

Chronology of Events – North West Europe

1943

July 1943

2nd Army formed in the United Kingdom from elements of 1st Army that had seen active service in Tunisia in 1942 and 1943.

9 July 1943

21 Army Group formed in the United Kingdom, with under command:

- 2 Army;
- 1 Canadian Army.

1944

24 January 1944

Lieutenant General M. C. DEMPSEY, C.B., D.S.O., M.C. assumes command of 2nd Army replacing Lieutenant General ANDERSON.

6 June 1944

D-Day

00.20 hours.

- 00.20 hours – Coup de Main party of personnel from the 2nd Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, 6th Airlanding Brigade, land by glider at the bridge over the River Orne and Caen Canal. Both bridges are seized.

00.50 hours

- First personnel from the 6th Airborne Division begin landing to the east of the River Orne. The 3rd Parachute Brigade seizes the Merville Battery and establishes itself on the high ground between the River Dives and Orne. The 5th Parachute Brigade takes over responsibility for the Orne and canal bridges and clears the landing zones for the 6th Airlanding Brigade.

02.00 hours

- First units from the 82nd U.S. Airborne Division begins landing south and west of St. Mere Eglise and 101st U.S. Airborne Division north of Carentan to secure exit routes from the landing beaches.

03.00 hours

- The first gliders from 6th Airlanding Brigade begin landing near Ranville.

05.20 hours

- U.S. Air Force commences bombardment of German positions around 'Utah' beach.

06.30 hours

- First Duplex Drive (D.D.) tanks and infantry from the 4th U.S. Infantry Division land on Utah beach, the western landing beaches for the invasion.

- 06.30 hours ➤ Infantry from the 16th Regiment, 1st U.S. Infantry Division and 116th Regiment, 29th U.S. Infantry Regiment, begin landing on Omaha beach.
- 07.00 hours ➤ U.S. Rangers land at the base of Pointe du Hoc, climb the cliffs and secure the coastal battery.
- 07.30 hours ➤ Personnel from the 56th Infantry Brigade (attached) and 151st Infantry Brigade from 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division, supported by armoured units from the 8th Armoured Brigade and 79th Armoured Division (specialist armour) land on Gold beach under command of XXX Corps.
- 07.30 hours ➤ Personnel from 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade and 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, supported by armoured units from the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade and 79th Armoured Division (specialist armour) land on Juno beach under command of I Corps.
- 07.30 hours ➤ Personnel from 8th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, supported by armoured units from the 27th Armoured Brigade and 79th Armoured Division (specialist armour) land on Sword beach under command of I Corps;
- Units from the 1st Special Service Brigade and 4th Special Service Brigade land on Juno and Sword beaches under command of I Corps.
- 13.30 hours ➤ Units from the 1st Special Service Brigade link up with Airborne Forces at the Orne bridges.
- 20.00 hours ➤ Units from the 21st Panzer Division drive through to the coast at Luc forming a wedge between the 3rd Infantry Division and 3rd Canadian Infantry Division.

- 21.00 hours
- Units from the 6th Airlanding Brigade start landing on the zones to the east of the River Orne to reinforce the 6th Airborne Division.
- 7 June 1944
- Bayeux liberated by British forces.
 - Gap between 3rd Infantry Division and 3rd Canadian Infantry Division closed giving a solid bridgehead some twenty-two miles wide and between five to ten miles deep.
 - U.S. V Corps (1st U.S. Infantry Division and 29th U.S. Infantry Division) consolidate their bridgehead.
 - U.S. VII Corps, (4th U.S. Infantry Division) advances a further two miles to give a bridgehead some eight miles deep and nine miles wide.
- 8 June 1944
D + 2
- Port-en-Bessin captured by British Commandos that closed the gap between the British forces from Gold beach and U.S. forces from Omaha beach;
 - A British armoured column reaches eastern outskirts of Tilly, but cannot consolidate the position.
- 9 June 1944
D + 3
- Units from U.S. V Corps advance one and half miles and outflank the German forces to secure the road through Isigny.
- 10 June 1944
D + 4
- Battle Headquarters of Panzer Group West located by British intelligence and bombed by the R.A.F. destroying the majority of the headquarters.
- 11 June 1944
D + 5
- Units from the 101st U.S. Airborne Division forces the outer defences of Carentan, causing the German forces in the town to withdraw.
- 12 June 1944
D + 6
- Units from 7th Armoured Division struggling to capture Tilly-sur-Seulles are ordered to conduct a 'right hook' to outflank the German troops from the Panzer Lehr Division holding the town. This operation, (Operation 'Perch') is intended to exploit a gap found by American forces near Caumont. The division advances twelve miles (six through enemy territory) but stops overnight near Caumont.

- 13 June 1944
D + 7
- The 7th Armoured Division's units continue their advance to Villers-Bocage and by 08.30 have advanced the five miles to occupy the town. A German Tiger tank in the town manages to destroy twenty-five British armoured vehicles, but whilst the British tanks on Point 213 were destroyed, their counter-attack on Villers-Bocage was beaten back. Before nightfall, the 22nd Armoured Brigade withdraw from Villers-Bocage to Point 174 a mile to the west.
- 14 June 1944
D + 8
- The 22nd Armoured Brigade is not reinforced on Point 174, and by 12.00 hours, it is withdrawn back to near Caumont.
- 15 June 1944
D + 9
- U.S. VII Corps make significant progress of over five miles in forty-eight hours across the base of the Cotentin peninsula.
- 17 June 1944
D + 11
- 9th U.S. Infantry Division advances six miles in one day.
- 18 June 1944
D + 12
- U.S. VII Corps reach the coast and cut off the Cotentin peninsula.
 - Twenty Allied divisions now ashore in Normandy.
- 19 June 1944
D + 13
- A severe storm damages the Mulberry harbours and restricts the Allied supply lines.
 - 4th U.S. Infantry Division launch a surprise night attack on Montebourg and capture the town after several days hard fighting.
- 22 June 1944
- U.S forces begin their assault on Cherbourg.
- 24 June 1944
- 49th Infantry Division (XXX Corps) launch an attack towards Rauray.
- 25 June 1944
- VIII Corps (11th Armoured Division, 15th Infantry Division and 43rd Infantry Division) commence the main assault towards Cheux and Evrecy to the west of Caen.

- 26 June 1944
- All organized German resistance in Cherbourg collapses.
 - Twenty-five Allied divisions now ashore in Normandy.
 - British VIII Corps continue their steady advance, but, German forces stubbornly defend their positions. Hill 112 is taken but later recaptured by the Germans.
- 29 June 1944
- German armoured troops from the 2nd S.S. Panzer Division, 9th S.S. Panzer Division and Panzer Lehr counter-attack towards Rauray, but their attack is broken up by the British anti-tank screen. A few tanks reach Cheux but are destroyed by the British.
- 4 July 1944
- Canadian troops launch an attack intended to take Carpiquet airfield just to the west of Caen. The village of Carpiquet is taken, however, the airfield remains held by elements of the 12th S.S. Panzer Division.
- 7 July 1944
- U.S. XIX Corps crosses the River Vire seven miles north of St. Lo, however, their advance is halted by German troops.
 - British heavy bombers drop 2,560 tons of bombs on the northern outskirts of Caen.
- 8 July 1944
- U.S. VIII Corps finally capture Le Haye after days of fierce resistance.
 - I Corps (3rd Infantry Division, 59th Infantry Division and 3rd Canadian Infantry Division) attack in order to seize Caen and the crossings of the River Orne. The 3rd Infantry Division makes progress and is halted on the fringes of the city, being delayed by bomb craters and debris.
- 10 July 1944
- 21st Army Group conference is held amidst increasing criticism of the campaign.
- 18 July 1944
- Operation 'Goodwood' launched by 2nd Army, with VIII Corps (now comprising the Guards Armoured Division, 7th Armoured Division and 11th Armoured Division) attacking down a corridor to the east of Caen.
- 20 July 1944
- Operation 'Goodwood' ends, with the British forces failing to secure a breakthrough, although Caen is cleared of German troops and the front line is forced six miles further on from the start line.

- 25 July 1944
- American forces launch Operation 'Cobra' with U.S. VII corps making a strong thrust west of St. Lo.
- 26 July 1944
- Operation 'Cobra' continues, with 2nd U.S. Armored Division making three miles of gains.
- 27 July 1944
- The decisive day in Operation Cobra – the 2nd U.S. Armored Division continues its spectacular advance, and the 1st U.S. Infantry Division and 3rd U.S. Armored Divisions strike for Coutances. U.S. VII Corps broke through from Periers and captures Coutances.
- 28 July 1944
- German 84th Corps disintegrates, and the German line breaks open.
- 30 July 1944
- Operation 'Bluecoat' launched by VIII Corps and XXX Corps with redeployed British armoured divisions with the objective of capturing the western half of Mont Pincon ridge near Caumont. The 43rd Infantry Division is initially halted by a minefield, but in the centre the 15th Infantry Division supported by the 6th Guards Tank Brigade makes progress and storm the slopes of Hill 309.
 - 1st Canadian Army (I Corps and II Canadian Corps) becomes operational under 21st Army Group.
- 31 July 1944
- A British infantry battalion finds an unguarded woodland trail, four armoured cars follow up and find a bridge intact west of Le Beny Bocage. A British battlegroup drives for the bridge in a race against a German battlegroup from 21st Panzer Division. The British win the race and throw back the German troops.
 - 4th U.S. Armored Division takes a bridge at Pontaubault and continues into Brittany.

- 1 August 1944
- British forces continue to drive for Vire and during the night the town is found to be unguarded, however, the 2nd Army commander decides not to exploit this opportunity as it lay in the American sector. 43rd Infantry Division secures Hill 361, but neither 7th Armoured Division nor 50th Infantry Division made any significant progress towards Aunay or Villers-Bocage.
 - General BRADLEY assumes command of the 12th U.S. Army Group.
- 2 August 1944
- Lieutenant General BUCKNALL, GOC XXX Corps dismissed from his command by GOC 2nd Army.
 - Mortain captured by the Americans.
- 4 August 1944
- Rennes captured.
 - 4th U.S. Armored Division cuts off Brest peninsula.
 - German forces withdraw from Villers-Bocage, Aunay and Evrecy.
- 6 August 1944
- The 43rd Infantry Division assaults Mont Pincon, which is captured by a few tanks from the 13th/18th Hussars and secured by the 4th Bn. The Wiltshire Regiment.
- 7 August 1944
- Brest reached, but defences prove sound.
 - German 5th Panzer Army and 7th Army launch an offensive at Mortain against U.S. 1st Army.
- 8 August 1944
- I Canadian Army launches Operation 'Totalize' at midnight 7th August, using a combined armoured and infantry thrust towards Falaise using armoured personnel carriers. By daybreak, Allied forces are three miles inside the German defensive positions.
- 9 August 1944
- The 4th Canadian Armoured Division and 1st Polish Armoured Division take up the advance in Operation Totalize, however, they are held by elements from the 12th S.S. Panzer Division.
- 12 August 1944
- American forces capture Alencon, the main supply base for the German forces.

- 14 August 1944
- 1st Canadian Army launches another offensive towards Falaise and close to three miles from the town.
- 15 August 1944
- German forces hold the northern side of the Allied 'jaw', with the Americans advancing from the south, the gap is now only twelve miles wide.
 - U.S. 3rd Army begins its drive for the Seine and Paris with XII U.S. Corps, XX U.S. Corps and XV U.S. Corps under command.
- 16 August 1944
- Canadian forces enter Falaise.
- 17 August 1944
- V U.S. Corps attack northwards towards Falaise.
 - 1st Polish Armoured Division and 4th Canadian Armoured Division break out across the River Dives to reduce the gap to six miles.
- 18th August 1944
- Units from the 1st Polish Armoured Division capture the ridge north of Chambois, and the gap narrows to just two miles. Over the next couple of days, isolated German units and personnel manage to escape, but over 50,000 German troops are captured and much material is lost.
- 19th August 1944
- 90th U.S. Infantry Division and 2nd French Armoured Division link up with the 1st Polish Armoured Division closing the Falaise Gap;
 - U.S. forces from 79th U.S. Infantry Division cross the River Seine across an unguarded footbridge;
 - 3,000 armed gendarmes seize control in central Paris leading to an armed uprising in the city.
- 20th August 1944
- American forces capture Argentan;
 - German forces in Paris arrange an armistice to allow them to withdraw from the city centre.
- 25th August 1944
- The 2nd French Armoured Division and 4th U.S. Infantry Division enter Paris and all organised German resistance ceases.
- 29th August 1944
- VII U.S. Corps having crossed the Seine drives north to outflank the line of the River Somme.

- 30th August 1944 ➤ 11th Armoured Division captures Amiens passing within one mile of the headquarters of the German 7th Army.
- 3rd September 1944 ➤ British forces enter Belgium, the Guards Armoured Division heading for Brussels and the 11th Armoured Division for Antwerp. Brussels occupied by the end of the day.
- 4th September 1944 ➤ Units from the 11th Armoured Division reach Antwerp and find the docks intact.
- 6th September 1944 ➤ Allies gain bridgeheads over the Albert Canal and River Meuse, however, German resistance begins to make itself felt again.
- 10th September 1944 ➤ Units from the U.S. 3rd Army and 1st French Infantry Division from the South of France meet up, thus linking the forces from Operations 'Overlord' and 'Anvil';
➤ At 23.00, units from the 49th Infantry Division and 51st Infantry Division, supported by the 33rd Armoured Brigade and units from the 79th Armoured Division launch an attack on Le Harve.
- 12th September 1944 ➤ British forces capture Le Havre.
- 17th September 1944 ➤ Operation 'Market Garden' launched with a mass airborne landing by the 82nd U.S. Airborne Division, 101st U.S. Airborne Division and 1st Airborne Division in a corridor up to Arnhem;
➤ XXX Corps begins its advance up the airborne corridor towards Arnhem.
- 18th September 1944 ➤ Brest captured after ten day assault by three U.S. infantry divisions.
- 19th September 1944 ➤ Units from XXX Corps reach Nijmegen.
- 21st September 1944 ➤ Units from XXX Corps attack northwards from the Nijmegen bridgehead towards Arnhem.

- 23rd September 1944
- Units from the 43rd Infantry Division try to reach the southern bank of the Neder Rijn and the Driel ferry opposite the Hartenstein perimeter then held by the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division;
 - Boulogne liberated by Canadian and British troops.
- 25th September 1944
- The remnants of the 1st Airborne Division are withdrawn across the Neder Rijn.
- 27th September 1944
- Calais liberated by Canadian forces.
- 6th October 1944
- Canadian forces gain a foothold across the Leopold Canal forcing their way into the Breskens Pocket.
- 1st November 1944
- Allied commandos sail into Flushing harbour and gain a foothold on Walcheren.
- 8th November 1944
- All German forces on Walcheren surrender.
- 19th November 1944
- U.S. 9th Army reaches the River Roer.
- 28th November 1944
- First Allied convoy berths at Antwerp.
- 16th December 1944
- German forces launch the Ardennes offensive starting 'The Battle of the Bulge'.
- 12th January 1945
- Soviet forces launch a major offensive on the Eastern Front.
- 16th January 1945
- The Ardennes offensive ends with the German forces back at the original front line prior to the offensive commencing.
- 28th January 1945
- U.S. 1st Army and U.S. 3rd Army commence their offensive towards the River Rhine, but are halted after three days.
- 1st February 1945
- XIII Corps clear the Roermond triangle.
- 8th February 1945
- 1st Canadian Army launches 'Operation Veritable' to clear the Reichswald Forest.

- 9th February 1945 ➤ U.S. 6th Army eliminates the Colmar pocket.
- 10th February 1945 ➤ U.S. 1st Army captures the Roer dams, but, the Germans flood the Roer valley delaying the U.S. 9th Army offensive.
- 11th February 1945 ➤ Cleve is captured.
- 17th February 1945 ➤ 43rd Infantry Division take the Goch escarpment thereby breaching the Siegfried Line.
- 22nd February 1945 ➤ 15th Infantry Division and 51st Infantry Division take the town of Goch.
- 23rd February 1945 ➤ U.S. 9th Army commences 'Operation Grenade', the southern thrust towards the Rhineland.
- 26th February 1945 ➤ XVI U.S. Corps crosses the River Roer and heads towards the 1st Canadian Army.
- 3rd March 1945 ➤ XVI U.S. Corps and XXX Corps link up at Geldern to join up 'Veritable' and 'Grenade'.
- 7th March 1945 ➤ III U.S. Corps capture an intact bridge at Remagen and cross the River Rhine.
- 10th March 1945 ➤ 1st Canadian Army completes the clearance of the west bank of the River Rhine.
- 23rd March 1944
21.00 hours. ➤ British troops from the 51st Infantry Division, XXX Corps begin their crossing of the River Rhine near Rees.
- 22.00 hours. ➤ 1st Commando Brigade crosses the River Rhine and makes for Wesel.
- 24th March 1945
02.00 hours ➤ 15th Infantry Division, XII Corps crosses the River Rhine opposite Xanten.
- 09.50 hours ➤ Parachute troops and gliderborne troops from 6th Airborne Division and 17th U.S. Airborne Division begin landing north of Wesel.

- 25th March 1945 ➤ The bridgehead expands, with 15th Infantry Division sending an armoured battlegroup through the airborne positions to enlarge the bridgehead.
- 27th March 1945 ➤ Apart from around Rees, German resistance on the east bank of the River Rhine collapses, and the Allies start their final advance into Germany.
- 13th April 1945 ➤ I Canadian Corps liberate Arnhem.
- 30th April 1945 ➤ Adolf HITLER commits suicide in Berlin.
- 4th May 1945 ➤ German Army and Naval forces in northwest Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands formally surrender to Field Marshal MONTGOMERY.
- 5th May 1945 ➤ German forces in The Netherlands agree to a ceasefire with 1st Canadian Army.
- 7th May 1945 ➤ Formal surrender of all German forces to the Allies;
➤ German forces in Norway surrender.
- 8th May 1945 ➤ Hostilities ceased at 23.00 hours.
➤ VE-Day celebrated.
- 9th May 1945 ➤ German garrisons in Dunkirk, La Rochelle, St. Nazaire and Lorient all surrender;
➤ All German garrisons on the Channel Islands surrender (except Alderney which surrendered on the 16th May 1945).
- 12th May 1945 ➤ Last units in Army Group Centre surrender to the Soviets and Americans in Czechoslovakia.