

A DAY AT THE OFFICE IN NORMANDY

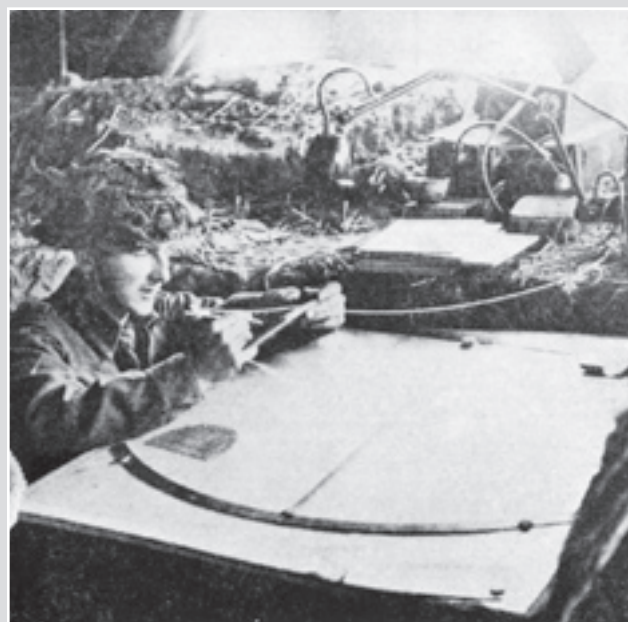


Daily chores, Normandy 1944

Each gun required daily maintenance and, in action, that maintenance had to be fitted around firing tasks. Here, a gunner, working shirtless in the heat of a Normandy summer, performs maintenance on the hydraulic recoil chamber of his 105 mm howitzer. FROM 13 CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT, RCA

(Below) Getting ready for Carpiquet

The plan for the attack on Carpiquet Airport, which took place on 4 July 1944, called for an intense barrage and bombardment programme requiring a heavy expenditure of ammunition. A gunner of 13th Field prepares 105 mm rounds for firing. FROM 13 CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT, RCA



(Above) Troop Command Post

A Troop Command Post at Bretteville-l'Orgeuilleuse, June 1944. Targets from the OP and FOO parties were relayed to the Troop Command Posts which directed the fire of each of the six troops in 13th Field Regiment. The gunners learned quickly that they had to protect their positions. FROM 13 CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT, RCA

(Right) Observation Post officer, Normandy 1944

Captain H.L. Thorne of 13th Field poses for the camera in Normandy beside his Sherman OP tank. When the regiment switched to self-propelled guns, the OP officers changed from soft-skinned vehicles to Shermans, which provided an additional measure of protection. There were many complaints when the unit went back to towed guns in August 1944 and the Shermans were given up.

FROM 13 CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT, RCA



Smile for the camera: A gun crew, Normandy 1944

The unit is not identified but this photo, taken on 20 June 1944, shows a happy crew from one of the 3rd Division field regiments posed in front of their guns. The marking "B2" indicates the No. 2 gun of Baker Troop. Note the extra plate welded on the side of the vehicle for protection from smallarms fire, the camouflage net on the front and the rather unconvincing use of a tree branch for additional cover. With the exception of the man standing on the right, these gunners are wearing the Mk III "Invasion" helmet, with a wound dressing inserted under the camouflage net to break up the outline. The battle dress issued in Normandy was impregnated with an anti-gas chemical which made it stiff and hot to wear. NAC, PA-132886



Another day at the office (1): No. 2 prepares to fire

Seated under the ring for the .50 calibre machinegun on his self-propelled gun, the detachment No. 2 prepares to open fire. In his right hand, he holds the lanyard that fires the weapon while in his left hand is the lever that will open the breech and eject the empty shell casing after the gun fires. In front of him is the elbow sight used for anti-tank work. The gunner is Lance-Bombardier W.J. Pelrine and this is a gun of 14th Field Regiment. NAC, PA-114582



Another day in the office (2): No. 3 does his job

While the No. 1, or gun detachment commander, looks on, the No. 3 uses the panoramic telescope – fitted with an extension to raise it above the sides of the vehicle – to lay the 105 mm howitzer on the correct azimuth. Note the shells ready for use at the rear of the vehicle. This is actually a detachment from 14th Field and the No. 1 is Sergeant D. Mills while the No. 3 is Gunner H.W. Embree. NAC, PA-145374



Another day at the office (3): Ammunition numbers at work

Only Nos. 1, 2 and 3 actually fired the gun; the remaining gun numbers prepared the ammunition, located at the rear of the vehicle. Here, they are loading ready-use rounds onto a gun of 19th Army Field Regiment. 19 Army Field Regiment, although an army unit, was assigned to 3rd Division for the D-Day assault and fought with that formation through the Normandy campaign. Unlike the three field regiments of the division, it retained its self-propelled guns for the rest of the war. NAC, PA-190212



Air Observation Post, Normandy 1944

Assisting the ground-based OPs and FOOs were the Air OPs, light but unarmed Auster aircraft piloted by trained artillery officers which ranged the length of the front looking for targets behind the enemy lines. It was dangerous work, as not only did German flak try to bring them down, but Luftwaffe fighters made an occasional appearance. Here, an Auster AOP of the British AO Squadron 661, which worked with the 3rd Division in Normandy, prepares to take off. NAC, PA-162286