



BATTLEFIELD WALKAROUND (ver 1.1)

1. AGAINST ALL ODDS

1.1 Locale—The region represented by the AGAINST ALL ODDS (AAO) map is the bocage country located along the Merderet River between Ste. Mere Eglise and the UTAH Beach exits. Securing the battlefield on D-Day 1944 was the responsibility of the 82nd Airborne Division, an elite unit with the drop into Sicily already recorded in the annals of airborne warfare the year before.

1.2 Land Forms—The AAO mapsheet is divided by a nearly impassable marsh, the flood-plain of the Merderet. And it was deeply flooded on 6 June. Many a ‘mis-drop’ took place with men landing in the watery morass. Some never to exit the trap alive. Most of the AAO is Level 0 landscape (e.g., hex I17). On the eastern side of the Merderet the land slopes upward to Level +10, then Level +20, with some +20 ‘hummocks’ poking up steeply (e.g., hex BB16). Note the steeply sloped rise located in hex BB16 entails DOUBLE the cost to climb by personnel and is considered Precipitous Terrain (8.4.8). Another important elevation change slopes *down*, into the marshland. Hexes like Q10 are notated as ‘-5’ terrain, representing the down-slope from P9 to Q10 (and the move UP when heading in the opposite direction). This level change ONLY affects movement. The Swamp terrain is considered to rise +5 levels above Level 0, i.e., to Level +5, thus affecting fire between units on Level 0 normally. Of course, a unit in a Level +10 location (e.g., the ‘upstairs’ of hex K9 or the steeple location of N7) may see over the swamp. Note there are only THREE Hillock hexsides on the AAO map, across the following hexsides: AA11-BB10; AA11-BB11; and AA12-BB11.

1.3 Terrain Forms—We find ourselves in Normandy’s *Bocage* country. Farms are found along lanes dotted with Orchards. The boundaries of most fields are bordered by hedges, walls and hedgerows. The latter, known as *bocage*, consist of trees planted on earthen mounds. A handful of small copses is found on the map, utilizing the game terrain known as Woods in hexes like F9. Lighter vegetation is also present as Brush in hexes like K16. Crops are grown in two fields, unmistakable in game terms since they utilize a ragged-edged, yellow-orange depiction (e.g., hex K13). A large portion of the map is covered by Swamp hexes (e.g., hex Q15). A special rules is used for the AAO mapsheet to recreate the flooded condition of the marshes on D-Day 1944. There is also a significant Water Obstacle on the map, the

Merderet River (e.g., hex Y16). This is RIVER terrain, and the entry restrictions of 8.20.8 should be noted. The only way to cross the Merderet is using the bridge in hex Y14. That’s what this was all about, the hotly contested La Fiere bridge. The reason men died here.

1.3.1 Buildings—Structures of masonry construction, the largest being the dominating Hameau Aux Brix *chateau*, are found in the area. The outskirts of the village of La Fiere, location of the famous Merdert crossing, can be found around hex AA15. Heading west over the causeway we come to the small village of Cauquigny, a handful of buildings and a small church. The steeple in the *La Chapelle* church was rubble during the battle. We chose to allow it to remain, subject to the fortunes of war for its condition. Heading southwest we come to the outskirts of another village, Hameau Flaux. Note many of the buildings on the map have a large yellow hex center-dot, denoting they have a Level +10 location in addition to a ground level location. The Hameau Aux Brix chateau also has a Level +10 location in EACH of its five hexes, as well as a stairwell in each hex making the entire ‘upstairs’ accessible from the ground floor of each hex, and noting units on a Level +10 marker in the building can see AND fire at units on the ground floor of the hex just beneath them (only) and vice-versa.

1.3.3 Other Man Made Terrain—Walls are found along hexsides like O8-O9. Gates are present along hexsides O8-N8. A Personnel unit moving from N8 to O8 would only pay TWO Movement Points for entering the Graveyard. Numerous bocage hexsides are found on the AAO mapsheet. An example of a bocage hexside is J14-J15. Hedges are also found in abundance, as evidenced by hexside I14-H14. Hex O8 is a Graveyard and there is a Wall around the entire churchyard with a gate across the O8-N8 hexside.

1.4 Terrain Rules—The following rules are provided as an addition to the terrain rules presented earlier in the rulebook and apply ONLY to the AAO mapsheet.

1.4.1 The La Fiere Manoir in Hex AA15—This building is notable for its lack of windows on the ground floor along three hexsides. The result is the inability to conduct DIRECT FIRE or move across the THREE ‘black bar’ hexsides by and at units on the GROUND FLOOR. Units on Levels +10 and +20 may fire normally across these hexsides and an LOS into the building (e.g., for FO spotting for off-board artillery) may otherwise be created across these hexsides.

1.4.2 Building With Road—The road/building combination in F14 allows a unit to move from G15-F14-E15 WITHOUT ENTERING the building in F14. For example, a personnel unit could move at the cost in Movement Points of 1-1-1 (total of 3) down the road. A unit in F13 has an LOS to a unit moving down the road.

1.4.3 Yellow and Red Dot—A number of ‘yellow dot’ buildings are found on the AAO mapsheet (e.g., hex F13). These buildings are +20 level LOS obstacles and also contain an additional ‘story’, a hex location at Level +10. The building in hex AA15 is a ‘red dot’ building, containing an additional story at Level +10 and another at Level +20. No buildings on the AAO map are considered to have Roof-top locations.

1.4.4 Steeples—There is a steeple location in the building in hex N7. Thus, this building hex is a Level +20 obstacle and contains a steeple location at Level +10.

1.4.5 Multi Hex Buildings—All multi-hex buildings have a ground level AND a second Level +10 location. Units may enter +10 from ANY hex of these buildings. These too are +10 levels high. There are no Stairwell hexes. Units may also move between ‘upper floor’ hexes noting rubble eliminates the upper floor in any hex it is placed in. It also reduces the building hex to +5 levels high.

1.4.6 Hameau Aux Brix—The G4 building hex has a road running THROUGH it. Units may use the road or the building portion of the hex normally. Any moving unit must declare which part of the hex it is moving through. Personnel units are considered to be in the building if not moving. Heavy weapons and vehicles are always considered to be in the road portion unless they state they are entering the building portion of the hex BEFORE entering. There IS a LOS from F4 to H3, i.e., units may fire through the opening. There are ground level and Level +10 locations in hex G4, i.e., it is treated as a normal building with the exception of the ability to enter or move through it along the road.

1.4.7 Vehicle Bridge—The bridge in hex Y14 is a ‘normal’ bridges. It serves as a continuation of the road over the lower terrain, in this case the Level -10 Merderet River. Any unit may cross the bridge and if fired on while ON the bridge, any LOS that touches the bridge artwork treats the fire as if hitting a wall IN the hex.

1.4.8 Path Through Brush—Personnel units moving along the Path in hexes D3-D2-H0 do NOT pay the cost for entering the Brush in hexes D2-H0. They are still treated as if in Brush hexes when fired upon.

1.4.9 Flooded Swamp—The flooded condition of the marshes along the La Fiere causeway requires special treatment.

1.4.91 Personnel Entry—Treat all Swamp hexes (e.g., hex M18) normally with the following exception. Personnel may only use CRAWLING or Infiltration to enter a Swamp hex.

1.4.92 Vehicle Entry and Proximity—All vehicles are IMMEDIATELY M-KILLED when entering a Swamp hex. Any vehicle that moves ADJACENT to a Swamp hex while NOT on a road must make an immediate roll on the M-KILL table for each such hex entered and following any vehicle covered arc change within such a hex.

1.5. LOS Examples—The following examples clarify Lines-of-Sight on the AAO mapsheet.

- a) A unit in A16 has a LOS to C16 that is NOT affected by the Woods in B16.
- b) A squad in J12 firing at one in L13 applies a one column LEFT shift due to firing through K13. An HJAT gun would add a +1 die roll modifier to its HPN, making it tougher to secure a direct hit.
- c) A squad moving from N8 to O8 pays TWO Movement Points due to the gate in the Wall hexside and the cost to enter a Graveyard. A unit firing from N8 to O8 STILL treats the ENTIRE hexside as if it has a Wall running across it for units IN THE HEX.
- d) A crew in the steeple in hex N7 can see over hedges. They still provide cover for units in a hex directly connected to a hedge hexside (as do

We drive west out of a small French town. Passing under the new autoroute, we follow a minor road through quiet countryside. Two kilometers on, the hedgerows grow thicker and our road crosses a bridge over a deep cutting with a two-track railway. Suddenly we are in true bocage; the lane winds between high hedgerows. A final bend and the road straightens, sloping down past a large farm on our left. We stop opposite the farm buildings. Ahead, a river meanders slowly, flowing under the stone road bridge. Further ahead, beyond the bridge, our road turns slightly right to follow a raised avenue traversing 500 meters of open meadows. Through this tree-lined causeway and the hedgerows on the far side of the valley, we can make out the roofs of the houses and small church of the hamlet opposite.

All is peace and tranquillity. We have traveled hundreds of Kilometers to visit this site, yet there seems to be nothing remarkable here. The locals, most of them elderly farming folk, are unused to visitors, and stare open mouthed at the historian laden with cameras and camcorder, taken by surprise and curiosity when he asks permission to film their homes and their farmyards. Casual passers-by would see nothing here but tranquil, unremarkable French countryside. Unless they stopped where we have stopped, and read the small notice over a hole beside the road: 'Ici combattit le Gal. Gavin - 6 Juin 1944'. Unless they talked to the master of the Manoir, hearing his story and seeing his cache of antique weaponry.

Monsieur Poisson ensures that no one is watching, then reaches his arm into the eaves of an old cattle shed. He pulls out an old mine, a grenade, the fossilized bag of a gammon bomb, its stockinet squares now stiff and its contact fuse rusted solid. It was one such bomb that the first American to approach the manoir on the morning of 6th June tossed in response to a German sentry's challenge. The German instinctively tried to catch the thrown object, and as the book puts it, "that ended for the moment the local resistance." Perhaps this was one of the bombs carried by men of the mis-dropped 507, who crossed the causeway looking for friends and ran into German tanks. Or maybe this was just one of the many Gammon bombs whose owner gradually used up the "Composition C" plastic explosive charge to heat his coffee canteen. In any case, the relic is a reminder of the days when this quiet valley was the scene of death and destruction, and a focus of the attention of the whole world.

For the distant town was Sainte Mere Eglise. The railway was an important rallying point for the mis-dropped regiments of the 82nd Airborne Division on the night of 5/6 June. Where we stand stood 'Slim Jim' Gavin, and General Matt Ridgway, and many more heroes of the 82nd. Opposite, the hamlet of Cauquigny was bitterly contested by the German 1057th Grenadier Regiment. And the causeway, then surrounded by deeply flooded marsh, was to change hands as both sides sought to win the strategic crossing.

Most of the tourists gathering in the summer sun in the busy little town of Sainte Mere Eglise have come to see a dummy parachutist suspended

by his 'chute from the top of the church tower. They will visit the museum, buy some postcards, and leave for the Utah beaches, content that they have seen the key feature of the American paratroop landings. And they are right to think that Sainte Mere Eglise was the key to the Allies' right flank in the assault on Normandy. But in truth, the outcome at Sainte Mere Eglise was only briefly in question. By midnight on 6th June, though Ridgway and his men did not fully realize it, the threat to their defense of the town was over. It is at the bridgeheads, at Chef du Pont and especially at La Fiere, that the front line of the action was to be found, as the Merderet crossing became for four days and nights the focal point of both the German counter attack on the airborne bridgehead and of VII Corps' westward advance across the Cotentin.

History does not stand still. In the time it has taken to assemble, playtest, and produce AGAINST ALL ODDS, new information has continued to come to light. This is both healthy and pleasing. Every discovery of a unit report and every personal reminiscence that comes to light can give us new insights into the events of 6 to 9 June.

When AAO was first researched, there was still a debate over the position of the heroic Petersen with his bazooka. We now know (thanks to the testimony of his loader, Marcus Heim, Jnr), that he stood on the east bank of the river, up against the south parapet of the bridge. Applying the ultimate test of "Inherent Military Probability", this makes excellent sense. Standing where Petersen stood, there is a good ten foot span of masonry between you and any oncoming traffic!

Right up to publication, the designer was still wondering why there were no records of American forces garrisoning the AA15 *manoir* after its capture. And then, the answer came from two separate sources. The entire western face of the manoir was rubbled in the course of 6th June, and what is more it was a constant target for German OBA and direct fire. So, the Americans held their entrenchments along the eastern side of the Merderet, exposed to the German bombardment.

And in a similar vein, members of the 505th still wonder aloud why Colonel Timmes (of the 507th) spent all that time holed-up in his orchard. To them, I am pleased to quote this extract from Gerard M Dillon, S-2 of the 507th, "I was to cross the river and the inundated area and tell Colonel Timmes that General Ridgway ordered him to hold out in that position at all costs and not to surrender it." Now we know.

The publishers wish to thank all who have been involved in the AGAINST ALL ODDS project: veterans, historians, playtesters, artists, publisher and printers. It's been hard work and great fun.

IAN DAGLISH

walls). If a crew was manning a MG 42 M|MG in this position it could put '8' Gunfire factors into Z13 (and many other hexes), seeing over the Graveyard, Walls, and Swamp hexes. It could NOT see past the Level +20 obstacle created by the building in N9, since the Steeple location is at Level +10 (while the hex the Steeple is in is also a Level +20 LOS obstacle). A minimum +10 height advantage is needed to see OVER something. Thus, this same machine-gun in the Level +20 location of hex AA15 could see over all other buildings (and Woodods and Orchards and Bocage hexsides) on the map, noting any BLIND hexes created. The +20 'red dot' location in AA15 is the ONLY location on the map that can see over bocage hexsides, beyond the hex they touch. Thus, the above machine-gun if placed in AA15, Level +20, could see a unit in hex K11. As per the LOS Blind Hex Creation Table, TWO blind hexes are created beyond the P11-O12 bocage hexside, eliminating any LOS to hex N11. The machine-gun in +20 of hex AA15 can NOT see a unit in O12 due to the blind hex created by the Orchard in P12.

e) There is no LOS from AA12 to AA10. There is none from AA10 to AA7 due to the Blind Hex created by the AA8 Orchard. There is one from AA15 to EE13. There is no LOS from AA15 to FF12 UNLESS the unit in FF12 is in the +20 location of the building.

f) A personnel unit moving from D2 to E2 pays ONE Movement Point. One moving from E3 to E2 pays TWO.

1.4.8 Airborne Gamers Guide—The Rangers Gamers Guide also includes material for enthusiasts of AGAINST ALL ODDS! This publication is now available.

Hey, a guys gotta read something on the way in! Now let's see, if I kin get the Sarge to lemme use some assault movement I'll nail those cruddy krauts...

