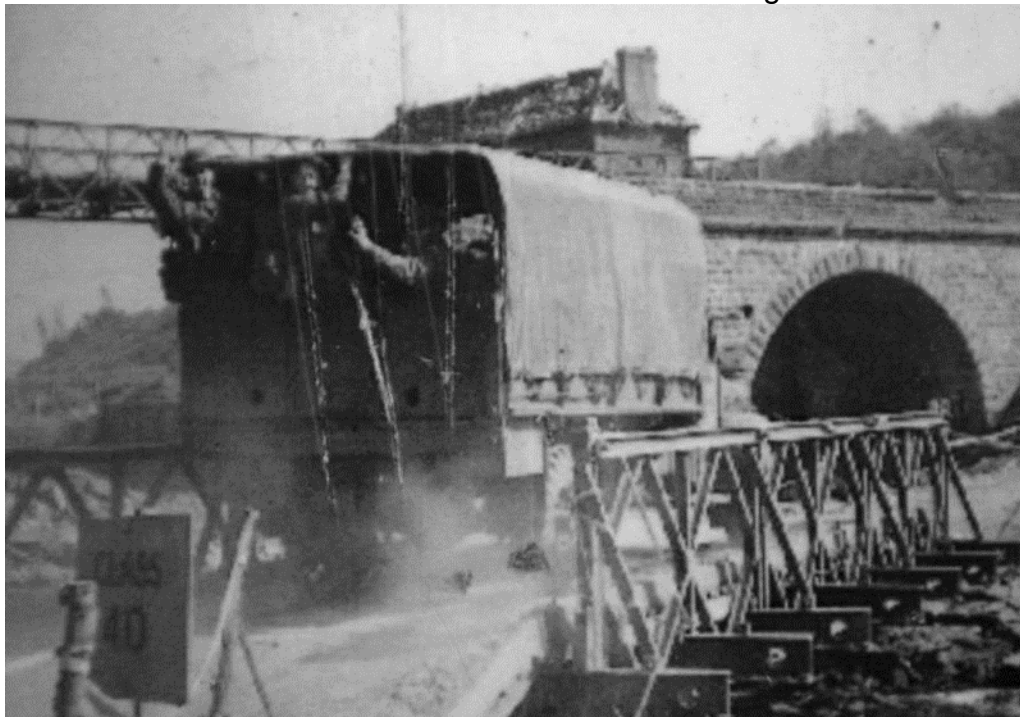




12 – A closer view of the old mill and railway halt at Le Bas.



12a – The bridge and old mill seen in 1944 from the heavier Bailey bridge on the southern side. As can be seen, this was a Class 40 bridge, which meant that Churchill tanks could now cross over into the bridgehead.



13 – The Le Bas hydro-electric power station and weir, as seen from Le Bas bridge. It might look modern, but it is clear from RAF recce photos that this was here in 1944.



14 – Looking north, down the Orne from Le Bas bridge. The infantry first forded the Orne at the far bend in the photo. The river was quite deep and fast when we visited, so it was hard to imagine how they managed it! This photo gives a very good impression of the deep, steep-sided and thickly-wooded Orne valley, which formed such a considerable military obstacle.





15 – Having moved east from the bridge to Le Bas, up a deep sunken road, we turned left (north) into open fields and paused to take a few photos of the southern half of the bridgehead. Here we look back at Le Bas village. It is most noticeable that there has been almost no development since 1944 – the houses and village/farm layouts are largely the same and the field boundaries and woods are still much where they were. The orchards have thinned out somewhat, however.



16 – The same spot as 15, but lookin back across the Orne to Goupillières village on the British-held high ground to the west. I took 03, 04 and 05 from the edge of the thick woods to the right of the photo.





17 – Much the same photo as 16, but panned slightly to the right – now looking due west across the Orne.



18 – The same spot as 15, but looking south-east to Brieux. The high ground of the Forêt du Grimbosq, from where Kampfgruppe Wüsché launched its attack, is visible in the background.





19 – The same spot as 15, but looking north toward Grimbosq. The thick patch of isolated woodland on the right is exactly the same as it was in 1944.



20 – Much the same photo as 19, but panned slightly to the right, looking due west toward the Forêt du Grimbosq.



21 – The same spot as 15 again; I stood here for quite a while! Now looking due south, back down the road to Le Bas.



22 – At last I've moved on, northwards to the farm at the southern edge of Grimbosq village.





23 – The same spot as 22, but zoomed in on the road sign!



24 – The same spot as 22, but looking north-west, toward the large chateau on the western bank of the Orne.



25 – Much the same photo as 24, but panned slightly to the left, now looking west.





26 – Now in Grimbosq itself, here is the tower at the western end of Grimbosq church.



27 – The same spot as 26, looking west. Note that the ground drops quite steeply away. Note the cemetery on the slope – many graves lie shattered and scarred by shot and shell.



28 – The same spot as 26, looking east, past the Mairie on the left and the church on the right (and wife and dad!).





29 – Much the same spot as 28, looking north-east to the Mairie, which looks as it did in 1944.



30 – Moving to the eastern end of the church, the WW1 war memorial looks as though it was 'Professionally Painted' (in eBay terminology).



31 – The war memorial is liberally peppered with damage from bullets coming from the German-held high ground to the east.





32 – Similarly, the eastern end of the church is peppered with bullet-holes and scars from shell-splinters.



33 – The same spot as 31, looking east, up the main street of Grimbosq, which is barely changed from how it looked in 1944.





34 – More battle-damage on the south-eastern corner of the church.





35 – More bullet-strikes can be seen on the WW1 shell-cases surrounding the war memorial.





36 – As 35.



37 – This is the front door of the building seen at the left in 28. A large chunk of stone has been knocked out of the door-pillar by a shell-splinter, which is still lodged deep in the stone.





38 – We are now moving east up Grimbosq's main street. Again, this would undoubtedly be familiar to anyone who was here in 1944.



39 – Now standing at the south-eastern corner of Grimbosq, we look eastward, through the remnants of a heavily-shelled orchard, to the threatening Forêt du Grimbosq, which is now only 200m away. This area of the forest was very heavily shelled during the battle; the trees were largely wiped off the map and had to be re-planted after the war.





40 – The same spot as 39, looking south along the road toward the calvary.



41 – The same spot as 39, looking west, across Grimbosq and the Orne, to the British-held heights beyond the western bank.





42 – The same spot as 39, looking north, at the western end of Grimbosq.



43 – Moving south, we come to the calvary at the crossroads between Grimbosq and Brieux. Like the war memorial, the stonework of the calvary bears the scars of battle.





44 – The same spot as 43, looking north-west, in the direction of Grimbosq church. Note the fully-planted orchard – the entire area was filled with orchards like this in 1944.



45 – The same spot as 43, looking north, back along the way we have come, toward Grimbosq. Note that the barn is the same one visible in 40.





46 – The same spot as 44, looking south-east, along the road to the Forêt du Grimbosq, where we are going next. Here there is some rare new building development, built on what was orchard in 1944.



47 – A closeup of the battle-damage on the calvary.





48 – Moving slightly south-east, we pause to take a photo of the ‘No-Man’s Land’ between the Forêt du Grimbosq and the eastern edge of the village. This area was subject to tremendous DF missions from the Royal Artillery, and these are consequently young trees that have re-grown since the war.



49 – The same spot as 48, but looking south-east, along the road into the forest.



50 – Moving up to the crest of the forest, it is now obvious from the small girth of the trees, that this has been re-grown since the war, due to the volumes of British DF artillery fire missions directed into this area.





51 – The forest was and is a very densely-planted hunting park, with plenty of undergrowth and cover for game animals. Wünsche's panzers were therefore restricted to one of two roads or a number of parallel 'rides' running east-west through the forest (this being one of them).



52 – As we reach the crest of the ridge, the trees are obviously more mature, having been subjected to less artillery fire than the area closer to Grimbosq village. This gives a better impression of how the forest must have looked to Wünsche's men, as they passed along this road.





53 – Having reached the t-junction with the main road running east out of Brieux, we turn right, to follow Wünsche's main axis of attack into Brieux.



54 – One of the more overgrown 'rides' through the forest.





55 – The same spot as 54, just inside the forest, looking west toward Briex.



56 – At the edge of the forest east of Briex, this is where the bulk of Wünsche's vehicles must have emerged from the forest.





57 – The same spot as 56, looking south-west.



58 – The same spot as 56, again looking south-west at a large farm on the south-eastern corner of the British bridgehead.





59 – The same spot as 56, again looking south-west.



60 – Moving down the road toward Brioux, we emerge from the forest into 'No-Man's Land'.





61 – The same spot as 60, looking north-east, back toward the forest. Note the scattered apple-trees – this was a far denser orchard in 1944.



62 – The same spot as 60, now looking due north, again through the old orchard. Des vaches Normandes!





63 – The same spot as 60, now looking due south.



64 – We've now moved down the hill, through Briex, and are now looking west from Briex toward Le Bas.





65 – The same spot as 64, looking south. It was somewhere in this area that Captain Jamieson of the Royal Norfolks won his VC, standing on a Churchill tank under enemy fire and indicating targets to the tank commander.



66 – The same spot as 64, looking north-west, past the western edge of Brieux, toward the Orne valley.



67 – The same spot as 64, looking east, back up the hill, through Brioux.



68 – We've now almost come full-circle and are back at Le Bas village. Here, we're standing on the main road at the northern edge of the village, looking south.





69 – The same spot as 68, looking south-west toward Goupillières in the distance.



70 – We're now driving back down the road from Le Bas to the bridge.





71 – The crossroads at the bottom of Le Bas village. Ahead of us is the bridge and to the right is the road to Grimbosq that we took earlier.



72 – The road from Le Bas to the bridge and railway halt cuts deeply down into the steep hillside. This was virtually the only vehicular exit from the bridge to the bridgehead.





73 – The roadsign warns us of the railway crossing and ahead of us lies Le Bas bridge once again. The tour's over.

