

THE BATTLE FOR SWORD BEACH

Will the British 'Funnies' give the men of Yorkshire the edge they need to overcome the tough German fortifications?



Sword Beach was on the eastern flank of the D-Day landings just west of the Orne River. The British 3rd Division, General Montgomery's own division in the Battle of France in 1940, was assigned the task of landing on Sword Beach and fighting its way inland to link up with the airborne operations across the Orne River and, if possible, capture Caen.

An off-shore reef limited the assault to a single brigade frontage at *La Brèche*, 'the Breach'. The divisional commander, Major-General Tom Rennie, selected 8 Brigade as his assault force with Lieutenant-Colonel C F Hutchinson's 2nd Battalion, The East Yorkshire Regiment landing on Queen Red (as the eastern sector was called). The 1st Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment was to land on Queen White to the west. The reserve battalion landing behind them as the second wave was the 1st Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment.

The brigade was well supported with specialised assault armour from the 79th Armoured Division and the DD swimming tanks of 27th Armoured Brigade. The 1st Special Service Brigade of four Commandos landed in the following waves to capture the strong points either side of the landing area and push inland to the Orne bridges to link with the paratroops that had captured them during the night.

Facing the landings was *Generalleutnant* Wilhelm Richter's 716. *Infanteriedivision*. Although the division has been in Normandy for more than two years, its troops have spent most of their time labouring on fortifications and little time on combat training. Sword Beach fell in the sector of 736. *Grenadierregiment*, in particular *Hauptmann* Heinrich Kuhtz's 10th Company.

The defenders were well dug in and well supported with machine-guns, mortars and artillery (every gun in the division was sited to fire on the beaches), but would need immediate reinforcement to prevent the enemy getting ashore. Unfortunately, the division lacked any form of motorised reserve. Worse, the closest reserve to hand was 642. *Ost Bataillon*, a battalion of Russian 'volunteers' recruited from the prisoner of war camps.

The nearest armoured troops were 21. *Panzerdivision* south of Caen. This division was fairly well equipped and trained,

but could not be expected to reach the beach in strength until late in the afternoon.

Whatever the outcome, Sword Beach was looking to be a hard fight and the troops knew it. Major 'Banger' King commanding A Company of the East Yorks, like Wolfe at Quebec, read to his men as the landing craft approached the beach. Shakespeare's stirring speech from King Henry V echoed in their ears as they stormed ashore.

*'On, on, you noblest English!
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof,
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought,
And sheath'd their swords for lack of argument: ...
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'*

REFIGHTING QUEEN RED

The battle for Queen Red Beach was a dramatic example of courage under fire and the value of specialised assault armour in amphibious assaults. The Hit the Beach mission on page 29 is ideally suited to refighting this battle in miniature.

Although the assault was made by a full battalion of infantry, it is easiest to scale the battle down to a company-sized action with each platoon in the game standing in for a full company in the historical battle. Obviously the battlefield has to be scaled down to match as well.

The following two pages give a table layout covering all of the important features of Queen Red Beach and strongpoints Cod and Sole (Daimler remains off the table to the east of Sole) and a list of the forces from 3rd Division and 716. *Infanteriedivision* that were engaged in the fighting there.

QUEEN RED, 6 JUNE 1944

STRONGPOINT COD

The defences of Strongpoint Cod (known as *Widerstandnest 20* or *WN 20* to the Germans) are formidable. Only the eastern part of Strongpoint Cod is shown as the rest faces Queen White beach where the 1st Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment is landing.

The anchor of Strongpoint Cod is an 8.8cm PaK bunker sited to fire along the beach. This is supported by a 5cm KwK bunker sited to fire along the beach to each side and inland, but completely protected from attacks coming directly off the beach by an impenetrable wall that covers its beach frontage. East of this the sea wall is covered by a Tank Turret bunker mounting an old Renault R-35 turret.

Cod is protected by mines, barbed wire and trenches making it almost impervious to frontal assault.

Further inland beyond the flooded marshes, Strongpoint Sole (*WN 14*) is the company HQ position. This strongpoint is mainly a command centre and has little in the way of defences aside from barbed wire.

Strongpoint Daimler (*WN 12*) houses four artillery pieces in formidable emplacements sited to fire out to sea and also cover the landing beaches at Sword Beach. Daimler is positioned off the table just east of Sole, but can fire artillery bombardments to anywhere on the table.



BRITISH 3RD DIVISION

2ND BN, EAST YORKSHIRE REGT, 8TH BDE

Battalion HQ

A Company

B Company

C Company

D Company

6th (Pioneer) Platoon

A Company, 2nd Bn, The Middlesex Regt

45th Battery, 20th Anti-tank Regt, RA

76th (Highland) Field Regt, RA

B Squadron 13/18th Hussars

77th Assault Squadron, RE

A Squadron, 22nd Dragoons

2 Troop, 4 Commando

RIFLE COMPANY (CONFIDENT TRAINED) (PAGE 142 OVERLORD)

Company HQ

Rifle Platoon (at full strength)

Rifle Platoon (at full strength)

Rifle Platoon (at full strength)

Rifle Platoon (at full strength)

Pioneer Platoon (at full strength)

Machine-gun Platoon (at full strength with carriers)

Assault Anti-tank platoon (SP), RA (4x M10 SP guns)

Assault Field Battery, Royal Artillery (1x Gun Troop of Priest SP guns)

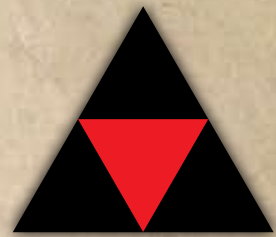
DD Armoured Platoon (3x Sherman DD tanks)

Breaching Group (2x AVRE Sections)

Breaching Group (3x Sherman Crab flail tanks)

Commando Company (1x Section)

This platoon must not be in the first wave.



The first wave ashore on Queen Red Beach was made up of soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The East Yorkshire Regiment with armoured support from 13/18th Hussars, 22nd Dragoons, and 77th Assault Squadron. Following waves came from the 1st Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment supported by the machine-gunners of the 2nd Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment.

GERMAN 716. INFANTERIEDIVISION

III/736. GRENADIERREGIMENT



Bataillongruppe (Strongpoint Sole)

Granatwerferzug (Strongpoint Cod)

4/1716. Artillerieregiment (Strongpoint Daimler)

ALARMHEITEN

4. Kompanie, 736. Grenadierregiment

3/642. Ost Bataillon

736. Sturmzug

3. Kompanie, 22. Panzerregiment, 21. Panzerdivision

FESTUNGSKOMPANIE (CONFIDENT TRAINED) (PAGE 26 ATLANTIC WALL))

Company HQ (with one HMG Nest, at **A**)

Sword Widerstandnest (at **B**), containing:

One Command MG team, five MG teams, two 8cm Mortar Tobruk Nests, three HMG Tobruk Nests, one 7.5cm FK nest, one 5cm KwK nest, one R-35 turret, and one 8.8cm Pak43 Pillbox.

716. Festungs Artillery Battery (off table, Observer teams at **A** & **B**)

RESERVES

Fusilier Platoon (at full strength)

Ost Grenadier Platoon (at full strength)

Fusilier Scout Platoon (one Squad with Command Panzerknacker SMG)

Panzer Platoon (four Panzer IV tanks rated Confident Veteran)

The Panzer Platoon must be the last reserve platoon to arrive.

The German defenders were from *III. Bataillon, 736. Grenadierregiment* of *716. Infanteriedivision*. All of the division's guns were deployed well forward where they could fire on the defenders as they landed. The immediately available reserves were mainly unsupported infantry, although the tanks of *21. Panzerdivision* arrived towards the end of the day.

WHAT IF BATTLES

While the forces shown above represent the forces that actually landed on Queen Red Beach and those that opposed them, you can also play the scenario with different forces to see how the battle would have turned out if the commanders had committed different forces to the battle.

An Allied force attacking at Queen Red Beach should consist of 1875 points based on an Infantry Company.

An Axis force should consist of 1250 points based on an Infantry Company. Any tank or self-propelled gun platoons should be the last to appear from reserve.