

Blood & Honour – Hitlerjügend in Normandy

Soldiers' Day

The Polish 10th Mounted Rifles at Jort – 15th August 1944

A Battlefield: WWII Scenario

By R Mark Davies



“The Polish soldier fights for the freedom of all nations but dies only for Poland.”
Major-General Stanisław Maczek, Commanding 1st Polish Armoured Division

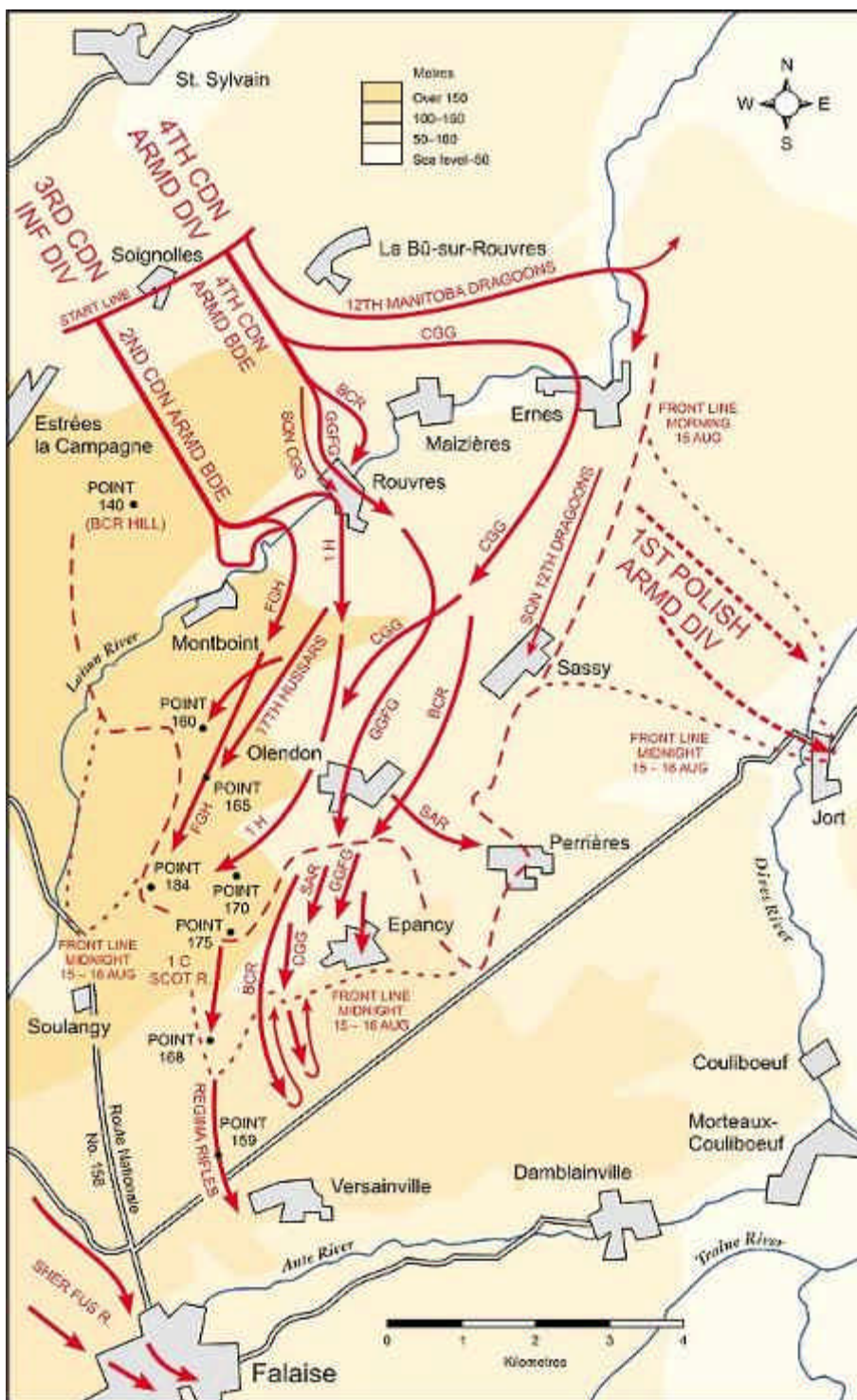
Historical Background

On 15th August 1944, Operation ‘Tractable’ – II Canadian Corps’ second offensive toward the ancient city of Falaise – was in its second day. ‘Tractable’ was intended to be a near-repeat of the successful first phase of Operation ‘Totalize’ a week earlier: that is, a break-in by two infantry divisions (2nd & 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions), followed by a break-out and exploitation by two armoured divisions (1st Polish and 4th Canadian Armoured Divisions). Supporting attacks would also be undertaken by 51st (Highland) Division on the left and 59th (Staffordshire) Division on the right. The ultimate objective for II Canadian Corps was to seize the city of Falaise and then to drive on south to link up with the Americans at Argentan, thus trapping the German armies in a pocket to the south-west of Falaise.

However, one unwanted aspect of Operation ‘Totalize’ that was repeated was the mistaken bombing, by RAF Bomber Command, of II Canadian Corps’ follow-up elements – particularly the two armoured divisions. Some 100-150 deaths and 250-300 wounded were caused by this mistaken bombing and one Canadian Field Battery had all its guns and transport destroyed by the bombing. Incredibly, despite exactly the same thing happening in the previous operation a week earlier, there was still no method in place for ground headquarters to directly communicate with the bombers. A Canadian air observation pilot took off and attempted to warn off the bombers in his tiny Auster aircraft, but to no avail. Troops on the ground fired yellow smoke, which they would use to indicate friendly units to fighter-bombers, but weren’t to know that Bomber Command was this day using yellow smoke to mark its targets! One senior Canadian officer even had to be dissuaded by his staff from ordering his anti-aircraft guns to open fire on the bombers.

Despite the disruption caused by this ‘friendly fire’, the two Canadian infantry divisions attacked as planned and seized crossing points on the River Laison. However, the Laison proved more of an obstacle than anticipated, which caused considerable delay to the operation. Nevertheless, the German 272. *Infanterie-Division* and 85. *Infanterie-Division* were crumbling in the face of the determined Canadian advance and despite the best efforts of 12. *SS-Panzer-Division* ‘*Hitlerjügend*’, elements of 4th Canadian Armoured Division were already finding ‘The Green Fields Beyond’, as they wheeled right towards Falaise.

With the Canadians advancing south-west toward Falaise, but encountering bitter and fanatical resistance from 'Hitlerjügend' on the high ground around Soulangy, the 1st Polish Armoured Division finally had the chance to show what they could do, as they were launched south-eastwards, with the objective of breaking out, bypassing Falaise and driving on to link up with the Americans at Argentan. Unlike their extremely restricted deployment during Operation 'Totalize', they finally had space for manoeuvre.



The 1st Polish Armoured Division's first objective was to seize a practicable crossing on the River Dives and with that in mind, a fast armoured reconnaissance battlegroup was formed, with orders to bypass German positions around Sassy, to advance to Jort on the Dives, to find a bridge or ford and to establish a bridgehead there.

As the Poles advanced, the Poles were burning for revenge; not only for the humiliation of 1939 and their recent losses in Operation 'Totalize', but also for Warsaw, which had risen up in open insurrection on 1st August and was now burning as the Germans brutally crushed the city. With this in mind, the Poles advanced confidently into battle. After all, 15th August is an auspicious day for Polish soldiers to start a battle; it is Poland's national 'Soldiers' Day'...

Briefing for Major Jan Majiejowski, Commanding 10 Pułk Strzelców Konnych

Situation

Having bypassed the remaining German positions around Sassy, your regiment, the 10th Mounted Rifles (*10 Pułk Strzelców Konnych* or *10 PSK*), has reached the high ground at Hill 74 and is now observing the valley of the River Dives; specifically the bridge at Jort.

You presently have two squadrons at your immediate disposal – 1st and 3rd Squadrons. The 2nd Squadron, 1st Anti-Tank Battery and 1st Squadron/10th Dragoons are presently covering your right flank, but are moving up and will be here soon. Your Reconnaissance Troop meanwhile, is screening your left flank and the 2nd Anti-Tank Battery is screening the German positions now in your rear, around Sassy.

You have therefore ordered 1st & 3rd Squadrons to move forward by bounds to secure first the railway crossings and then the bridge and any other crossings over the Dives in the vicinity of Jort. The rest of your battlegroup will join you when they can – most critically the 10th Dragoons, whose infantry will be vital in securing the holding the bridgehead.

Mission

You are to secure and hold a river crossing at Jort, with the intention of creating a bridgehead through which the division may pass over the Dives.

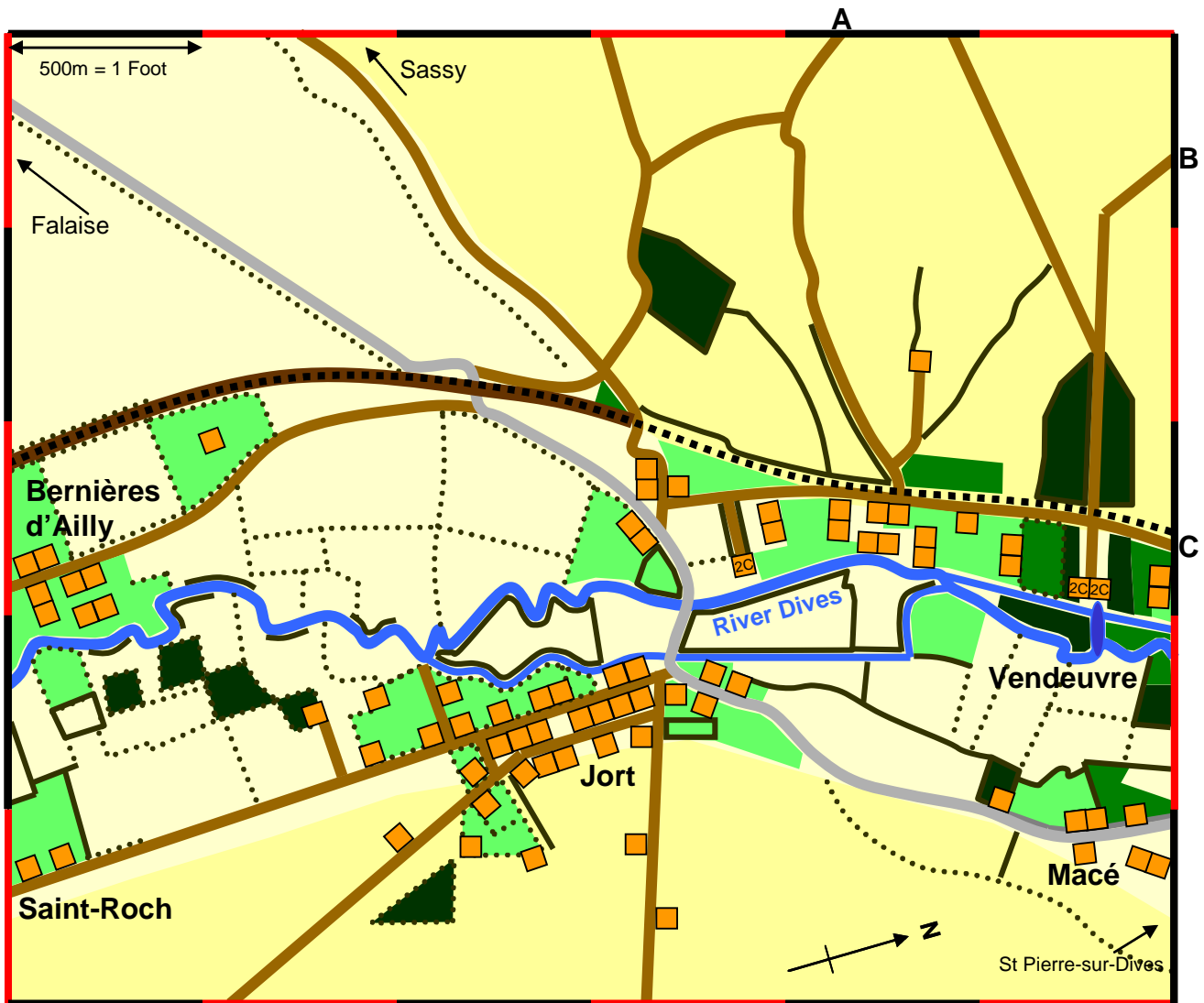
Execution

General Outline

- As you lack infantry, Speed and Surprise must be used to the greatest advantage.
- Failing that, use maximum firepower!
- If the bridge is too securely held by the enemy, scout the riverbank for a suitable fording site.

Deployment & Reinforcements

- Turn 1: No.1 & No.3 Squadrons will arrive on the table edge, anywhere between Point A & Point B.
- Turn 5: The RHQ and Canadian Forward Observer will arrive between Point A & Point B.
- Turn 8: No.2 Squadron and No.1 Anti-Tank Company arrive between Point A & Point B.
- Turn 12: No.1 Squadron, 10th Dragoons arrives between Point A & Point B.
- Turn 15: Recce Troop arrives anywhere between Point B & Point C.



Map Key

 1-level Contour	 Paved Road	 High Hedge
 Woods with Underbrush	 Unpaved Road	 Low Hedge
 Cleared Woods	 Railway Embankment	 Low Wall
 Orchards	 Railway	 Built-Up Area (Stone-Built)
 Ornamental Lake	 River Dives	 Built-Up Area (2-level Chateau)
	 Wide & Deep Stream	

Friendly Forces

- Your order of battle is detailed at Annex A below. Essentially it consists of your entire regiment, plus a squadron of the 10th Dragoons (motor infantry company) and an Anti-Tank Group, consisting of the 1st Anti-Tank Regiment's two M10c self-propelled 17pdr batteries (however, the 2nd Battery has been left back to screen enemy positions on the right flank).
- You also have a FO attached from 2nd Canadian AGRA, who is riding in one of your Liaison Troop's scout cars. You have thus far been able to use his medium guns to great effect in dislodging enemy troops from their positions. However, the demands on the guns are great and they are therefore only available as General Support.

- You have not been allocated a Forward Air Controller and cannot therefore expect any tactical air support.
- You are at present at the tip of the division's advance. 1st Tank Regiment is due to move up on your right, aiming for Bernières d'Ailly, while 24th Lancers are due to move up on your left, aiming for Vendeuve.
- All elements of your force are classed as 'Experienced', except for Captain Wasowski's 1st Squadron, which is classed as 'Veteran'.

Enemy Forces

- As you know, you are at the tip of the advance and have bypassed known enemy positions, so the enemy is all around you.
- Enemy forces encountered thus far have comprised elements of the 85th and 272nd Infantry Divisions. However, these two divisions have been crushed by Operation 'Tractable' and you seem to be encountering combat support elements such as artillery batteries and headquarters. It therefore seems that you have broken through the crust of the enemy's defence line. However, the Canadians are finding the going much stiffer a few miles to the west, where they have encountered at least one SS panzer division.

Reconnoitering the River-Bank

- In order to recce the river-bank for fords, first move a unit to conform to the river-bank.
- To recce a section of riverbank, a unit must take a full turn doing nothing else (including rallying off Disorder or Suppression – a unit may not recce if it has to rally that turn). However, the unit may fire in Defensive/Opportunity Fire or defend itself against close assault.
- In the next Allied turn, roll a D10. The umpire will then inform you if this section of river-bank is fordable or not.
- If a ford is discovered, an attempt may be made to ford the river, but note that it is still difficult. Apply an additional -3 Bog Down modifier to all Bog-Down checks while attempting to ford.
- If the recce attempt is unsuccessful, mark that spot on the river. The river has now been recce'd 2 inches either side of this marker and is not fordable anywhere within this 4-inch stretch. No other recce attempts may be made in this stretch of river.

Fire Support

- The 5.5 Medium Battery fires 4x Large templates in exactly the same manner as a 25pdr Field Battery - 4 wide for shelling or 2 wide for concentration. Though for the purposes of this scenario, it may not be split into troop (half-battery) missions. Factors are +1 vV & +2 vTGSV for shelling and +2/+3 for concentration. Smoke is not available in this scenario, though of course the Cromwell CS tanks may fire smoke.

Game Sequence

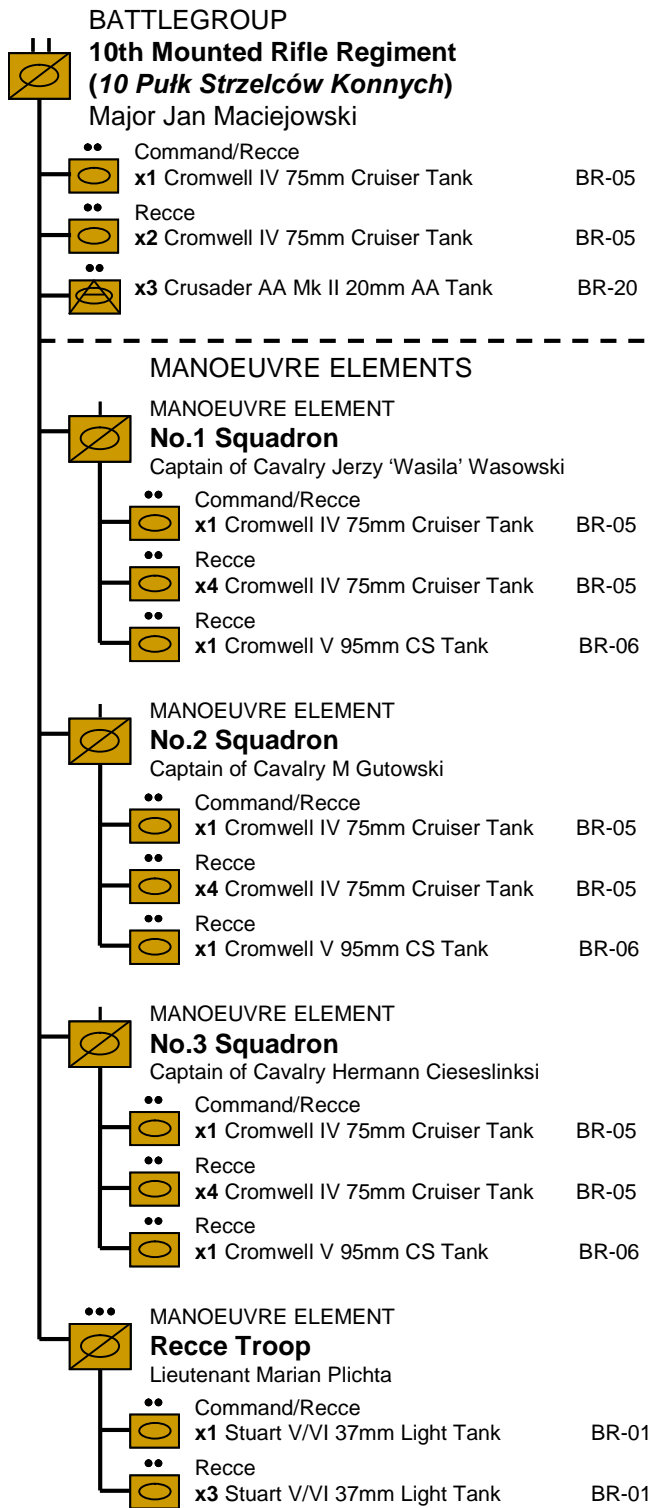
- The Poles have the first turn.
- The game lasts for 20 turns or until one side concedes.

Victory Conditions

- **1 VP** for each KO'd Vehicle of Gun.
- **1 VP** for each ME with more than 25% casualties.
- **2 VP** for each ME with more than 50% casualties.
- **3 VP** for each ME with more than 75% casualties.
- **1 VP** for each ford located by the Poles.
- **5 VP** for each Polish ME or HQ Element with at least 50% of its units across the river by Turn 20.
- **10 VP** if one side has the only un-disordered units within 10 inches of the bridge **and** on the German side of the river by Turn 20.

	Germans	Poles
Total Victory	If the Poles do not have un-disordered units across the river at the end of Turn 20.	If the Poles have secured the 10 VP victory condition and have more than double the German VP total.
Partial Victory	If the Poles have un-disordered units across the river, but have fewer VPs than the Germans.	If the Poles have crossed the river and have secured more VPs than the Germans.





DIVISIONAL ATTACHMENTS

MANOEUVRE ELEMENT

No.1 Battery, 1st Anti-Tank Regiment
(1 Pułk Przeciwpancerny)

- Command
- ▲ x1 Crusader III OP Tank BR-P36
- x6 M10c 17pdr Tank Destroyer BR-14

MANOEUVRE ELEMENT

No.1 Squadron, 10th Dragoon Regiment
(10 Pułk Dragonów)
 Captain Giera

- Command
- HQ x1 Commander BR-50
- Transport
- x1 Daimler Dingo Scout Car BR-36
- x9 Infantry (1 with PIAT) BR-49
- Organic Fire Support
- x1 2-inch Mortar BR-55
- Transport
- x6 M5/M9 Halftrack Carrier BR-34
- Recce
- x2 Infantry (1 with PIAT) BR-49
- Recce
- x1 Bren Light Machine Gun BR-53
- Organic Fire Support/Recce
- x1 2-inch Mortar BR-55
- Transport
- x4 Universal Carrier (with MG) BR-31
- x1 Vickers Medium Machine Gun BR-54
- Transport
- x1 Universal Carrier (no MG) BR-31
- x1 6pdr Anti-Tank Gun BR-46
- Transport
- x1 Loyd Carrier BR-32

2nd CANADIAN AGRA SUPPORT

GENERAL FIRE SUPPORT ELEMENT

Battery, 5th Canadian Medium Regiment,
Royal Canadian Artillery

- On-Table Attachment/Recce
- ▲ x1 Forward Observer BR-52
- Transport/Recce
- x1 Humber Scout Car BR-38
- General Fire Support
- x4 5.5-inch Gun

Briefing For SS-Untersturmführer Albert Weinecke, SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 12

Situation

You have been dispatched by the commander of *I. SS-Panzer-Korps* to assess the situation on the right flank, where *85. Infanterie-Division* is reported to have crumbled in the face of Allies assaults. Upon arrival, you discovered that *85. ID* has indeed collapsed, but that elements of the divisional pioneers and anti-tank battalions are holding firm, defending bridges on the Dives in the vicinity of Jort, Vendeuvres and St Pierre-sur-Dives.

Having reported this fact back to the corps commander, he has ordered you remain at Jort, with the intention of adding some backbone to the defence there. You are also to continue reporting back regarding the tactical situation there.

The line is heavily-pressed everywhere from the Orne in the west to your location in the east. However, *I. SS-Panzer-Korps* has been refused permission to withdraw to more defensible terrain. You must therefore hold the line! Should the Dives line be breached, the entire right flank of the corps could be rolled up! There is precious little to spare at the moment, but he will send what armour he can to your aid – elements of *SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 12* and *II. SS-Panzer-Regiment 12* are deployed along the Jort-Falaise highway and may be able to assist you.

With the corps commander's words ringing in your ears, reports start coming in of tanks approaching... Lots of tanks...

Mission

You are to hold the Dives river crossings at all costs, with the intention of preventing a collapse of the corps' right flank.

Execution

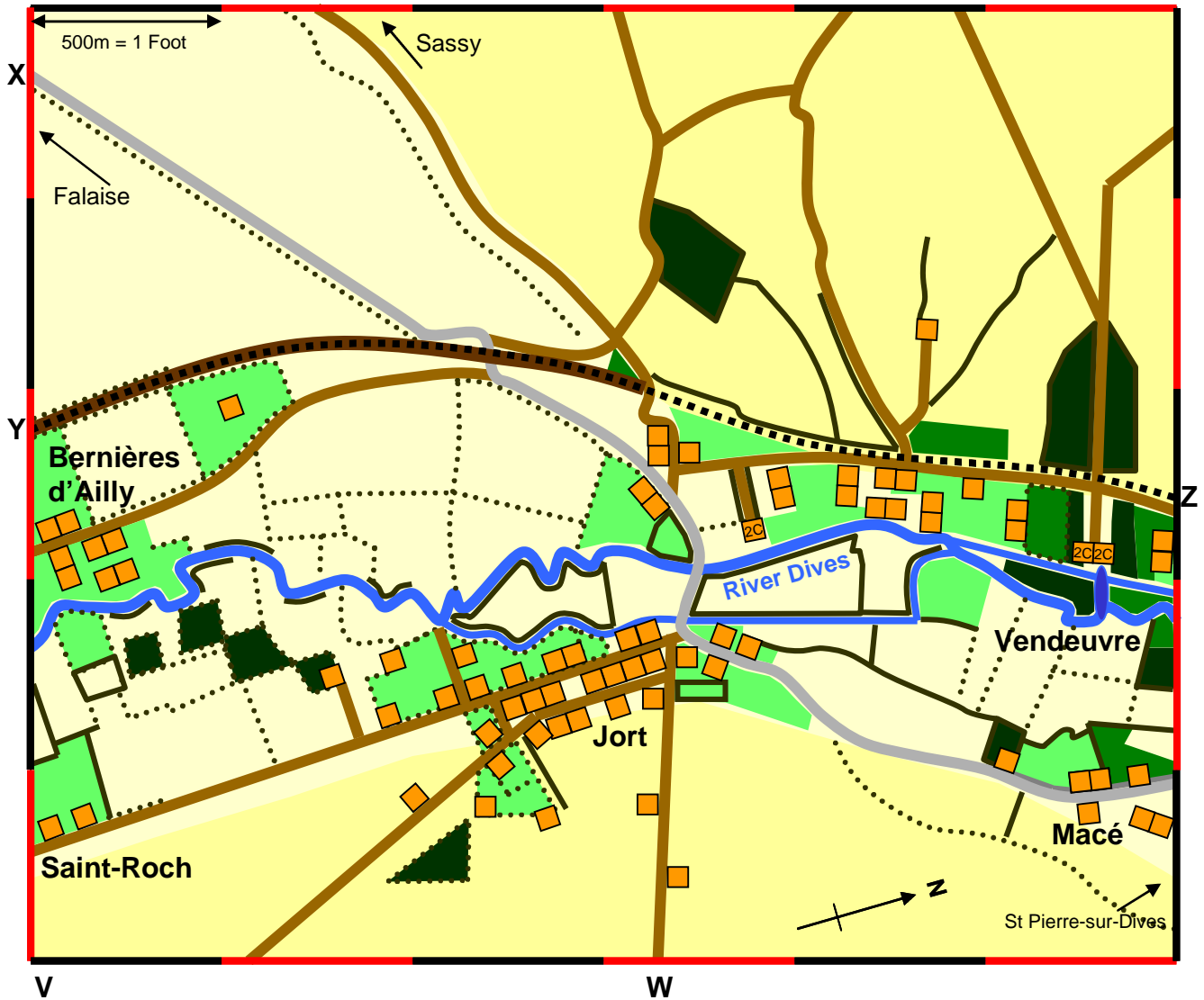
General Outline

















- You don't have a lot to work with here at the moment. You will need to co-ordinate your efforts with the commanders of the pioneer and anti-tank units locally and devise a defence plan that maximises your strengths.
- Your ace is the section of highly-potent 8.8cm PaK 43/41 anti-tank guns. Deploy it wisely.

Deployment & Reinforcements

- Your reconnaissance group, pioneer company and anti-tank company may deploy anywhere east of the railway line (line Y-Z).
- All Troops and Guns are dug-in to weapons pits (not connected by trenches), while the armoured cars may be hull-down.
- All units are deployed as hidden unit markers and you may also deploy 13 dummy unit markers.
- The FO must be attached to one of the three MEs on table at the start.

- Turn 5: The SS Jagdpanzer IV platoon arrives on the southern table edge, at Point X (the Falaise road).
- Turn 12: The SS Panzer platoon arrives on the eastern table edge, anywhere between Point V & Point W.



Map Key		
	1-level Contour	 Paved Road
	Woods with Underbrush	 Unpaved Road
	Cleared Woods	 Railway Embankment
	Orchards	 Railway
	Ornamental Lake	 River Dives
		 Wide & Deep Stream
		 High Hedge
		 Low Hedge
		 Low Wall
		 Built-Up Area (Stone-Built)
		 Built-Up Area (2-level Chateau)

Friendly Forces

- Your order of battle is detailed at Annex A below.
- Your flanks are secure – no enemy penetration of the Dives river line has been reported. Other bridges at St Pierre-sur-Dives and Vendeuvre have been demolished.
- There are still elements of *85. Infanterie-Division* holding out to your front and yet more retreating. You therefore need to keep the bridge at Jort intact and open, to allow friendly units to withdraw with their heavy equipment. The pioneers have in an case, already exhausted their stocks of explosives in the demolition of the other bridges.
- Other elements of *12. SS-Panzer-Division 'Hitlerjugend'* are operating on your left. With luck, some of these will be sent to assist you.
- All elements of *12. SS-Panzer-Division 'Hitlerjugend'* in this scenario are rated as 'Élite'. The elements of *85. Infanterie-Division* are rated as 'Experienced'.

Enemy Forces

- The bulk of forces presently engaged appear to be Canadian, but British units, as well as a Polish armoured formation, have also been reported. They have a seemingly-endless supply of tanks, artillery, ammunition and air support.
- The enemy are reported to have broken through the crust of *85. Infanterie-Division's* defence and are exploiting the breach east of Sassy. You can therefore expect to meet armoured or reconnaissance units first.

Game Sequence

- The Allies have the first turn.
- The game lasts for 20 turns or until one side concedes.

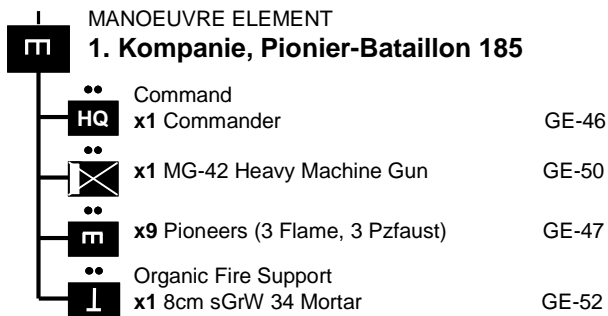
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- **1 VP** for each ford located by the Poles.
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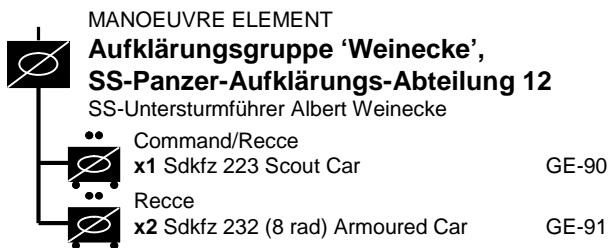
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Partial Victory	If the Poles have un-disordered units across the river, but have fewer VPs than the Germans.	If the Poles have crossed the river and have secured more VPs than the Germans.

The German Defenders of Jort

Elements, 85. Infanterie-Division

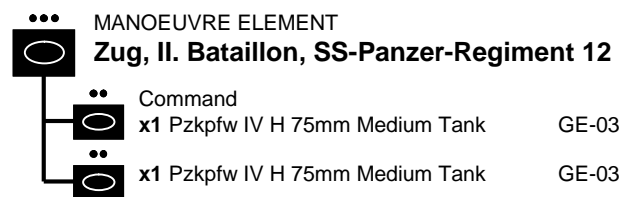
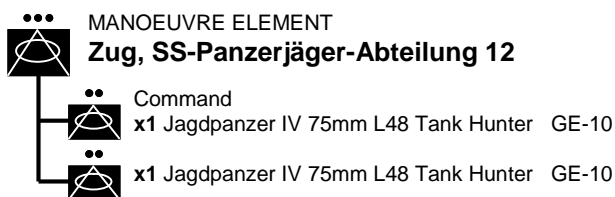


Elements, 12. SS-Panzer-Division 'Hitlerjugend'



German Reinforcements

Elements, 12. SS-Panzer-Division 'Hitlerjugend'



Terrain Effects

Terrain	Concealment	Cover	Mobility		
			Troops	Tracked or Half-Tracked Vehicle	Wheeled Vehicle or Gun
Open	Nil	Nil	Full Speed	Full Speed	Full Speed
Woods with Underbrush	Dense Area	Soft	Full Speed	Half Speed & Bog	Half Speed & Bog
Cleared Woods	Dense Area	Soft	Full Speed	Half Speed	Half Speed & Bog
Orchards	Sparse Area	Soft	Full Speed	Half Speed	Half Speed
Streets	Dense Area	Soft	Full Speed	Half Speed	Half Speed
Built-Up Area	Dense Edge	Hard	Full Speed	Impassable	Gun: Half Speed Veh: Impassable
River Dives	Nil	Nil	Breach & Bog	See Polish Brief	Impassable
Wide & Deep Stream	Nil	Nil	Breach	Breach & Bog	Breach & Bog
Ornamental Lake	Nil	Nil	Impassable	Impassable	Impassable
High Hedgerow	Dense Edge	Soft	Breach	Breach & Bog	Breach & Bog
Low Hedgerow	Sparse Edge	Soft	Half Speed	Breach	Breach & Bog
Low Wall	Sparse Edge	Hard	Breach	Breach & Bog	Impassable
Paved Road	Nil	Nil	Double Speed	Double Speed	Double Speed
Unpaved Road	Nil	Nil	Full Speed	Full Speed	Full Speed
Railway Line	Nil	Nil	Full Speed	Breach	Breach
Railway Embankment	Dense Edge	Hard	Breach & Bog	Impassable	Impassable

Optional Rules Used In This Scenario

- **MG Grazing Fire** (see website)
- The British Forward Observer Replacement rule may not be used in this scenario.

Scenario-Balancing Options

Favouring the Polish

- Increase troop quality of all MEs to 'Veteran'.

Favouring the Germans

- The Poles reported the armour coming from Falaise as 'Tigers & Panthers', declaring one of the Tigers to have been knocked out. However, Hubert Meyer's history disputes this, pointing out that the only Tigers were with *Kampfgruppe Wünsche*, which was busy fighting at Soulangy on the day in question (some Polish sources even go so far as to claim that *KGr Wünsche* was defending Jort). However, as a scenario-balancing option, it might be fun to replace the Jagdpanzer IVs with Tiger Is, or alternatively bring on a Tiger or two from the Falaise direction if the Jagdpanzers get knocked out or if the Poles are having too easy a time of it.
- Allow the Germans to replace one of the 5cm PaK 38s with a second 8.8cm PaK 43/41.
- Deploy 12 inches of mixed minefields and a further 12 inches of barbed wire – but not on the main (paved) road.

Umpire's Eyes Only!

- The Polish player has a one-in-ten chance of successfully finding a ford each time he reconnoiters a section of river-bank. You can simply ask him to roll a 10 on a D10, but I prefer to keep the player guessing: when the player rolls his recce die, secretly roll your own die – if the numbers match, he has found a ford.
- Remember that once a section of river has been reconnoitered, that four-inch section may not be reconnoitered again. An easy way to keep track of this is to place some sort of marker in the river at that point and tell the Polish player that his men have searched for 2 inches in each direction from that point, but to no avail – try somewhere else.
- Of course, if a ford is discovered, a suitable marker needs to be placed to indicate that fact. Note that a ford is only passable to units in single file and if a unit becomes bogged down in the ford it will be impassable until the ford is cleared again.
- It is entirely possible that the Poles might be unlucky and not find any fords. This is statistically unlikely, but such are the fortunes of war! Of course, if using the 'secret die roll' method, the umpire could allow a ford to be discovered at around Turn 15, if the Poles haven't found one by then. However, I would then disallow the next 'genuine' discovery, if one should occur.

