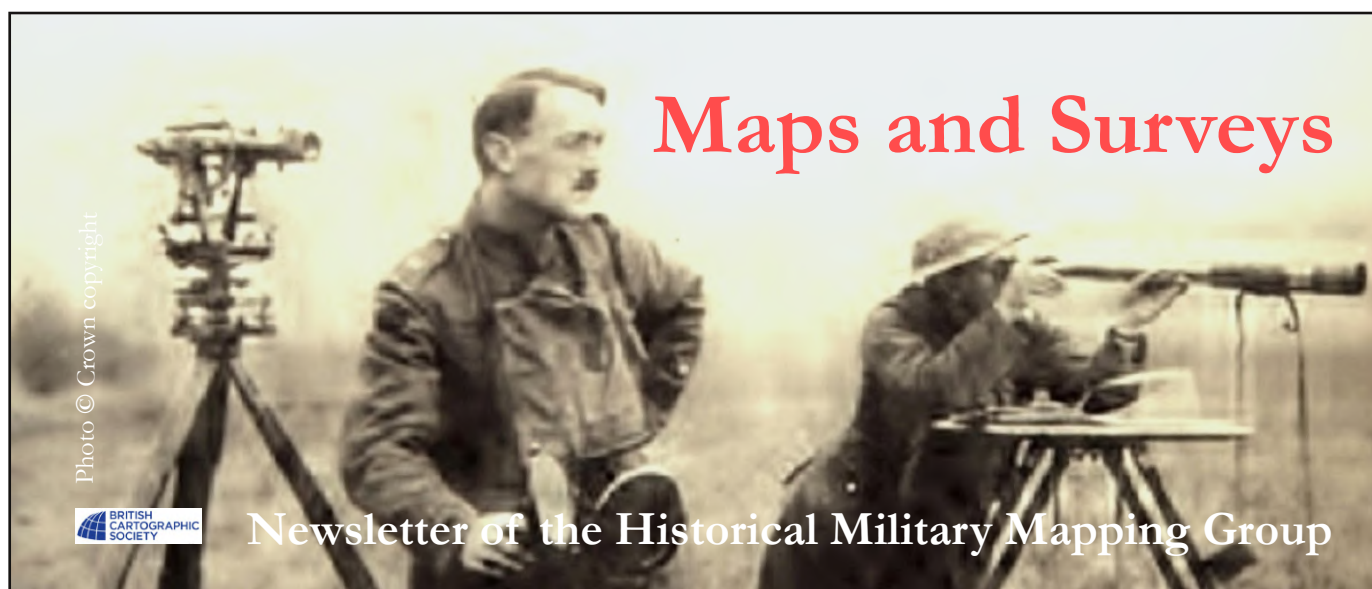




Maps and Surveys appears in spring, summer and autumn. The Newsletter welcomes contributions. Editor: Paul Hesp (Paul.Hesp@drei.at).

Summer 2024

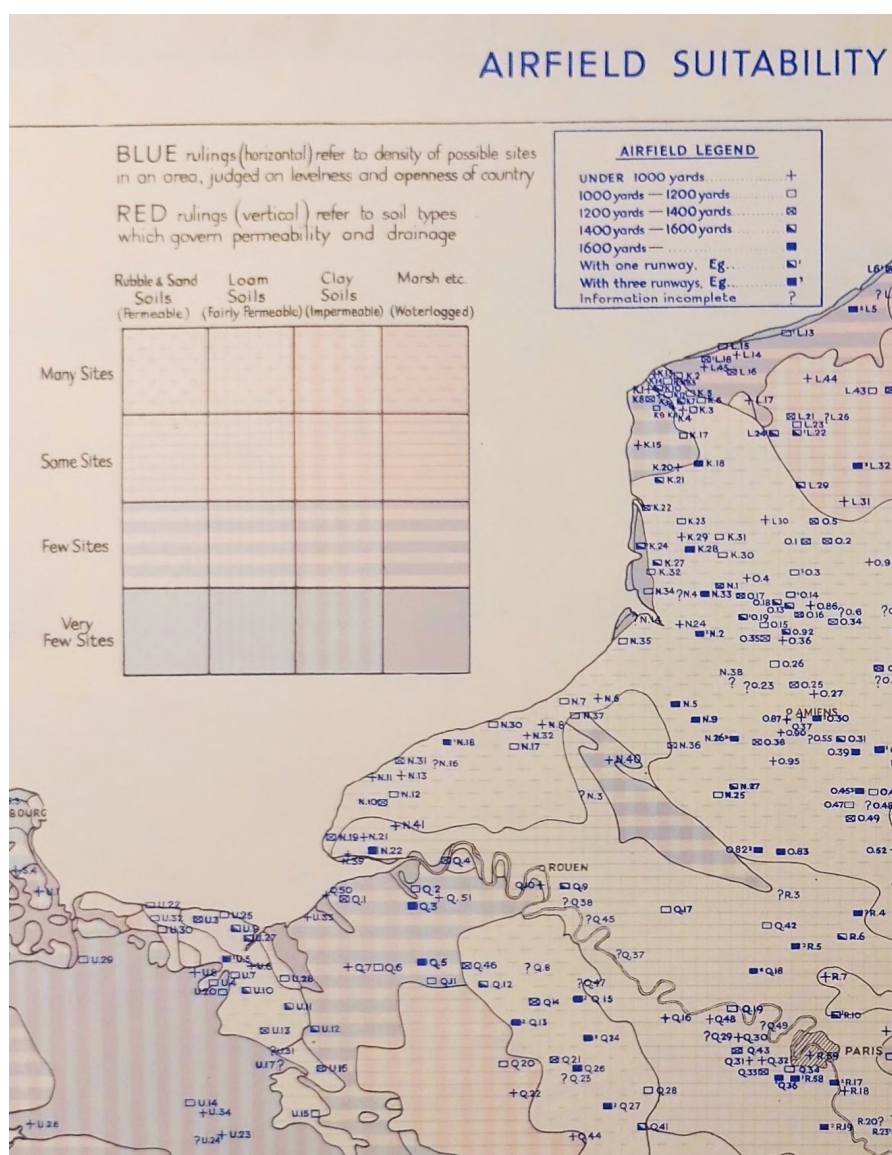
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From the Editor

Think of the 80th anniversary of D-Day and cartography, and the first question that probably comes to mind is: how was Normandy mapped? But the main contribution to this issue of Maps and Surveys by Chris Barrington Brown focuses on a less obvious (but no less important) topic: mapping that facilitated the movement and concentration of troops, equipment and supplies prior to embarkation. In addition, Chris spotlights two other map types to be discussed in a coming Newsletter issue.

The Battle of Bannockburn, the Finnish-Russian War and the Galician Front in 1917 will also feature in future issues. If you want to write about (or just show) unusual military maps in the Newsletter - let's hear from you!

Paul Hesp



Air bases on the Continent were essential for the campaign on the ground after the D-Day landings. This map shows the suitability of land for airstrip construction. It also shows the numerous existing airfields (operational as well as non-operational) as of September 1943. (Source: British Library - many thanks to Chris Barrington Brown)

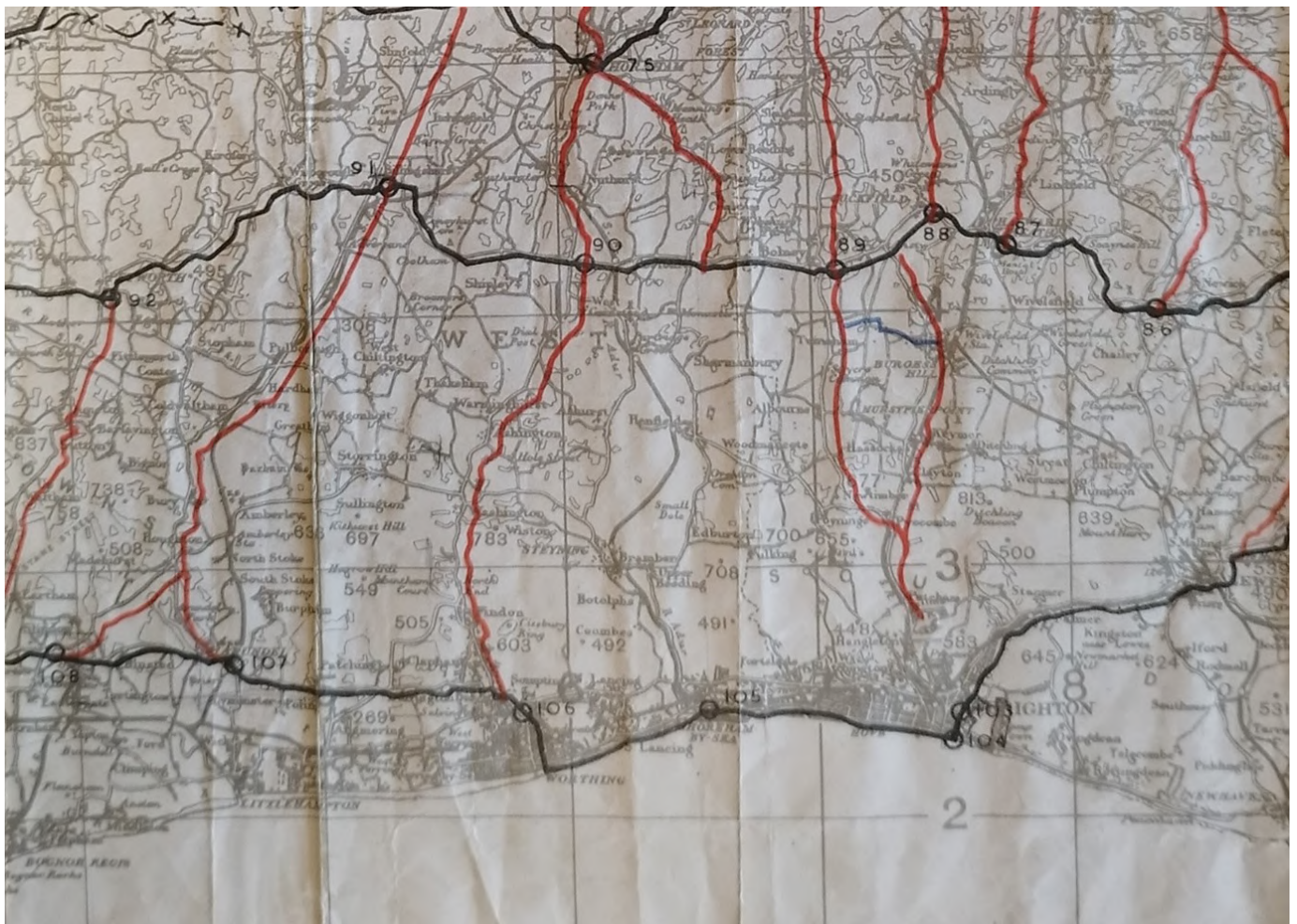
Chris Barrington Brown - MAPPING THE ROAD TO THE INVASION

Marshalling Areas and Encampments

Marshalling area maps

In order to bring the troops, vehicles and supplies to the marshalling and embarkation areas for D-Day, military map makers were tasked with providing a series of maps. Each Command gave guidance on what overlay data was required, but the cartographers were given freedom to choose base mapping and symbology. On the 80th anniversary of the invasion, some examples of the choices they made may be of interest.

Three series of map were produced. Firstly, a 'Restricted' map showing only the road network to be used. This could be issued to the civilian police, as well as military convoys, with little risk of a compromise of the high level of security surrounding the invasion. An example is shown here.



Map 1: Traffic routes. (Source: Defence Geographic Centre Archive)

Note the offset of the routes from the roads to make them easier to navigate while driving. Traffic posts are also marked on the map, where a military police officer was normally stationed to check on the progress of convoys, and communicate that to a central control point.

The next series was known as 'Traffic Circulation' by the American Forces and 'General Information' by the British. It was classified 'Top Secret', and showed most of the marshalling area information, except for the actual embarkation locations and the sizes of the camps. It was printed on 1 inch to 1 mile Ordnance Survey base mapping, but some producers chose a coloured version and others a monochrome one.

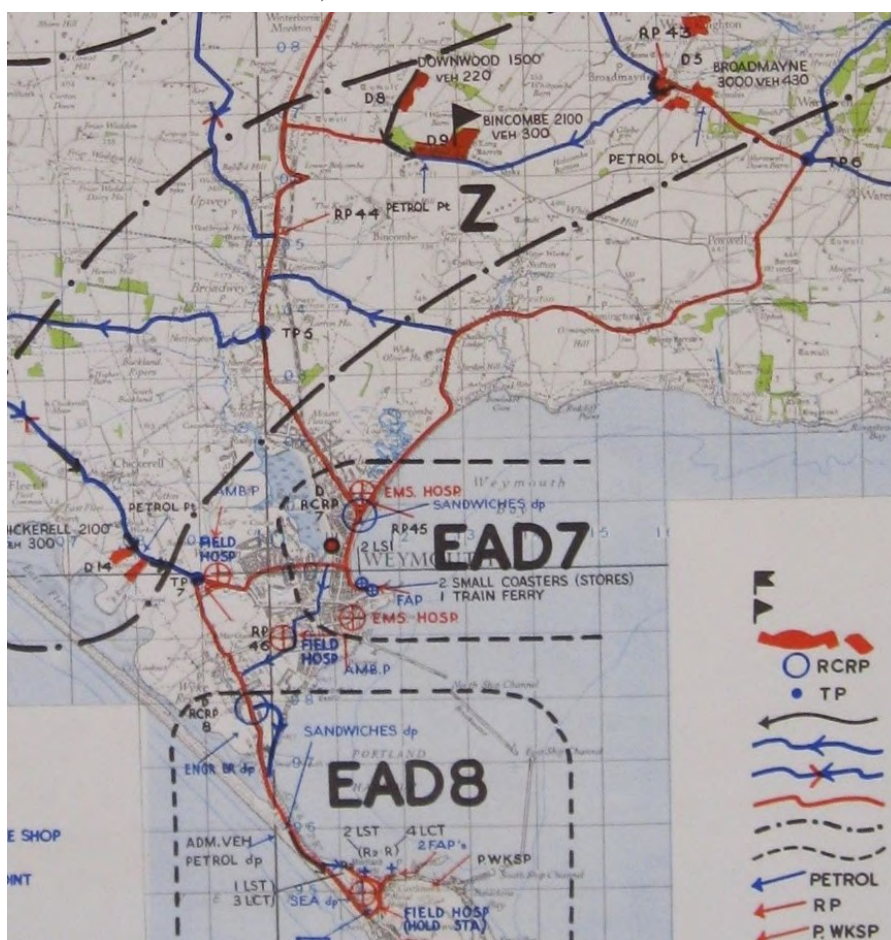
The final series, known as the 'Administrative Map', was very similar, but had the embarkation areas and camp capacities shown.

Here are examples of the two series of the Weymouth area. The Weymouth area maps were produced by British cartographers, for use by British, Canadian and US troops.

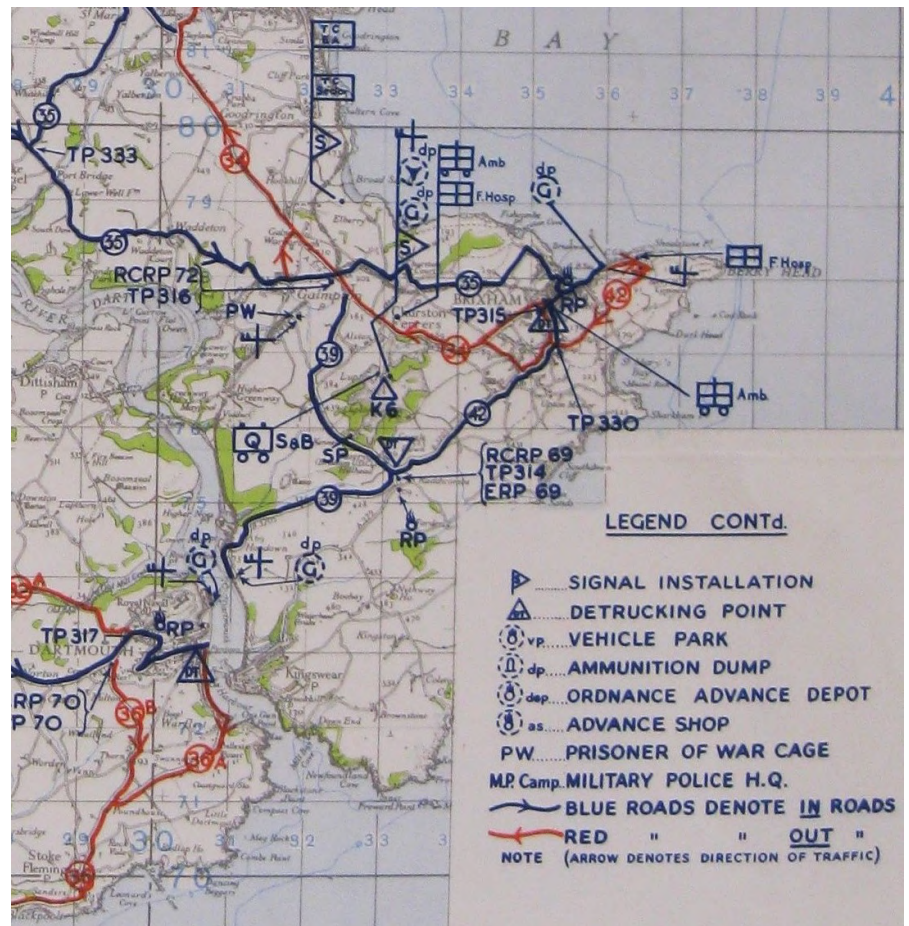


Map 2: General Information, Weymouth, Area D. (Source: National Archives and Records Administration, NND887540)

Map 3: Administration, Weymouth, Area D. (Source: National Archives and Records Administration, NND887540)

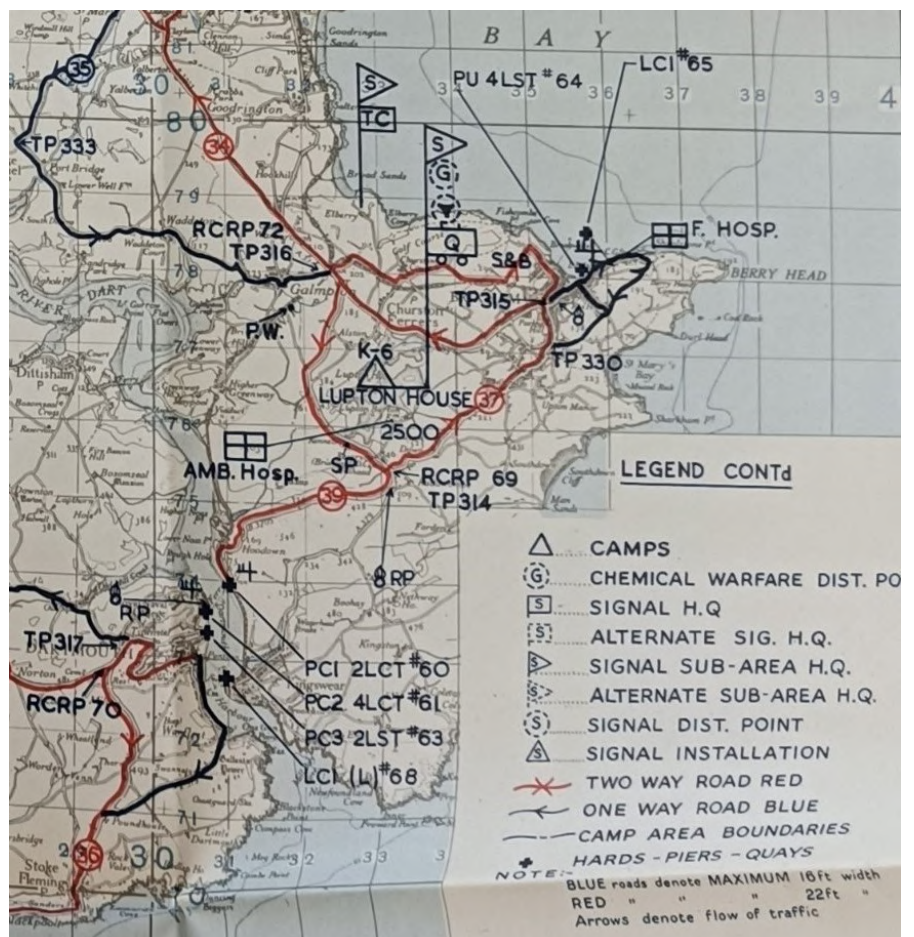


For comparison, a US Topographic Battalion produced the maps in the South West, such as this one of the area around Brixham, purely for US troops. Note the different symbology, the use of a more subdued base on the Administration map and the numbering of all routes.

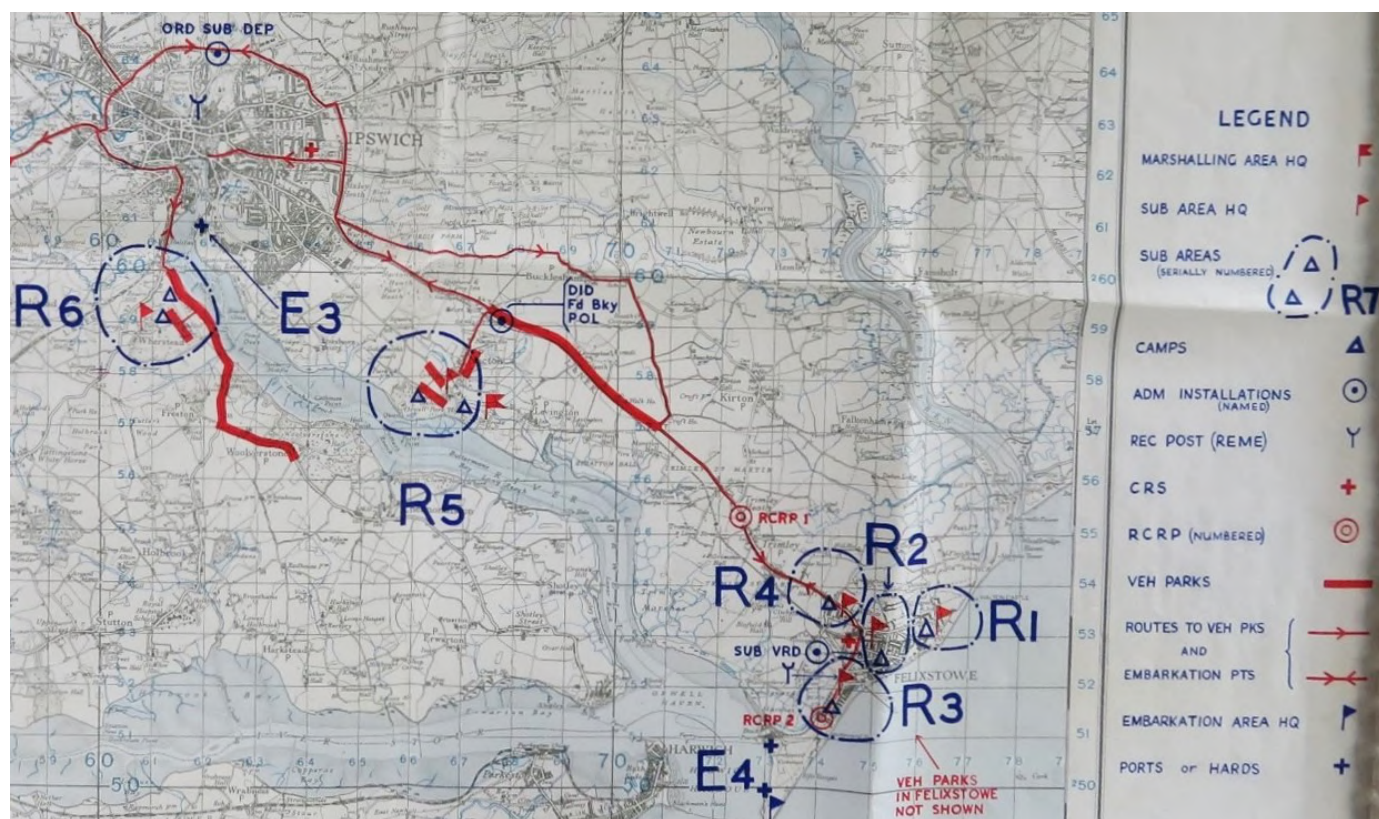


Map 4: Traffic Circulation, Brixham, Area K. (Source: National Archives and Records Administration, NND887540)

Map 5: Administration, Brixham, Area K, (Source: National Archives and Records Administration, NND 887540)

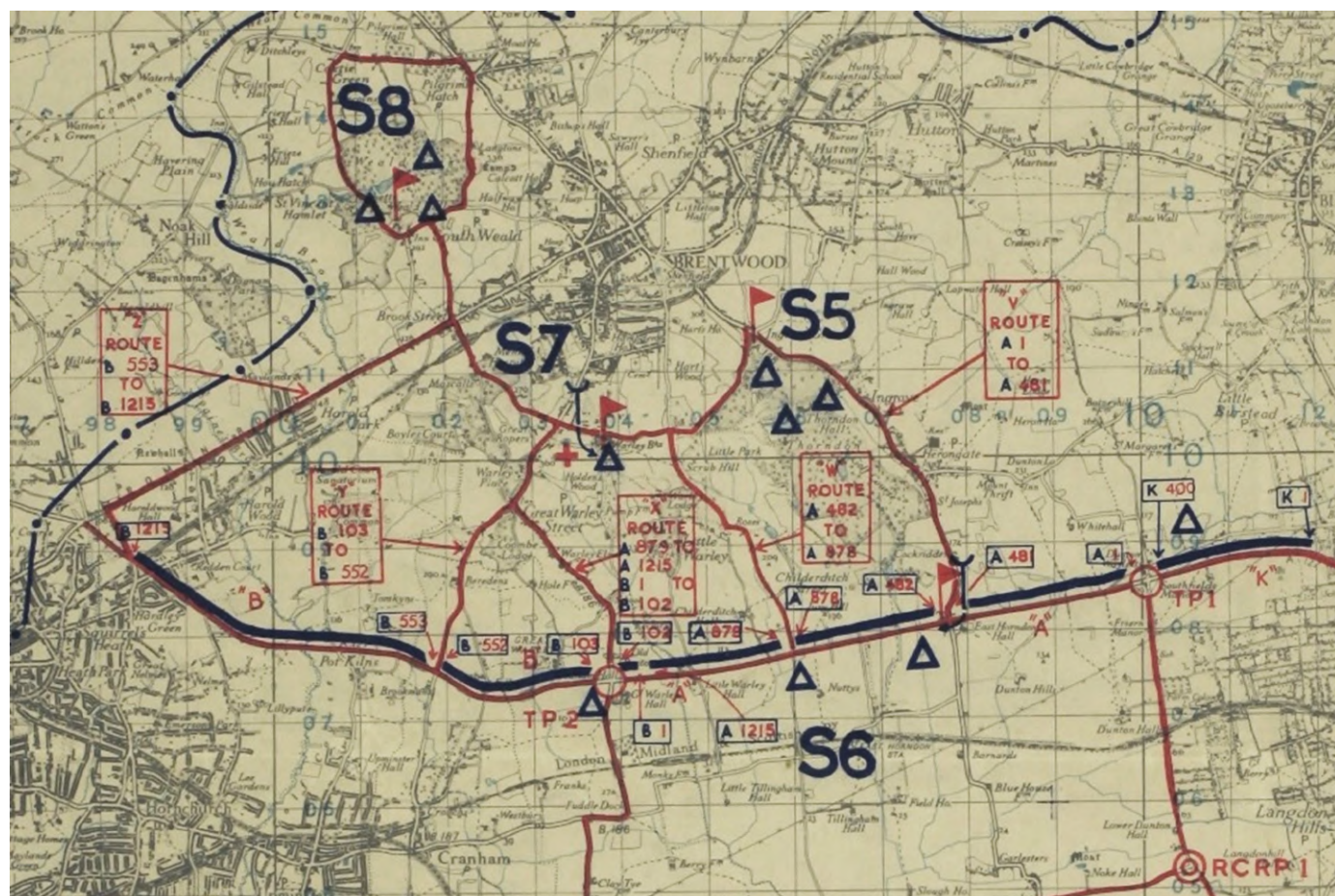


Eastern Command used different symbology again, Map 6 being the General Information map for the area around Ipswich. For the Tilbury marshalling area (Map 7) they added greater detail on the vehicle standing areas, not used on any other map.



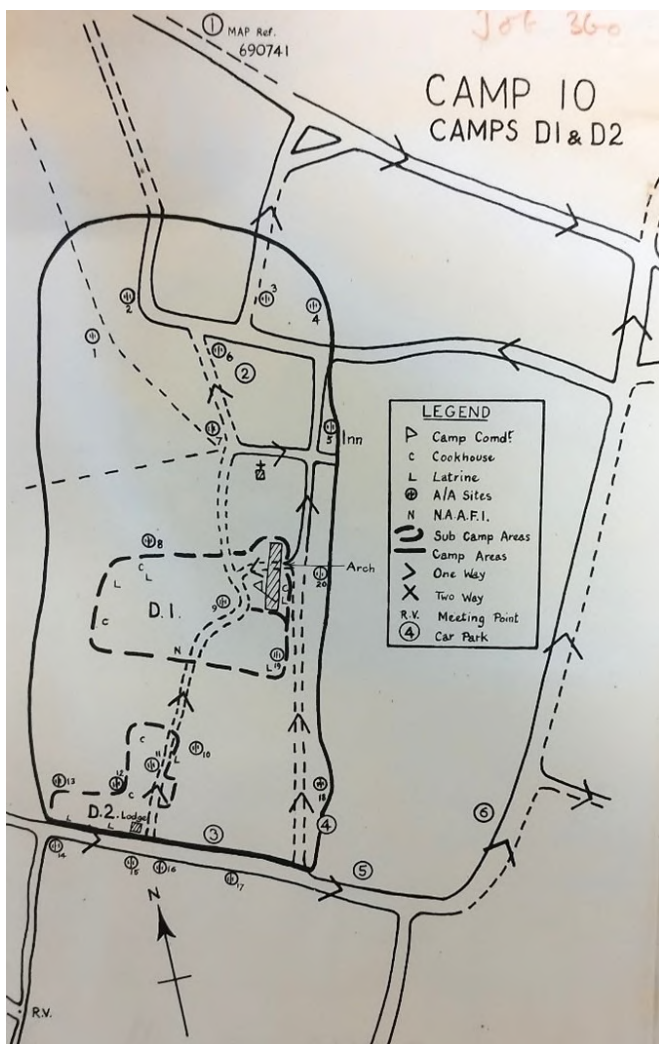
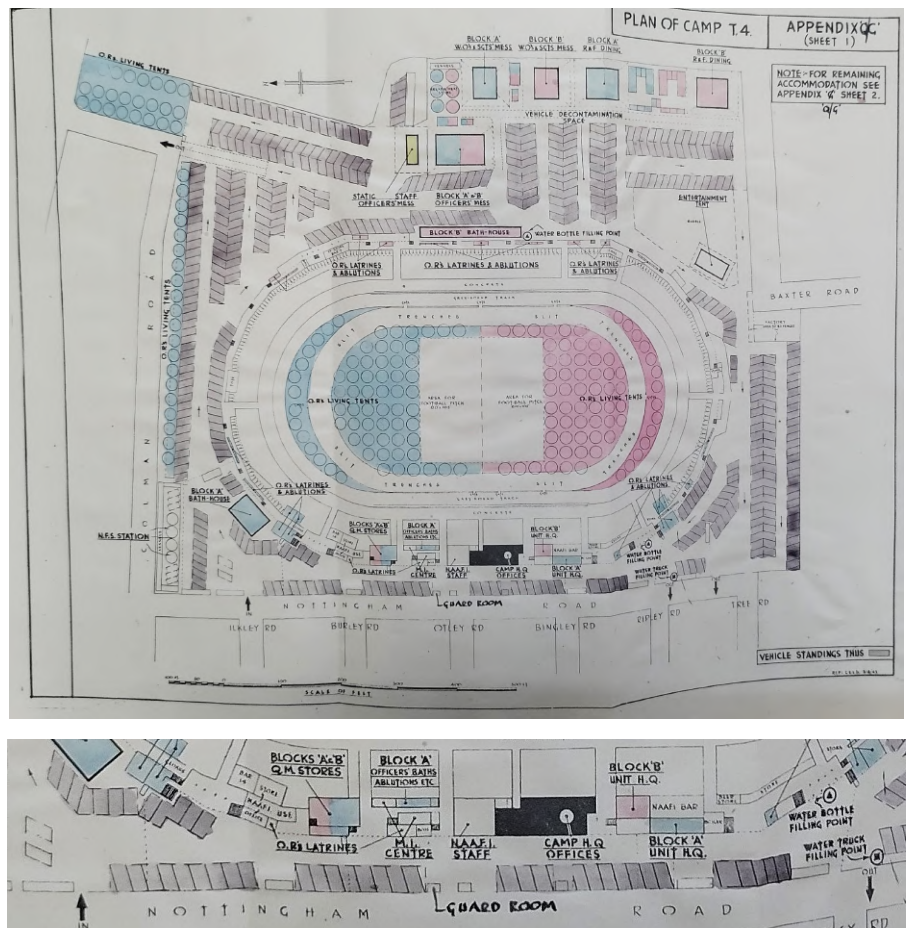
Map 6: General Information, Ipswich Area. (Source: Defence Geographic Centre Archive)

Map 7: Administration, Tilbury Area. (Source: Defence Geographic Centre Archive)



London District produced good diagrams of its camps, a good example being this one of the West Ham Dog Stadium, where 2,000 troops and 500 vehicles were marshalled. The enlarged fragment gives an impression of the detail of these maps.

Map 10: West Ham Stadium camp diagram and diagram fragment. (Source: Defence Geographic Centre Archive)



I have found a small number of diagrams for camps that were used during exercises leading up to D-Day. These camps were also used for D-Day itself, and it is unlikely that they would have changed in the few months between. Map 11 is an example of a camp in Kent.

Different makers, different maps

In spite of the close relationship between US and British forces it is interesting to see how different the mapping was between the different nations, even when produced to a supposedly similar specification. Even more surprising to me is the variations between the maps produced by different sections of the Royal Engineer Topographic sections in the British Commands.

I have not yet researched the mapping done under Project Benson for 'the far shore' (example on the next page), but it will be interesting to see if similar variations exist between the Allies and within the different production units of a single military organisation.

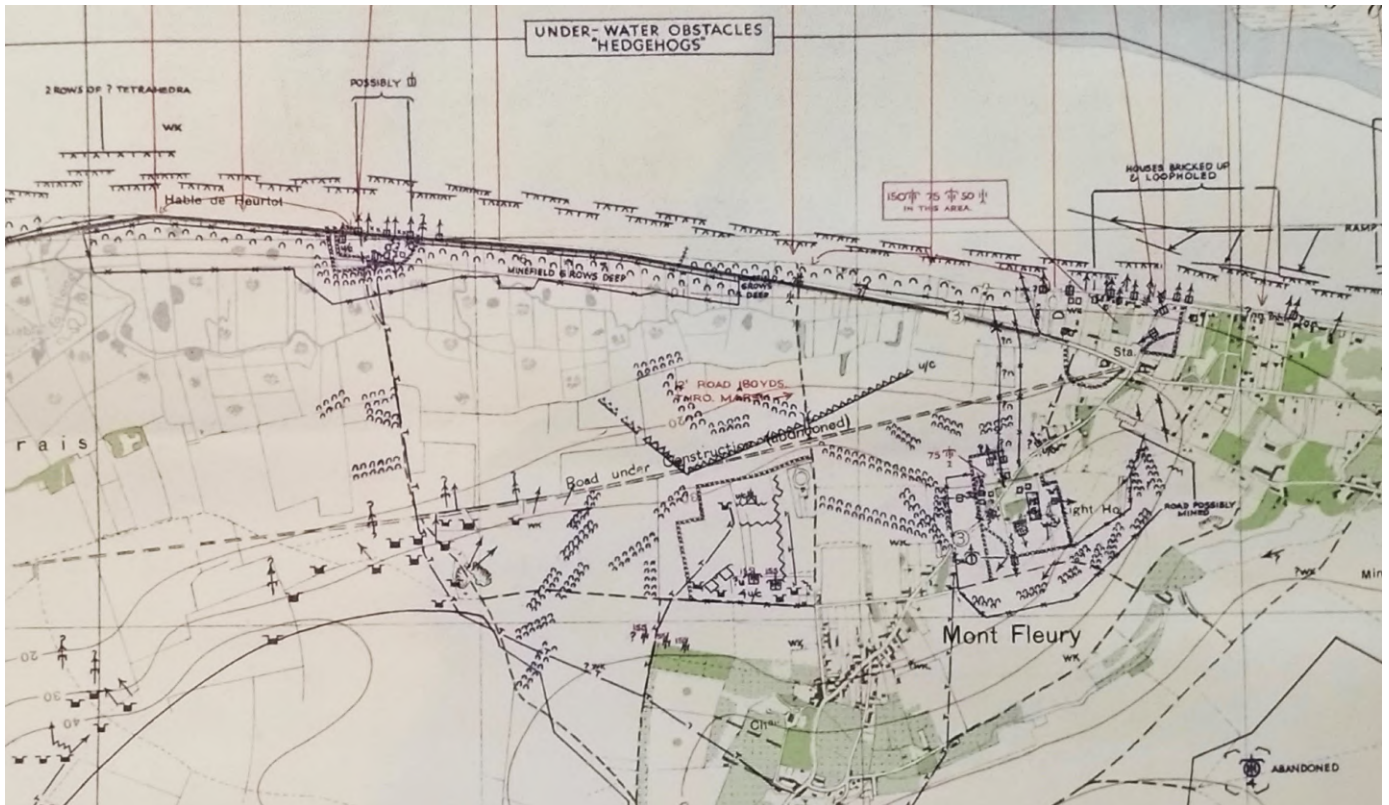
Chris Barrington Brown spent twelve years in the regular Gunners and thirty-three in the Reserves. He is a proud computer geek, occasional orienteer, and amateur map-maker and historian. He retired from his defence and counter-terrorism software business in 2022.

Map 11: Goodnestone Park, Canterbury. (Source: Defence Geographic Centre Archive)

Chris Barrington Brown - BENSON AND BOGUS

For the invasion, British, Canadian and American cartographers and surveyors were involved in a huge project under the codename 'Benson' to map Northern France at 1:25,000 and smaller scales. Extensive aerial photography enabled them to map almost every beach obstacle, gun emplacement and defensive installation to minimise surprises for the invading armies.

In addition, for mission rehearsal, they produced versions of those maps with dummy names. These were called 'Bogus' maps. More about these maps in a future article.



Above: Fragment of a Benson map of the Ver-sur-Mer area (Calvados department), scale 1:25,000. (Source: Paradata.org.uk)

Below: Fragment of a Bogus map of Caen and surroundings with dummy names. (Source: Defence Geographic Centre Archive)

