

Chapter Four

Action

The 6th Airborne were now totally involved on all sides. The coup-de-main force had come in by gliders. The various Battalions were trying to regroup, deal with the enemy and proceed with all haste to carry out their orders, which were to seize and hold the bridges over the River Orne and Canal de Caen, then establish a bridgehead on the west bank of the canal until relieved by seaborne troops. The bridges were to be captured intact if possible, in addition a battery position, thought to be abandoned, was to be neutralised and occupied.

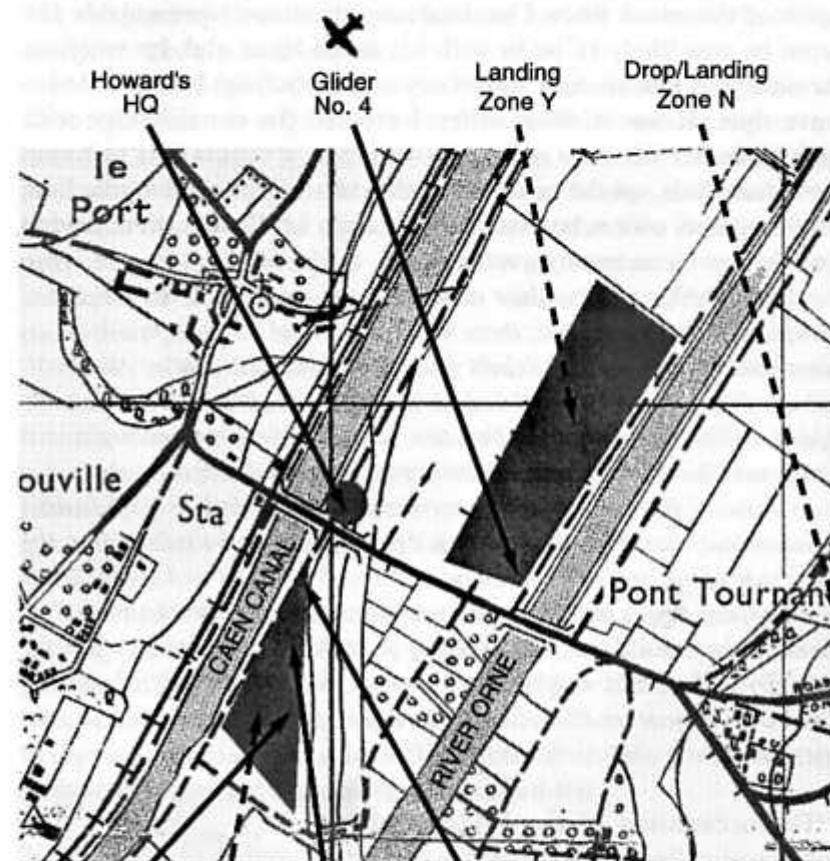
"This force (coup-de-main) landed as close to the bridges as possible at 0020hrs D-Day (6th June). This force consisted of a Company and two Platoons of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (with certain attached troops) under Major Howard (Ox and Bucks) and was carried in six gliders. Lieutenant McDonald travelled with this force for liaison duties between Howard and myself."

The coup-de-main party was successful and as a result it was not necessary for the Battalion to cross the water obstacles in dinghies as had been expected.

Eddy Gurney, who had earlier been violently sick on landing, was now one of a group of parachutists, and relates: *"One of the 20 to 30 parachutists was a wireless operator who was trying to contact the glider troops that had landed just before us near to the bridges and, we hoped, had captured them intact. We were about 200 yards from the first bridge when the wireless operator shouted 'Ham and Jam', the signal that the glider troops had captured the bridges intact. I immediately threw away my kit bag containing the dinghy that would have been used to cross the water obstacles had the bridges been demolished by the Germans."*

"The signals could now be heard plainly so the pace was stepped up, and soon the Orne bridge was reached and seen to be intact, with Howard's men on it. As the bridges were intact I took

Approximate positions of glider landings and drop zones



Glider No. 2

Landing Zone X

Glider No. 3

Glider No. 1 hit No. 3 on landing, bounced and landed here

✈ Glider No. 5 landed at Cabourg, on the coast to the east of Ouistreham

✈ Glider No. 6 landed nearer the coast, north of Ouistreham