

Sources relating to the troops facing each other on D-Day

War Diary of a unit in the 8th Canadian Brigade

Catalogue ref: WO 179/2866

	6	Weather - Fine. Enemy Air Activity - NIL.
At Sea	0630	D Day. Sighted BERNIERES and ST AUBIN. The landmarks which had been carefully memorized from air photos were clearly recognizable - the jetty at the harbour of COURSEULLES - the flat expanse of marsh land to the EAST - then the church steeple amid a profusion of trees, which marked BERNIERES and on down the coast to the cluster of bldgs surrounding the next church which marked ST AUBIN SUR MER. As the coast drew nearer the wind increased and a heavy sea made it necessary to consider whether or not the DD tks were to be launched or should the tps go in without their immediate assistance.
	0700	Visibility lessening and the decision was made not to launch the DD tks. The expectant and eager tps of the assault coys loaded into their LCAs.
	0705	At this time a sig was received that the AVREs were late. H hr for J2 was set back an additional 10 mins. To give the leading inf the sp at the correct time, orders were issued to delay fire from the SP arty to conserve amm for the assault. The armada slowly approached the shore and at 0725 LCGs opened fire on beach defs followed by the SP arty who opened fire after a slight delay had occurred in transmission of orders to all craft. The orders were to fire until 0807.
	0725	
	0735	

What is this source?

This is an extract from a war diary of a Canadian unit involved in D-Day.

War diaries were official documents that recorded what a unit did. They were not the personal diaries of soldiers.

What's the background to this source?

By late 1942 the tide began to turn against Germany. From 1943 to 1944, British Empire and US forces began a build up of troops and equipment to drive the Germans out of the lands they had invaded in 1940. The landings took place in June 1944.

It may seem obvious but one of the key factors in any battle is the quality and commitment of the troops who were fighting. Many of the German troops facing the Allies at D-Day were not German. They were conscripted into the German army from territories that the Germans had conquered.

It's worth knowing that...

There were major differences in terms of the quality of German troops the Allies faced on D-Day. American units faced SS Panzer Divisions on D-Day, for example, and these were well trained, well equipped, committed and very formidable opponents. However, not all German units were so committed.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: D-DAY

By 1944 the vast majority of German soldiers in the German army were fighting on the Eastern Front against the USSR. Possibly, as many as five out of six German soldiers were not German. Recruiting from occupied lands made up the numbers.

How does this source help us to understand why D-Day was successful?

1. Try and sum up the attitude of the troops in this source.
 2. What does this source tell us about the training of Allied troops?
 3. Compare this source to the interrogation statements made by captured German soldiers in this investigation.
 4. Is it possible to say whether the role of the ground troops was more or less important than the role of the other forces on D-Day?
 5. How would you sum up the main value of this source to the historian?
- Will you include this source (or part of it) in your storyboard?
 - If you do use it, what are the main points you will make in your caption?

Use the framework to plan your storyboard.