

A Historian's Holiday Snaps

Photos on a recent trip have illustrated or raised issues about some bits of history ancient and modern, famous and obscure.

Hopefully they will be of some general interest.

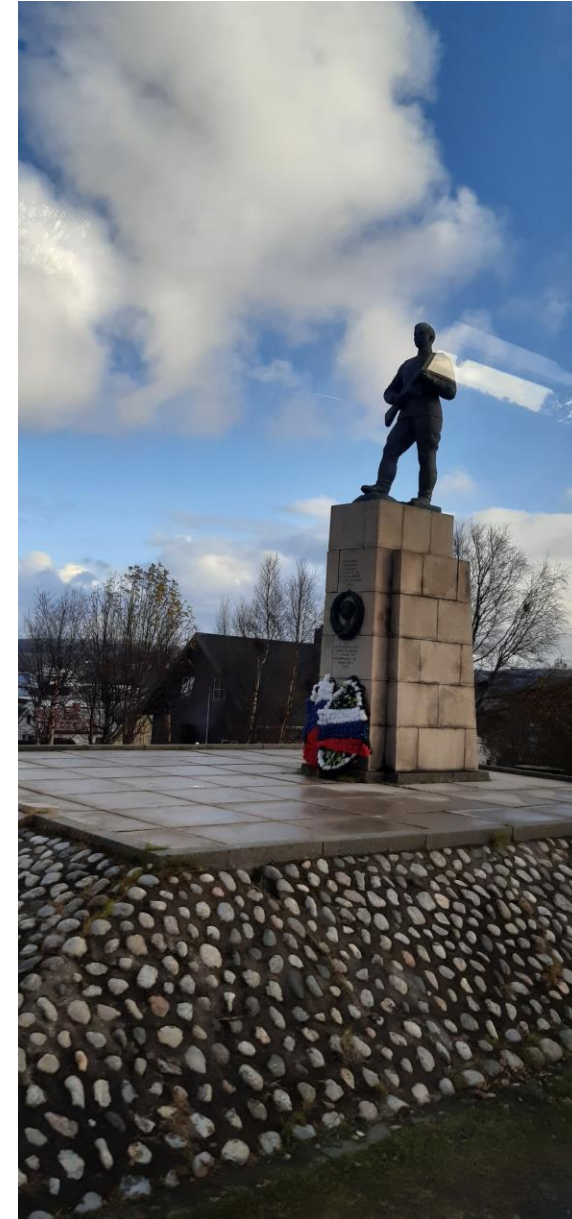
Kirkenes

- This is unusual.
- These were never common but they are really out of fashion now.
- It is a memorial to the Russian Soldier.



Kirkenes

- Someone is still laying wreaths on it, which would not happen in many parts of the world these days.
- The memorial is in Kirkenes



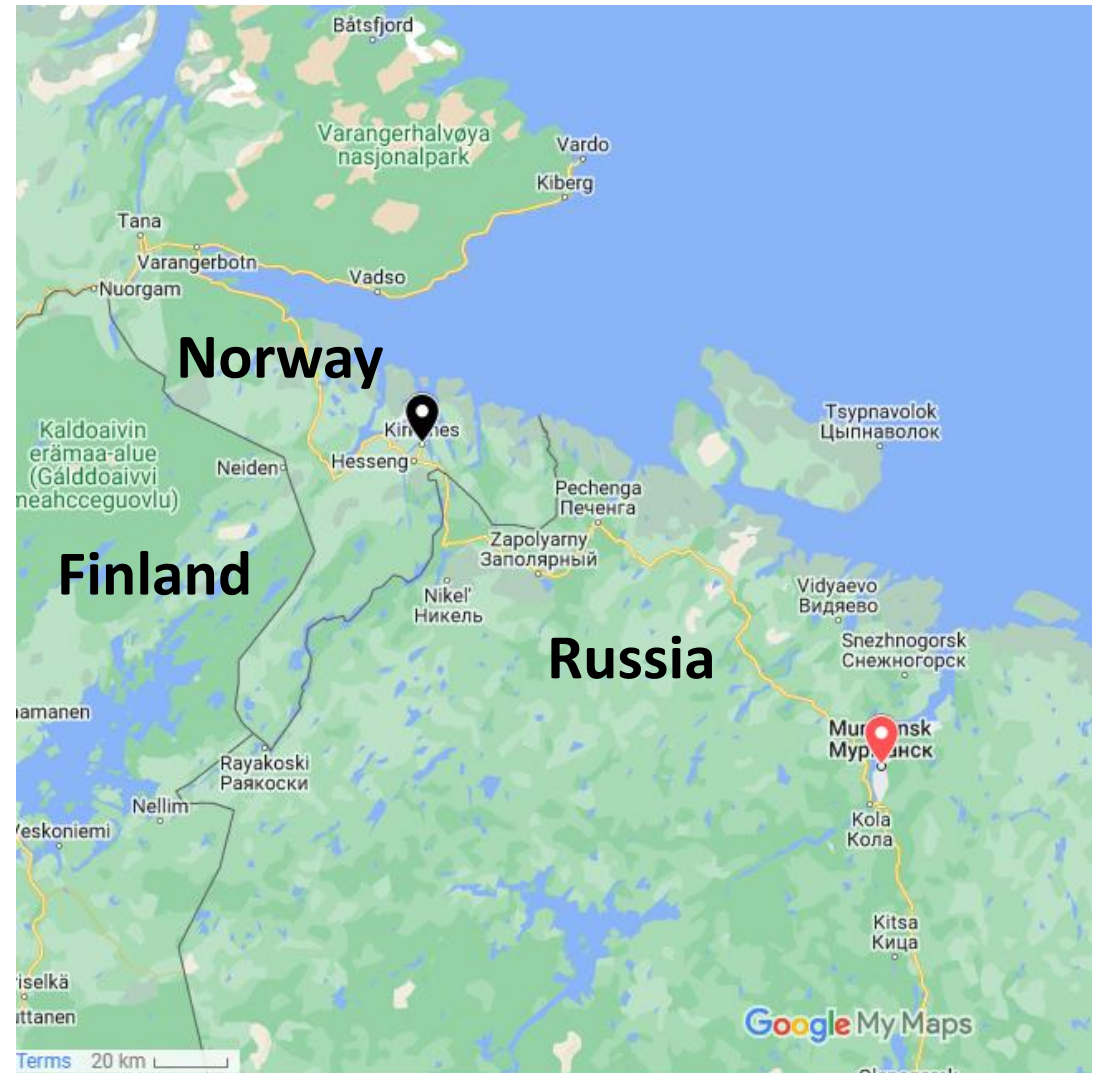
Kirkenes

- This is the road sign at the dock gates in Kirkenes.
- The Russian border is 10 kilometres away and it is 150 kilometres to Murmansk.
- Before the Ukraine war there was a lot of cross border traffic to go shopping. The Kirkenes shops have signs in Russian as well as Norwegian.
- Russians can still shop in Kirkenes but they have to eat what they buy before they go home because sanctions do not permit exports from Norway to Russia.



Kirkenes

- The borders on the map around Kirkenes are convoluted and they produced some confusing events during WW2.



Kirkenes

- The Winter War was a war between the Soviet Union and Finland. The Soviets made several demands, including that Finland cede substantial border territories in exchange for land elsewhere, claiming security reasons – primarily the protection of Leningrad, 32 km (20 mi) from the Finnish border. When Finland refused, the Soviets invaded on 30 November 1939.
- The League of Nations deemed the attack illegal and expelled the Soviet Union.
- Finland repelled Soviet attacks for more than two months and inflicted substantial losses on the invaders in temperatures as low as -43°C (-45°F).
- Despite superior military strength, especially in tanks and aircraft, the Soviet Union initially made little headway.
- The battles focused mainly on the Karelian Isthmus



Map of the Karelian Isthmus. Shown are some important towns, Lake Ladoga, the current Finnish-Russian border in the North-West and the pre-Winter War border further South.

Kirkenes

- but there were also battles in Salla and Petsamo in Lapland.
- The Soviets informed the Finnish government that they were willing to negotiate peace in late January 1940.
- After the Soviet military reorganized and adopted different tactics, they renewed their offensive in February 1940 and overcame the Finnish defences on the Karelian Isthmus.
- This left the Finnish army in the main theatre of war near breaking point, with a retreat seeming inevitable. Consequently, the Finnish commander-in-chief, Mannerheim, urged a peace deal with the Soviets, while the Finns still retained bargaining power.
- Hostilities ceased in March 1940 with the signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty in which Finland ceded 9% of its territory to the Soviet Union.



Kirkenes

- On 9 April 1940 Germany invaded Norway.
- Conventional armed resistance to the German invasion ended on 10 June 1940, and Nazi Germany occupied Norway thereafter.



Kirkenes

- Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.
- On 25 June the Soviet Union launched an air raid against Finnish cities, after which Finland declared war and allowed German troops stationed in Finland to begin offensive warfare.
- The resulting war was known to the Finns as the Continuation War.
- By September 1941, Finland had regained its post–Winter War concessions to the Soviet Union in Karelia. The Finnish Army continued its offensive past the 1939 border during the invasion of East Karelia and halted it only around 30 kilometres from the centre of Leningrad.
- It participated in besieging the city by cutting the northern supply routes.

Jerry McBrien 2024



The Finnish invasion of Karelia during the 1941 general offensive. The old 1939 border is marked in grey.

Kirkenes

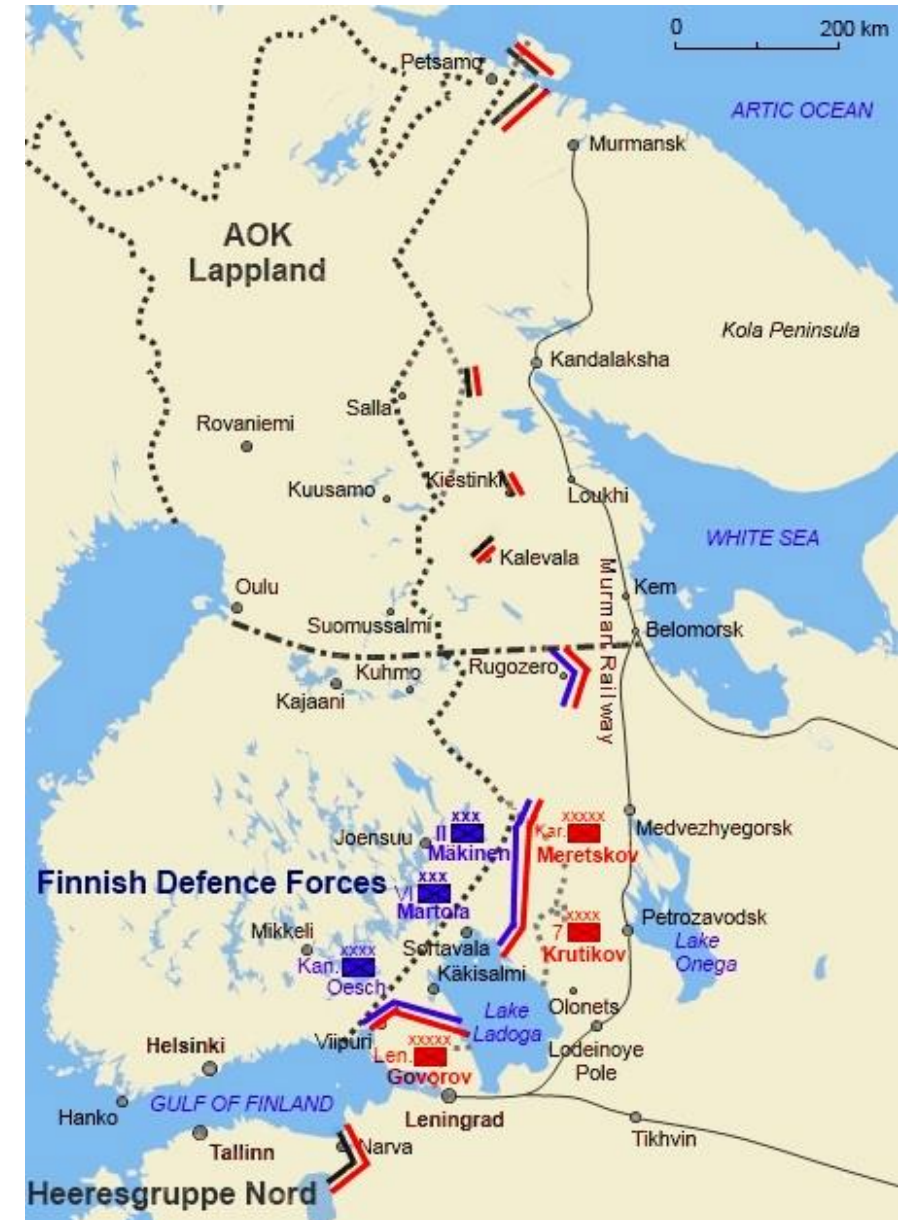
- In Lapland, joint German-Finnish forces failed to capture Murmansk or to cut the Kirov (Murmansk) Railway.
- In December 1941, the Finnish army took defensive positions. This led to a long period of relative calm in the front line, lasting until 1944.
- The Soviet Vyborg–Petrozavodsk Offensive in June and August 1944 drove the Finns from most of the territories that they had gained during the war, but the Finnish Army halted the offensive in August 1944.
- During this period, starting at 1941 but especially after the major German defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad, intermittent peace inquiries took place.



Keitel (left), Hitler, Mannerheim and Ryti (President of Finland) at Immola Airfield on 4 June 1942. Hitler made a surprise visit in honour of Mannerheim's 75th birthday.

Kirkenes

- On 16 March 1944, President Roosevelt, called for Finland to disassociate itself from Nazi Germany.
- On 9 June 1944, the Red Army launched a major offensive against Finland, attaining vast numerical superiority and surprising the Finnish army. This pushed the Finnish forces approximately to the same positions as they were holding at the end of the Winter War. Eventually, the Soviet offensive was fought to a standstill, while still tens or hundreds of kilometres in front of the main Finnish line of fortifications. However, the war had exhausted Finnish resources and it was feared that the country would not be able to resist another major attack.
- The situation caused the Parliament to select Marshal Mannerheim, the Finnish commander-in-chief, as president and charged him with negotiating a peace.
- The Finnish front had become a sideshow for the Soviet leadership, as they were in a race to reach Berlin before the Western Allies. This, and the heavy casualties inflicted on the Red Army by the Finns, led to the transfer of most troops away from the Finnish front.
- On 4 September 1944 a ceasefire was agreed, and the Moscow armistice between the Soviet Union and United Kingdom on one side and Finland on the other was signed on 19 September.
- Map: The front lines on 4 September 1944, when the ceasefire came into effect and two weeks before the war concluded.



Kirkenes

- After the Moscow Armistice between the Soviet Union and Finland on 4 September 1944, the Petsamo region, still largely occupied by the Germans, was ceded to the Soviet Union, and the Finnish government agreed to remove the remaining German forces from their own territory by 15 September (leading to the Lapland War).
- During the retreat of the German 20th Mountain Army, called Operation Birke, the decision was made by the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht to withdraw completely from northern Norway and Finland in Operation Nordlicht.
- To stall the Soviets, OKW ordered a scorched earth policy throughout the region.



Kirkenes

- The Stavka decided to move against the German forces in the Arctic in late 1944.
- The Germans had been ordered to abandon Petsamo and Kirkenes by the beginning of November.
- To stall the Soviets, the Germans enacted a scorched earth policy and began to sabotage local infrastructure and destroy villages.
- Thousands of civilians from Finnmark were forcibly evacuated to southern Norway. Between 43,000 and 45,000 Norwegian civilians were forced out of Finnmark.
- The German Commander claimed to have successfully evicted all but 200 Norwegians.
- In reality, between 20,000 and 25,000 civilians avoided relocation, including 10,000 residents of Kirkenes and the Varanger Peninsula who could not be moved due to logistical constraints.
- The Soviets attacked on 7 October but due to supply problems did not reach the Norwegian border until 19 October.



Finnmark, in red

Kirkenes

- The fight for Kirkenes started on October 23, 1944, as the Soviet forces beat off a series of counter-attacks as they pursued the retreating Germans from Finland.
- That night, the 45th Rifle Division crossed the Jarfjord. Further south, the 10th Guards Division crossed over a pontoon bridge at Holmfoss, accompanied by KV tanks and self-propelled artillery.
- On 24 October the 45th Rifle Division met little resistance as it advanced to the edge of Bøkfjord, opposite Kirkenes.
- The 14th Rifle Division had more trouble at Elvenes, where the Germans had destroyed the local bridge to prevent them from crossing the fjord. Using amphibious Lend-Lease vehicles and makeshift rafts, the majority of the Soviet corps were able to cross the river by 09:00.
- The 10th Guards Division had advanced within 10 kilometers south of Kirkenes, securing the iron ore mines where many civilians were sheltering.
- Fires and explosions were seen in the town itself, as the withdrawing Germans had set the town ablaze as part of the scorched earth campaign.
- The 10th Guards Division reached the southern outskirts of the town by 03:00 25 October.
- Supported by tanks and artillery, the 10th, 65th, and 14th Rifle Divisions cleared out the last of the German rearguard from Kirkenes by midday 25 October.



Kirkenes left burning by the Germans

Kirkenes

- After the Russians, forces of the Norwegian government in exile returned to Finnmark, but the population of Kirkenes continued to rely on the ironmine for shelter for months.
- So you can see why the inhabitants of Kirkenes are more favorably disposed to the Russian Soldier than most.



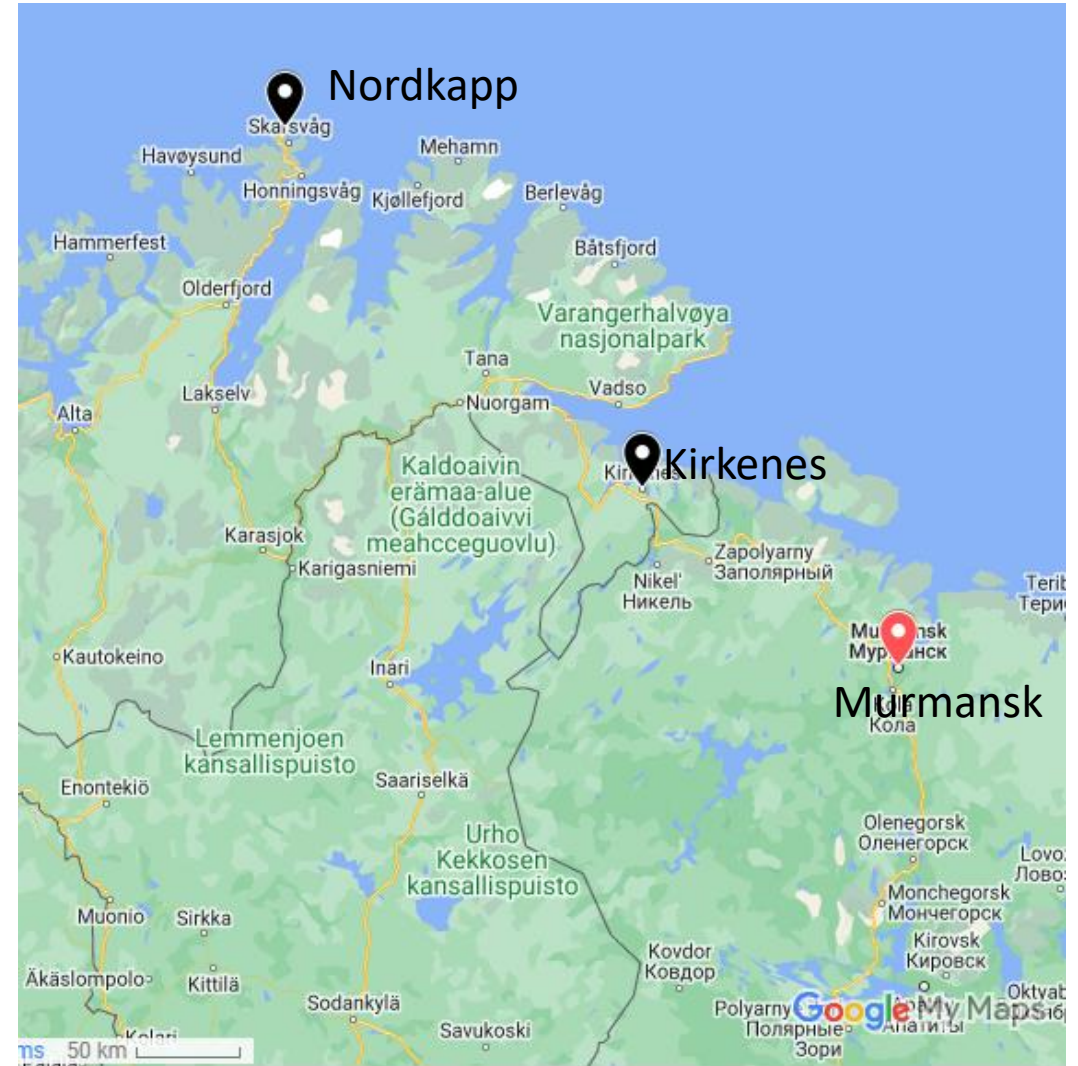
North Cape

- This monument marks North Cape, the most northerly point of Europe.



North Cape

- There is a museum there which, among other subjects, is a memorial for the battles that have been fought in the area.

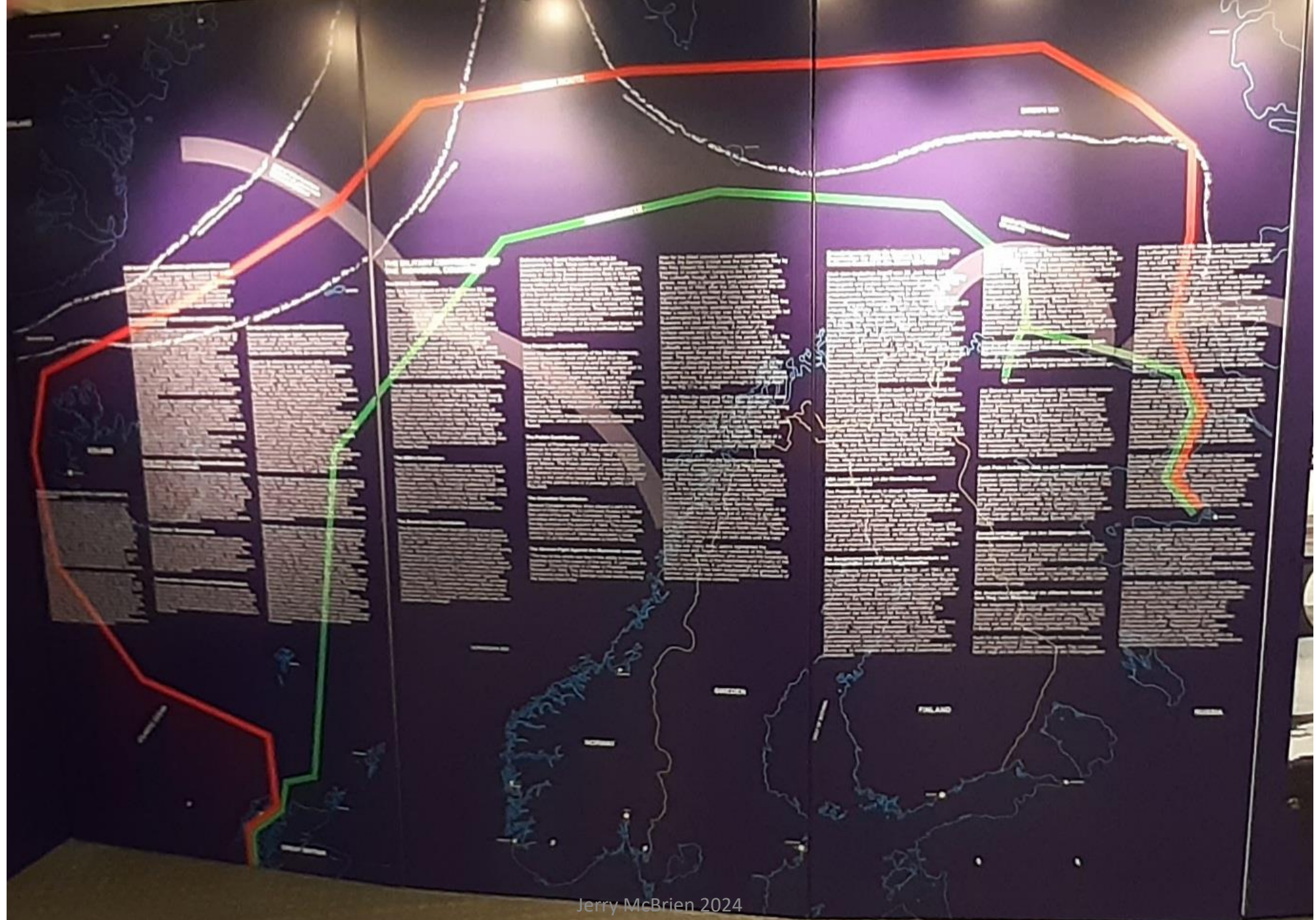


in front the destroyer HMS ESKIMO (G75).

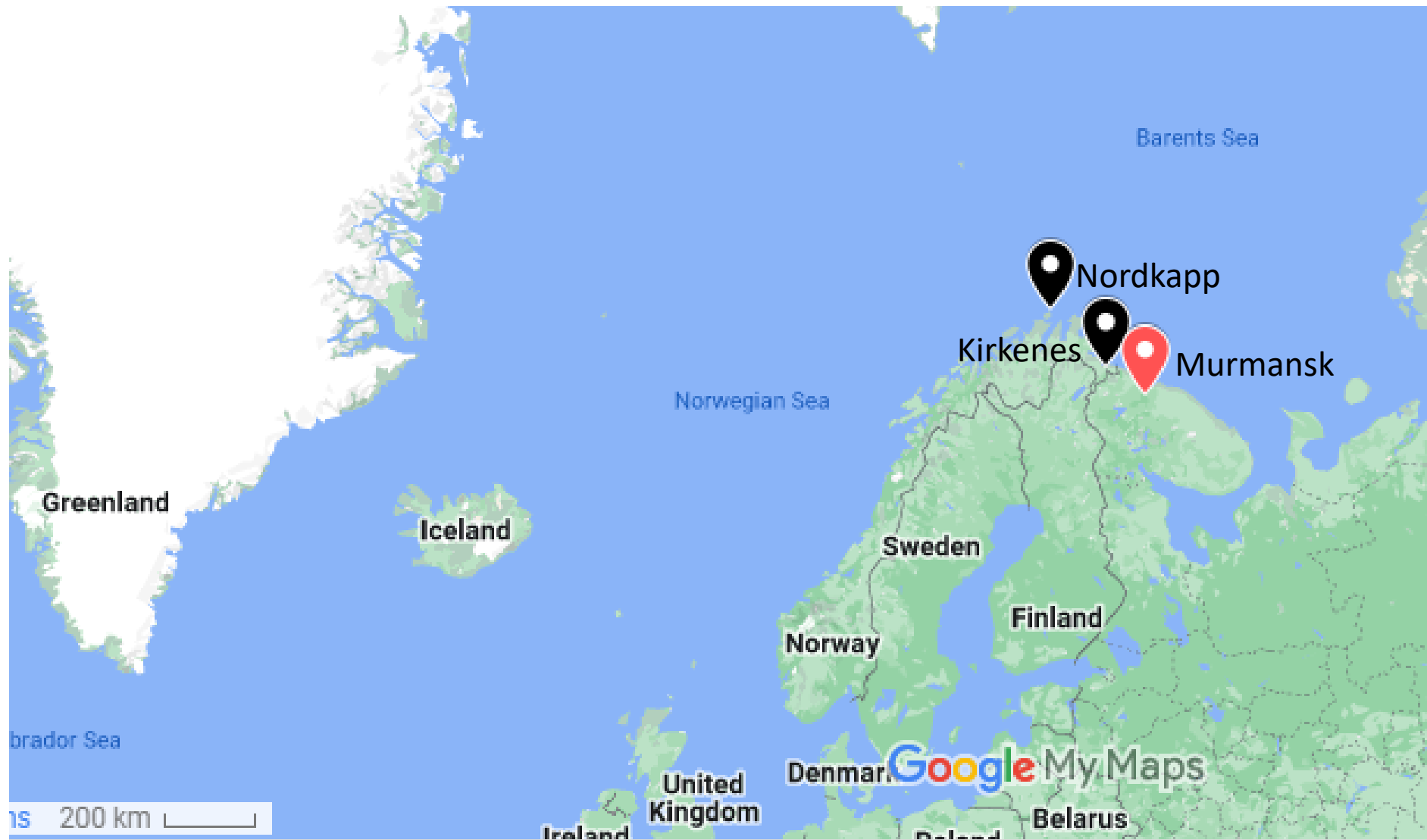


**IN MEMORY OF ALL THOSE WHO TOOK PART
ON LAND AND SEA CONTRIBUTING TO THE
VITAL CONTINUATION OF THE TRANSPORT
OF ALLIED SUPPLIES TO THE SOVIET UNION
1941 - 1945**

Storbritannia hadde hovedkonvoifarten
Etter det tyske angrepet på Sovjetunionen besluttet den britiske regjering seg for å etablere konvoier for frakt av krigsforstyrrelser til Sovjetunionen. Hovedkonvoien (Dervish) seilte til Nordvest i august 1941 via Island til Arktikk. Den seilte med konvoi QP 1, som returnerte i september 1941. Fra mai 1942 etablerte Storbritannia og Norge egne konvoier til Sovjetunionen. Det britiske admiralskapet hadde det operative ansvaret for konvoierne, mens den norske marinen og organiserte eskorter og transporterte krigsmateriell og forsyninger. På tross av store tap og problemer var konvoierne avgjørende for den allierte forsyningslinjen til Sovjetunionen.







MURMANSK CONVOYS 1941 - 1945



Convoy PQ18 under air attack on 14 September 1942. In front the destroyer HMS ESKIMO (G75).



Jerry McBrien 2024





NINETY MILES NORTH-WEST OF THIS SPOT IN THE ARCTIC
NIGHT OF 26TH DECEMBER 1943 IN A FULL GALE, UNITS OF
THE BRITISH HOME FLEET, INCLUDING HINGING STORD
UNDER THE COMMAND OF ADMIRAL SIR BRUCE FRASER,
ENGAGED AND SANK THE GERMAN BATTLE-CRUISER
GOHARNHORST IN THE BATTLE OF NORTH CAPE.

The 1943 sea battle by North Cape

The war situation December 1943

The Russians wanted more weapons for their western offensive. At sea, German U-boats had lost the Battle of the Atlantic due to the Allies' radar and ASDIC (Anti-Submarine Detection Committee) devices. In Northern Norway, the German offensive air forces were sent to the Eastern Front. However, reconnaissance planes remained behind, sending regular reports even in dark and turbulent weather. Hitler kept huge land forces in Norway because he was convinced that the Allied invasion in Western Europe would take place here.

Significance of the Murmansk convoys

The Red Army suffered tremendous losses in 1941-42. The 1943 Winter offensive required large amounts of new war materials, but help from the west was difficult. The only way to reach Murmansk and Archangel was by crossing the Atlantic, but this was risky due to the swarms of German U-boats, warships and planes in Northern Norway. Altogether 40 convoys comprising 792 cargo ships carrying four million tons of cargo sailed to the Soviet Union. Cargo losses totalled 7.5 per cent.

The Alta fjord

The German warships here were a constant threat to the convoys carrying vital American war materials to the Soviet Union.

The *Tirpitz*, the pride of the German Navy, was moored behind torpedo nets in Kåfjord, an arm of the Alta fjord. It was incapacitated for several months after being attacked by British minisubmarines. The *Scharnhorst* lay protected by torpedo nets in Langfjorden, another arm of the fjord. A powerful battleship with a crew of 1,900 men, it was armed with nine 28 calibre cannons, twelve 15 calibre cannons, antiaircraft guns and torpedoes and could do 30-32 knots. Its speed enabled it to flee from the British battleship *Duke of York*, which was armed with more guns of higher calibre.



Scharnhorst

North Cape

ember: The fully loaded JW55b convoy is headed towards Murmansk and is expected to pass south of Bear Island on the morning of 26 December. The convoy is without heavily armed escort vessels.

23.00 The battleship *Duke of York*, the cruiser *Jamaica*, three British destroyers and the Norwegian destroyer *Stord* sail from Akureyri Island to protect the convoy from an attack by the *Scharnhorst*.

ember: 19.00 The battleship *Scharnhorst* and five destroyers sail from Alta. At 23.40 Admiral Karl Dönitz gives Admiral Bey of the *Scharnhorst* orders to attack the convoy, but to withdraw if more heavily armed forces intervene. Eight German U-boats are deployed along the convoy route by Bear Island. Convoy RA55 returns empty from Murmansk and calculates it will pass south of Bear Island earlier than convoy JW55b on 26 December. After escorting convoy RA55 outside the danger zone, the cruisers *Norfolk*, *Belfast* and *Sheffield* take over guarding convoy JW55b. Evening The IDA transmitter in Alta telegraphs to England that the *Scharnhorst* has sailed. In addition, the *Scharnhorst*'s radio communications are tapped and decoded in Britain. The British had the secret German code machine Enigma.



Admiral Fraser CinC Home Fleet,
flying his flag in HMS Duke of York.

North Cape

ember: 03.39 The *Duke of York* receives the message: "The *Scharnhorst* has probably sailed from Alta." Total polar darkness. High winds, cold and snow. German planes and U-boats report the movements of both the convoy and warships, but the *Scharnhorst* never receives a clear message that the *Duke of York* is under way.

07.00 The *Scharnhorst* closes in on convoy JW55b, and knows its route. The destroyers head out parallel to convoy.

09.24-09.40 Unexpected battle with the *Norfolk*, *Belfast* and *Sheffield*, which are directed towards the *Scharnhorst* from the escort for westbound convoy RA55.

09.40 Despite its superior artillery, the *Scharnhorst* takes off at full speed (according to orders). The *Duke of York* waits in suspense. Will the *Scharnhorst* return to Alta or continue north and attack the convoy? The *Scharnhorst* decides to attack. This means that the *Duke of York* can arrive in time to prevent the ship's return to Alta.

Approx. 11.00 Incomplete report from German planes about five naval ships northwest of North Cape. The *Scharnhorst* sticks to its attack plan. However, the convoy changes course and the cruiser comes between it and the battleship.

12.21-12.41 New battle with the *Norfolk*, *Belfast* and *Sheffield*. The *Norfolk* suffers damage. The *Scharnhorst* puts out a smoke screen and departs.

Approx. 13.00 The *Scharnhorst* gives up attacking the convoy and returns to Alta at a speed of 28 knots. The superior radar of the British is now decisive. The *Norfolk*, *Belfast* and *Sheffield* tail the *Scharnhorst* southwards and report its positions to the *Duke of York*.

13.43 The five German destroyers searching along the convoy route receive unexpected orders to return to Alta.

14.00 The *Duke of York*'s navigator estimates that the ship will meet up with the *Scharnhorst* at approx. 17.15. The *Scharnhorst*'s radar is not good enough to register the *Duke of York*.



Vice Admiral Sir Robert Burnett commanding the 10th Cruiser Squadron and flying his flag in HMS Belfast was the younger brother of the former Australian C.A.S. Sir Charles Burnet. Photo: Rear Admiral Burnett sitting at his desk on board Destroyer Depot Ship HMS Tyne.

North Cape

16.37 According to drilled plans, the four destroyers leave the *Duke of York* and sail in divided formation on both sides of the *Scharnhorst*'s calculated position. High seas cause the destroyers to roll, but they maintain their course and work hard to maintain the set speed.

16.47 The British set off light flares. The *Scharnhorst* is illuminated and is completely unprepared to meet the *Duke of York*.

16.50 The *Duke of York*: Open fire! Distance 10,000 metres. One hour battle. The *Scharnhorst* fights well and uses its speed to avoid its pursuers by sailing eastwards. It gets out of the range of fire from the cruisers and increases its distance to the *Duke of York* to 18,000 metres.

18.00 The *Scharnhorst* loses some speed after taking a hit in the boiler room. The four destroyers catch up, two on each side, with tensions mounting.

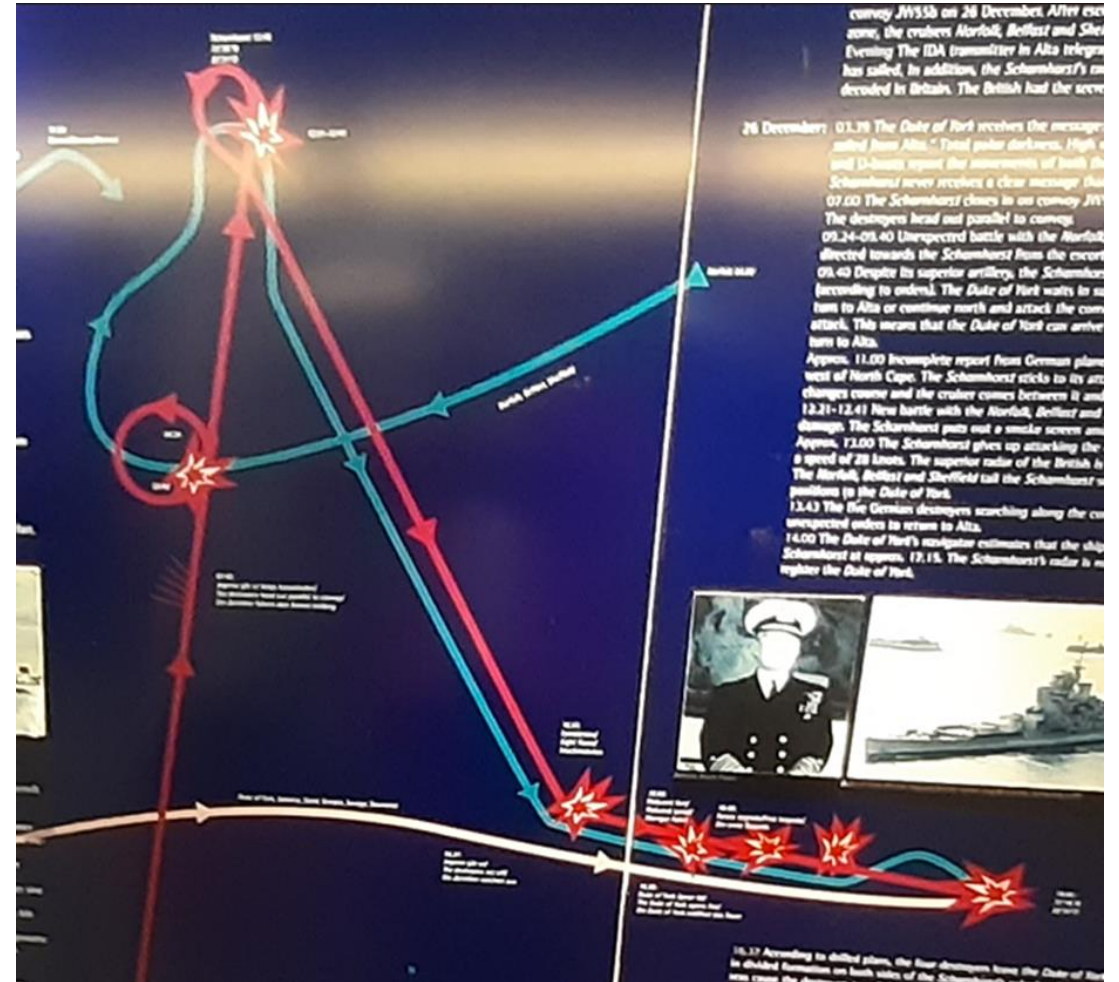
18.49 The *Stord* and *Scorpion* are discovered and subjected to murderous firepower. They fire their torpedoes, throw out a smoke blanket and disappear in the opposite direction.

18.55 The *Savage* and *Saumarez* fire torpedoes from the other side. The *Saumarez* suffers extensive damage. The *Scharnhorst* is hit in the cross-fire of the torpedoes and loses speed.

19.00 The artillery begins firing again from both sides. The *Scharnhorst* is hit repeatedly. Admiral Bey sends a telegram: "The *Scharnhorst* will fight to the last grenade. Heil Hitler."

19.19 Fraser gives orders to the cruisers: Fire your torpedoes!

19.45 The *Scharnhorst* sinks with 1,900 men on board. Thirty-eight are rescued, no officers. Quartermaster Gödde, the look-out man in the control centre, is rescued. He later gave a full account of the *Scharnhorst*'s final moments. Returning from Murmansk, the *Duke of York* places a wreath on the sea where the *Scharnhorst* sank. Honours are said in German for the capable and brave crew of the ship.



Bayeux

- The city of Bayeux in Normandy has two excellent museums commemorating the great cross channel invasions that have changed the face of Europe.



The historic centre of Bayeux, the Cathedral and the river Aure.

Bayeux



Bayeux

- This is the first.
- It only has one exhibit.
- The Bayeux Tapestry, describing the invasion of England by William, Duke of Normandy, in 1066.



The Bayeux Tapestry

- William, seventh Duke of Normandy, is the main protagonist in the story told by the Tapestry.
- Born in Falaise in 1027, he was the illegitimate son of Robert the Magnificent, Duke of Normandy, his illegitimacy earning him the nickname William the Bastard.
- He succeeded his father in 1035, when he was only 8 years old. In 1050 he married Matilda, the daughter of Count Baudouin V of Flanders, a distant cousin. He died in 1087 at the age of 60.
- Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, William's half brother, is on the left.



The Bayeux Tapestry

- William assembled his soldiers from the late summer of 1066 in an encampment at the mouth of the river Dives.
- Having called on his vassals and allies to provide their support for the conquest, William even managed to obtain the Pope's blessing for his claim to the throne of England.
- The vast forests of oak near the river were used to build an impressive fleet of about a thousand ships that were able to transport an army estimated at 8,000 men and 5,000 horses across the sea.
- "He thus assembled an immense army of Normans, men of Flanders, Franks and Bretons, and once his vessels were ready, he filled them with fine horses and strong men equipped with hauberks and helmets".
 - –Extract from Guillaume de Jumièges, Gesta Normannorum ducum, v. 1070 –



The Bayeux Tapestry

- William and his fleet crossed the Channel unhindered during the night of 28 September 1066, and landed at dawn on the beach at Pevensey, on the south coast of England.
- At that time Harold was fully occupied with another conflict in the north of the country against the king of Norway, Harald Hardrada, who had also laid claim to the throne.
- After defeating Hardrada at Stamford Bridge on 25 September, Harold Godwinson had to march south with all speed in order to confront the Norman invaders.
- William and his companions made use of this breathing space to prepare for the confrontation and built a wooden stronghold at Hastings to protect the Normans' position.



The Bayeux Tapestry

- In the morning of 14 October 1066, William divided his forces into 3 groups – the Bretons on the left flank, the Normans in the centre and the Franks and Flemish on the right.
- “He placed foot soldiers armed with arrows and crossbows in the lead; foot soldiers in second position too, but safer and equipped with hauberks; and in the rear the squadrons of cavalry, and he took his place in the midst of them with the elite; from there he was able to direct from all sides using both voice and gestures”.
 - -Extract from Guillaume de Poitiers, Gesta Guillelmi II ducis Normannorum, v.1073-1074
- Harold's troops, approaching under the cover of woodland, took up their positions on the top of a hill. The high position allowed them to harass any soldiers attempting to climb the hill by throwing a variety of missiles at them before pushing them back in hand-to-hand combat.



The Bayeux Tapestry

- As the Normans struggled to dislodge Harold's soldiers from their hilltop position they suffered severe losses, making the battle start to turn in the Anglo-Saxons' favour.
- A rumour then spread – that Duke William himself had perished in the fighting. Some of the Norman troops retreated towards the sea, pursued by the English who at last left their positions at the top of the slope.
- As he watched their flight, William, very much alive, rushed before his companions and removed his helmet so that everybody would recognise him.
- After being so close to defeat the Norman horsemen returned to the front and seized the edge in the battle.



The Bayeux Tapestry

- As evening was falling, King Harold fell wounded in the face by an arrow.
- The Anglo-Saxon troops finally succumbed to the Normans' repeated attacks and fled through the woods.
- At the end of an entire day of fierce battle, William of Normandy's men were the victors, Harold Godwinson was dead, his troops routed and the road to London was wide open.
- On 25 December 1066 William was crowned King of England in Westminster Abbey.



The Bayeux Tapestry

- The tapestry (actually an embroidery) is about 68.3 metres long and about 70cm wide, of which 50cm are devoted to the narrative itself.
- It is generally supposed by historians that Bishop Odo, who had fought alongside his brother at Hastings, had the Bayeux Tapestry made to embellish his new cathedral at its consecration in 1077.
- Exhibiting the Tapestry in a consecrated building provided legitimacy for the Norman conquest of England.
- About half the tapestry is devoted to building up the religious respectability of William's claim to the English throne and documentation of Harold's alleged perjury in swearing allegiance to William.
- The subtitles on the tapestry are in Latin. Google Translate does provide translation from Latin.



“After swearing an oath to William on holy relics, Harold sails back to England.”

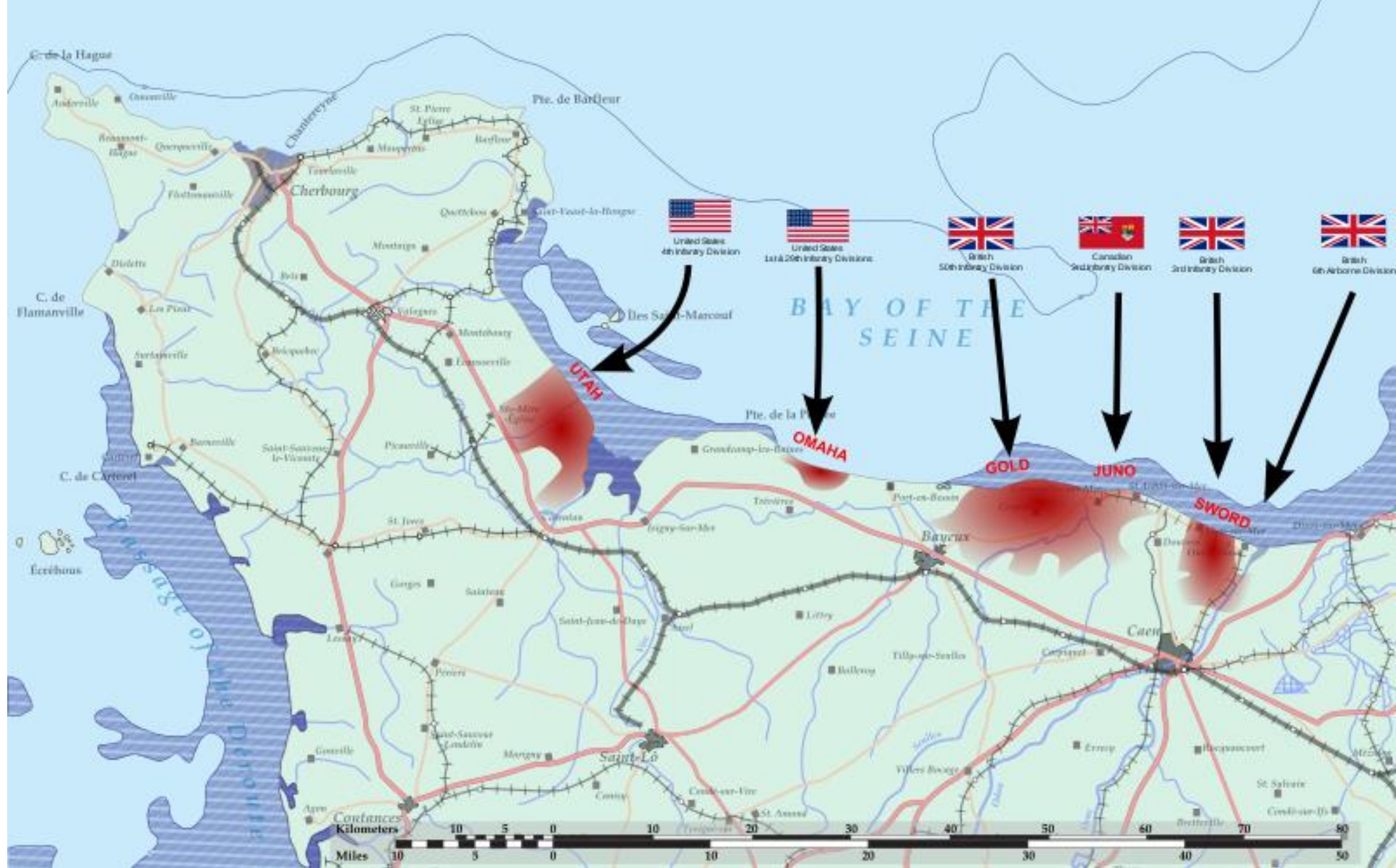
The Battle of Normandy Museum

- Less than a kilometre from the tapestry museum is the Battle of Normandy Museum.



A montage about the significance of aircraft and bombing to the battle for Normandy.

Situation at the end of D Day.
Last year I used this slide when talking about the involvement of Bomber Command in D Day. I remember a question about the progress of the Battle on the ground, which wasn't answered because we were following the air war. We can now follow the Land Battle in Normandy.



Normandy 6 June 1944



Normandy 6-7 June 1944



By 8:00 PM on D day the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, who had landed fresh on the beach at noon, were in Villon-les-Buissons, only three miles from the outskirts of Caen.

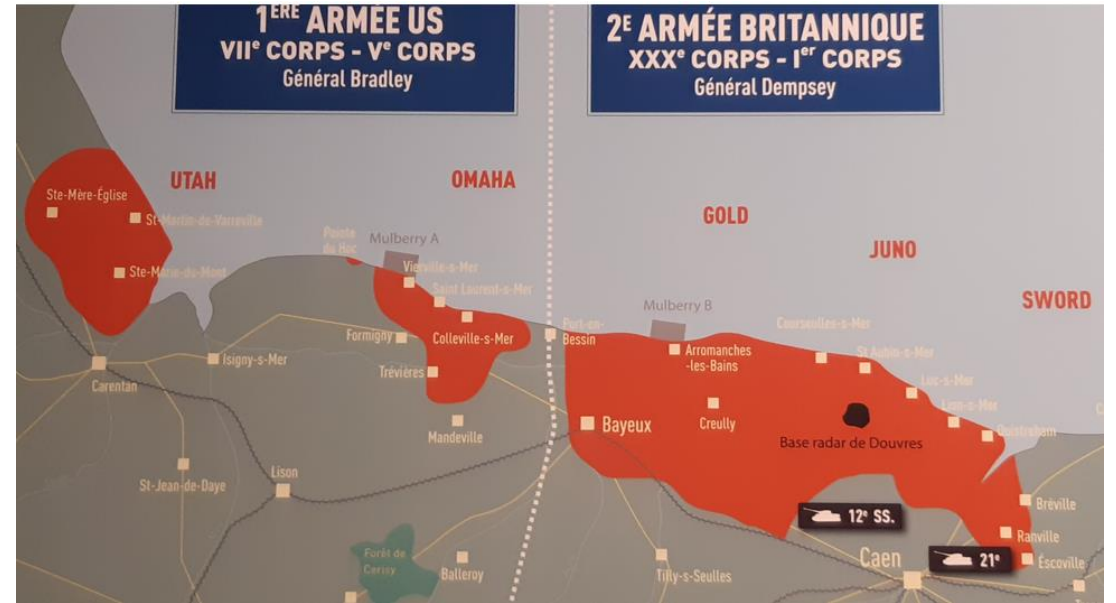
Late that evening a patrol of the 21st Panzer division, tardily released by army Group B to 7th army for the only German counter-attack of D Day aimed at the gap between the British and the Canadian bridgeheads and blundered into the pickets of the North Nova Scotias.

19 prisoners fell into Canadian hands. The rest of the Germans fled into the night.

The allies were ashore.

Normandy 6-7 June 1944

- On the evening of June the 6th the British seaborne infantry landing on Sword Beach had joined hands with the parachutists in the airborne bridgehead just as the Americans of Utah beach had done with their parachutists earlier in the afternoon.
- The Canadians on Juno had made early contact with the British on their right on Gold, who had almost reached Bayeux before the end of the day and would on the morning of June 7th close the gap between themselves and the British on their left into which the 21st Panzer division had probed and then withdrawn from in the dusk of D Day.



Normandy 10 June 1944



Normandy 18 June 1944



Normandy 25 June 1944



Despite achieving this line on 25th June and continual attacks by British and American forces all along the line it was not until 26th of July that the Americans broke through the cordon the Germans had managed to improvise around the landing.

Normandy 30 July 1944

- The 4th US armoured division captured the key exit point from Normandy, the coastal town of Avranches, on 30th July after an advance of 25 miles in 36 hours and by the following evening, July the 31st, was in Brittany proper.
- The Battle of Normandy was over.



Bayeux

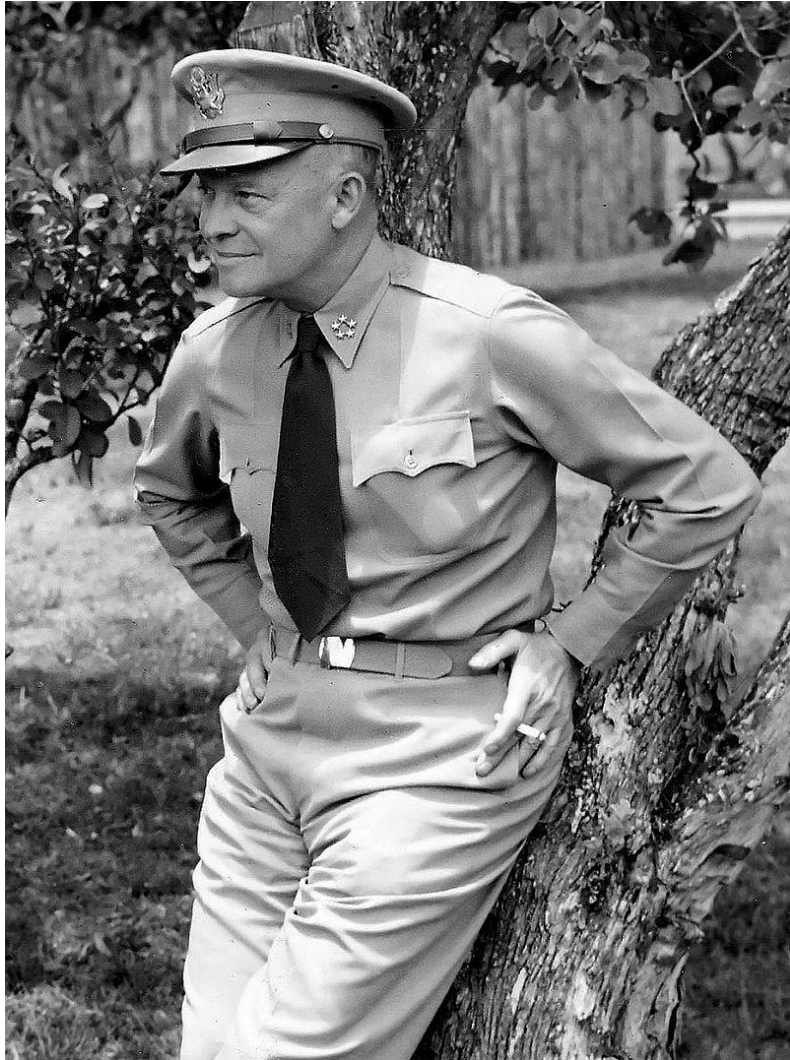
- Statue of an under-appreciated general.
- It's in the middle of a roundabout on the Bayeux ring road.
- But it is in the middle of the Department he fought his best battle to liberate.
- Even at this range it is recognisably Eisenhower.



Bayeux



Bayeux



BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY

The cemetery is next door to the Battle of Normandy Museum.



BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY

- BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY, which was completed in 1952, contains 4,144 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 338 of them unidentified. There are also over 500 war graves of other nationalities, the majority German.
- There was little actual fighting in Bayeux although it was the first French town of importance to be liberated.
- Bayeux War Cemetery is the largest Commonwealth cemetery of the Second World War in France and contains burials brought in from the surrounding districts and from hospitals that were located nearby.



Five members of one aircrew killed in the battle on 10 June 1944 are buried together in Bayeux. One member of the crew F.O. D. MacFadyen was RAAF the other four were RAF.

The BAYEUX MEMORIAL

The Bayeux Memorial, across the road from the cemetery, commemorates more than 1,800 casualties of the Commonwealth land forces who died in Normandy and have no known grave. They died during the landings in Normandy, during the intense fighting in Normandy itself, and during the advance to the River Seine in August.

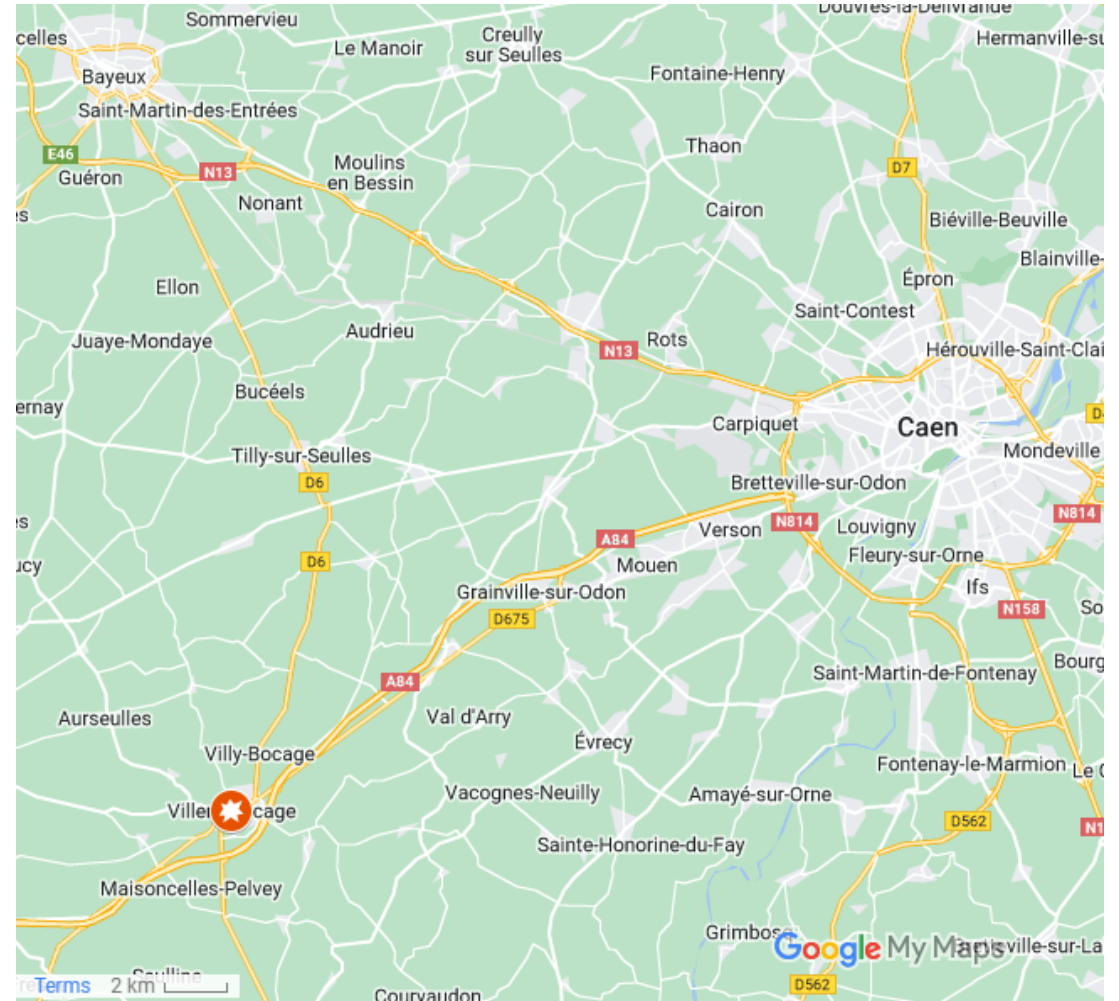


2 kilometres round the ring road from the big cemetery these five graves are in the graveyard of the Eglise Saint-Exupere.



Bayeux

- “On June the 13th the advance guard of 7th armoured division at last entered Villers Bocage.
- It was formed of a tank battalion, 4th County of London Yeomanry (Sharpshooters), supported by the motor battalion, the 1st Rifle Brigade in half-tracks.



Bayeux

- When it passed through to the countryside beyond it was ambushed by the 501st SS Heavy Tank Battalion which had been on the move from Beauvais beyond the Seine since June the 7th.
- The company commander of its leading company, Obersturmführer Wittman, was a veteran of the Russian front, his personal score of knocked out Russian tanks was 117. Waiting in a small patch of woodland beside the road out of Villers Bocage on the morning of June the 13th he observed the head of 7th armoured division's column leaving the town.
- Holding his fire Wittman allowed the leading Cromwell of the Sharpshooters to approach within 80 yards, when he destroyed it with a single shot from his 88mm gun thus blocking the road.



Wittmann's company, 7 June 1944, en route to Morgny. Wittmann is standing in the turret of Tiger 205.

Bayeux

- Confident of the impermeability of his armour to the Cromwell's 75mm gun, he then left cover and motored along the length of the column brewing up one British tank after another and devastating the infantry vehicles with machine gun fire.



Cromwell (A27M)

Bayeux

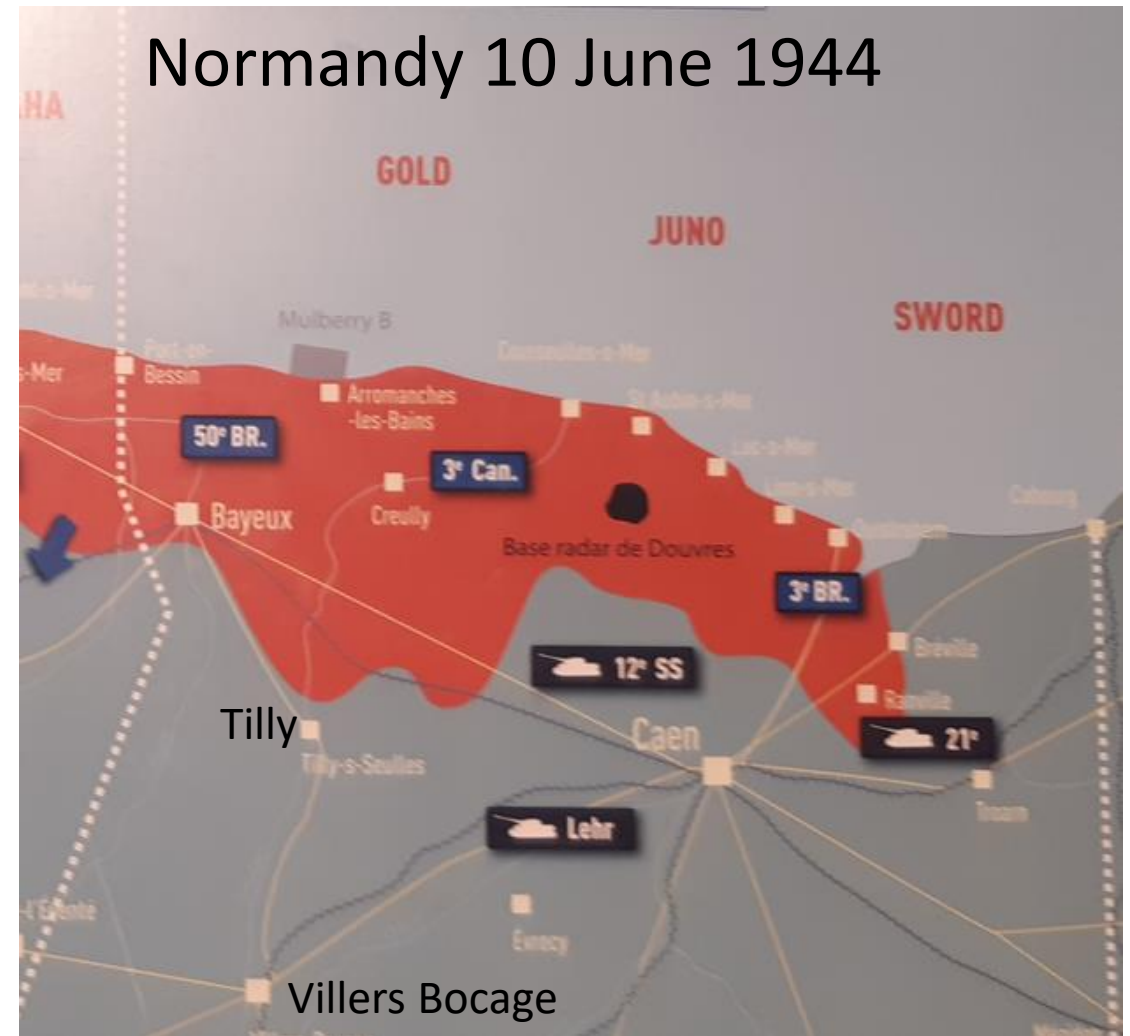
- Plugged into the road by the burning Cromwell at its head the British column was unable to advance while the collapse of tactical control prevented an orderly withdrawal.
- Later that afternoon the infantry of Panzer Lehr launched an enveloping counter-attack against Villers Bocage and retook the town. The 7th armoured division abandoned their local gains and fell back on Tilly having lost 25 tanks, 28 other tracked vehicles and suffered a heavy toll in human casualties.”
 - Keegan, Six Armies in Normandy.

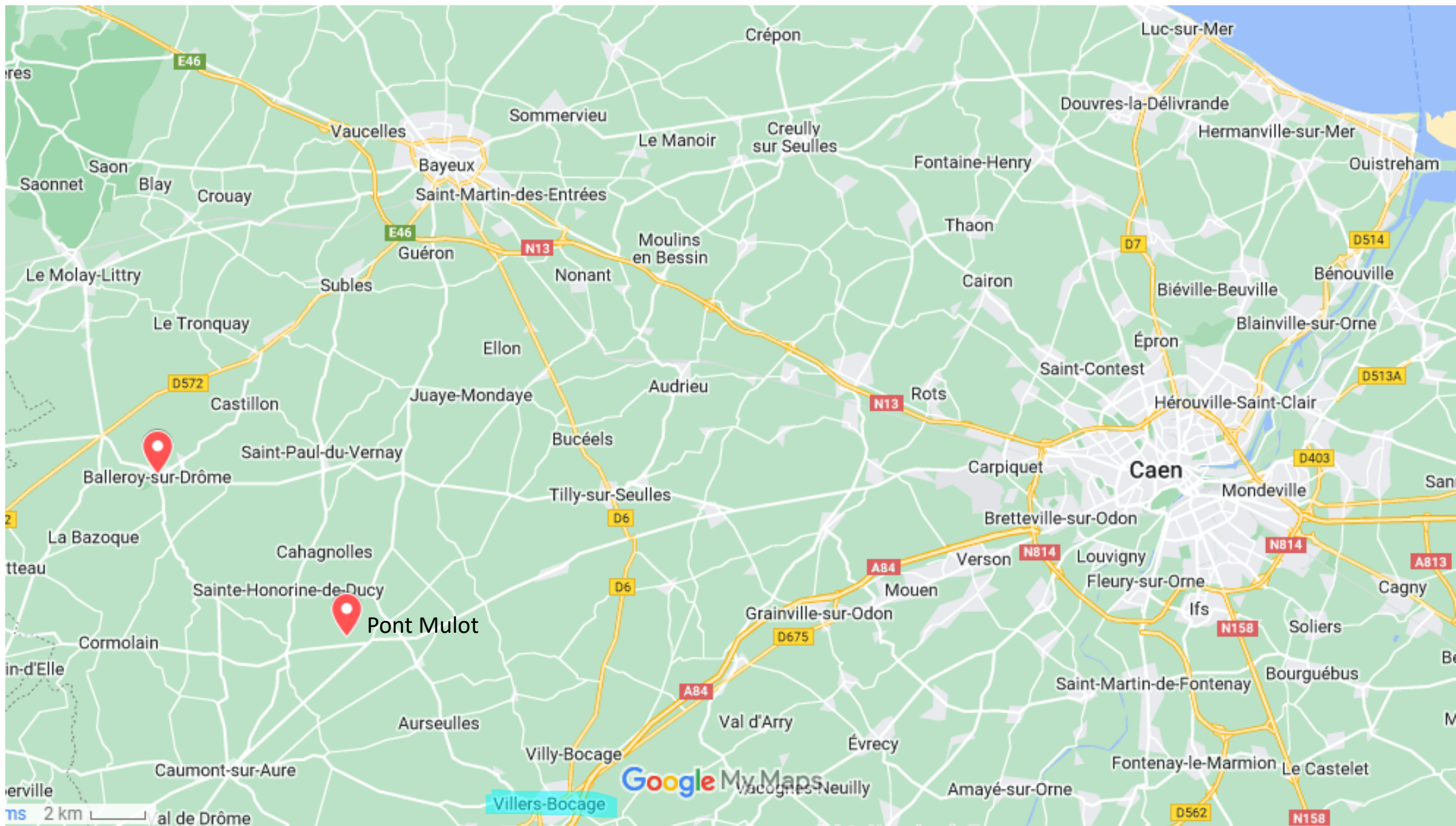


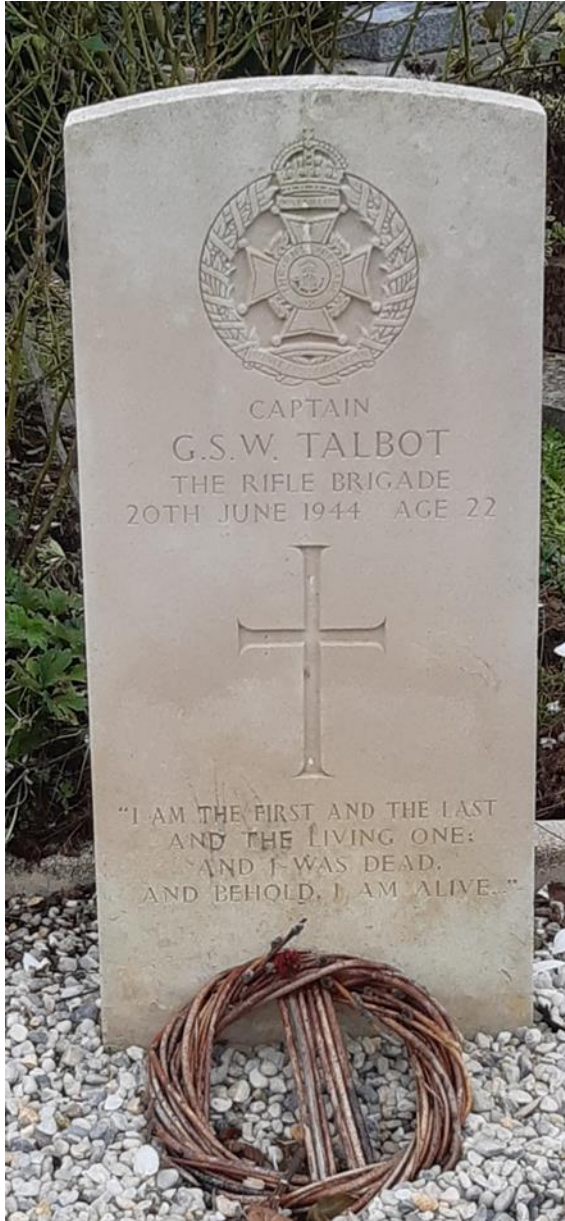
The wreckage of the British column, including to the fore an anti-tank gun, that Wittmann engaged.

Bayeux

- “James Wright commanding “A” Company and the Colonel of the tank regiment were among those taken prisoner. About 30 Rifleman made their way back by stages to rejoin the brigade (at Tilly). But we suffered some 80 casualties including three officers killed and “A” Company ceased for the moment to exist. ...
- While the armoured regiments rested the 1st Battalion went off to hold some 2500 yards of front near Le Pont Mulot, 4 miles from Caumont.”
 - Hastings, The Rifle Brigade 1939-1945





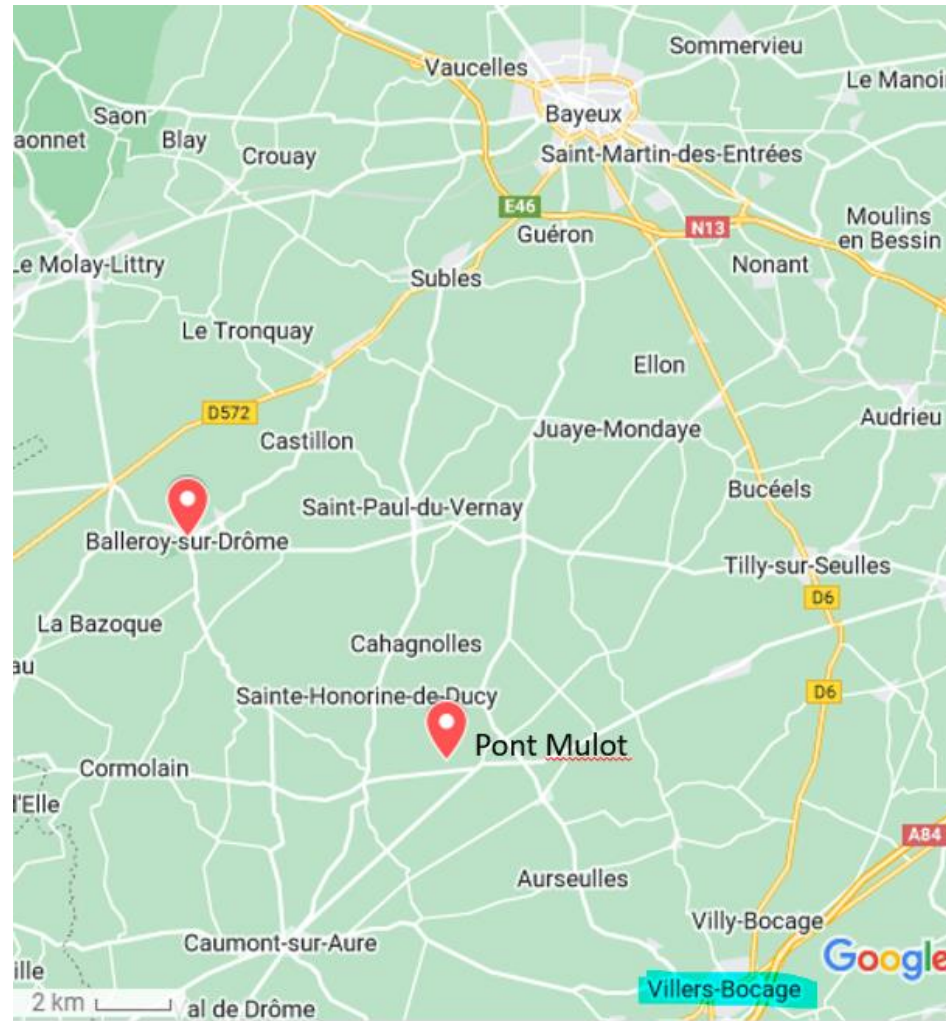


Bayeux

- “It was during the time at Pont Mulot that “B” Echelon away back near Balleroy was heavily shelled at night.
- “A” Company was there reforming and re-equipping and Francis Dorrien Smith had just taken over command.
- Unhappily Frances and James Caesar were killed by one of the first shells and shortly afterwards Gilbert Talbot, commanding HQ company, was also killed.
- It was a desperately tragic affair and the Battalion suffered a loss of exceptionally able and experienced officers whom it will be indeed difficult to replace.”
- 1st Battalion, The Rifle Brigade. Letter to the Rifle Brigade Chronicle for 1944.



Bayeux



Bayeux

- Corporal Beer from REME was presumably involved in the replacement or repair of the Rifle Brigade's lost and damaged vehicles.
- So we know who these men were and how and where they died.
- I have no idea why the War Graves Commission policy of bringing in graves from the surrounding districts to the major cemeteries was not followed in this case.
- My father was in the Rifle Brigade and had fought with the 1st Battalion from first Alamein in July 42 to Tunis in May 43.

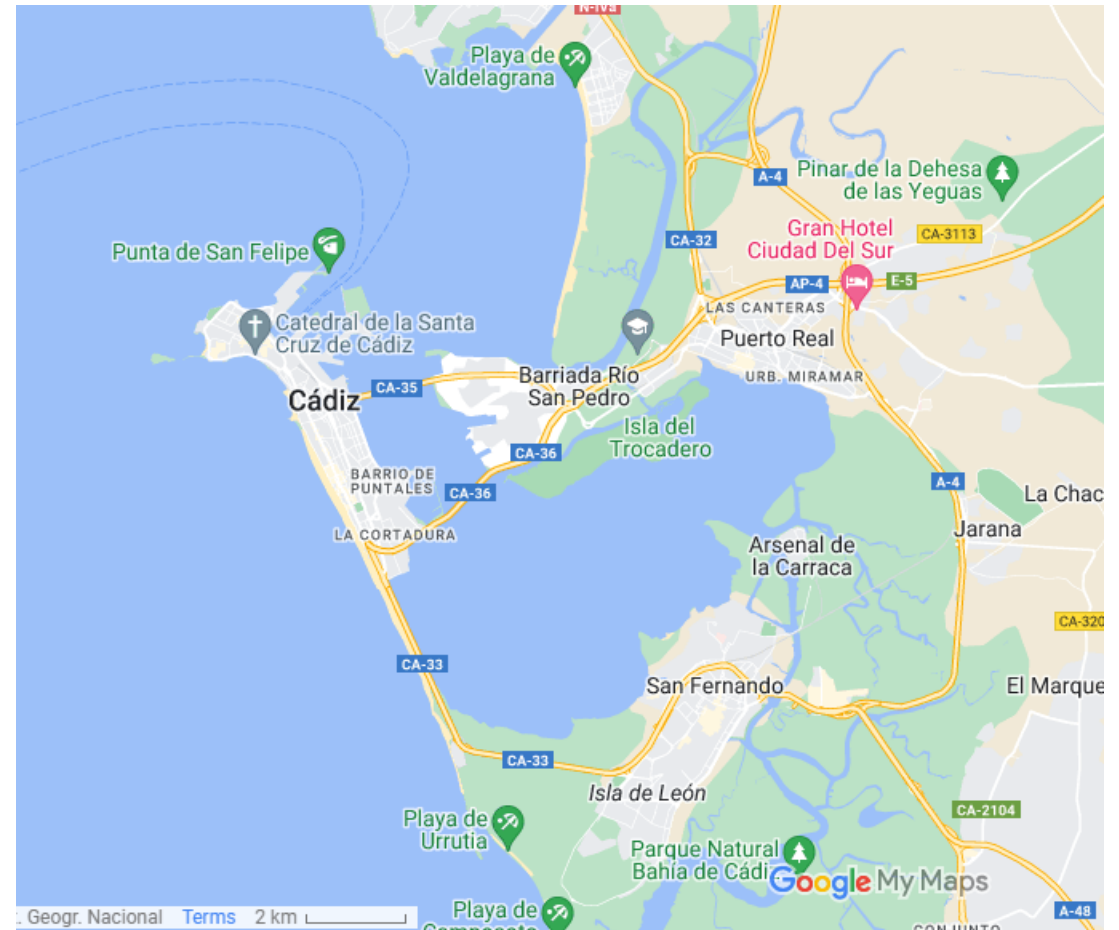
The Constitution of Cádiz

- This is in Cadiz.
- It's to commemorate the first Spanish constitution which was developed here in 1812.
- In 1808 Napoleon occupied Spain, forced the abdications of Ferdinand VII and his father Charles IV and then installed his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the Spanish throne.
- Most Spaniards rejected French rule and fought a bloody war to oust them. It is regarded as one of the first wars of national liberation. It is also significant for the emergence of large-scale guerrilla warfare.



The Constitution of Cádiz

- Besieged by 70,000 French troops, a reconstituted national government, the Cortes—in effect a government-in-exile—fortified itself in the secure port of Cádiz in 1810.
- The British army, under Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, guarded Portugal and campaigned against the French alongside the reformed Portuguese Army and provided whatever supplies they could get to the Spanish, while the Spanish armies and guerrillas tied down vast numbers of Napoleon's troops.



The Constitution of Cádiz

- In 1812, when Napoleon set out with a massive army on what proved to be a disastrous French invasion of Russia, a combined allied army commanded by Wellesley defeated the French at Salamanca and forced Joseph Bonaparte out of the capital Madrid. Wellesley then marched on to Burgos forcing Joseph and his army back to Vitoria leaving the majority of Spain free.
- The Political Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy also known as the Constitution of Cádiz was the first Constitution of Spain and one of the earliest codified constitutions in world history.
- The Constitution was ratified on 19 March 1812 by the Cortes of Cádiz, the first Spanish legislature that included delegates from the entire nation and its possessions, including Spanish America and the Philippines. "It defined Spanish and Spanish American liberalism for the early 19th century."

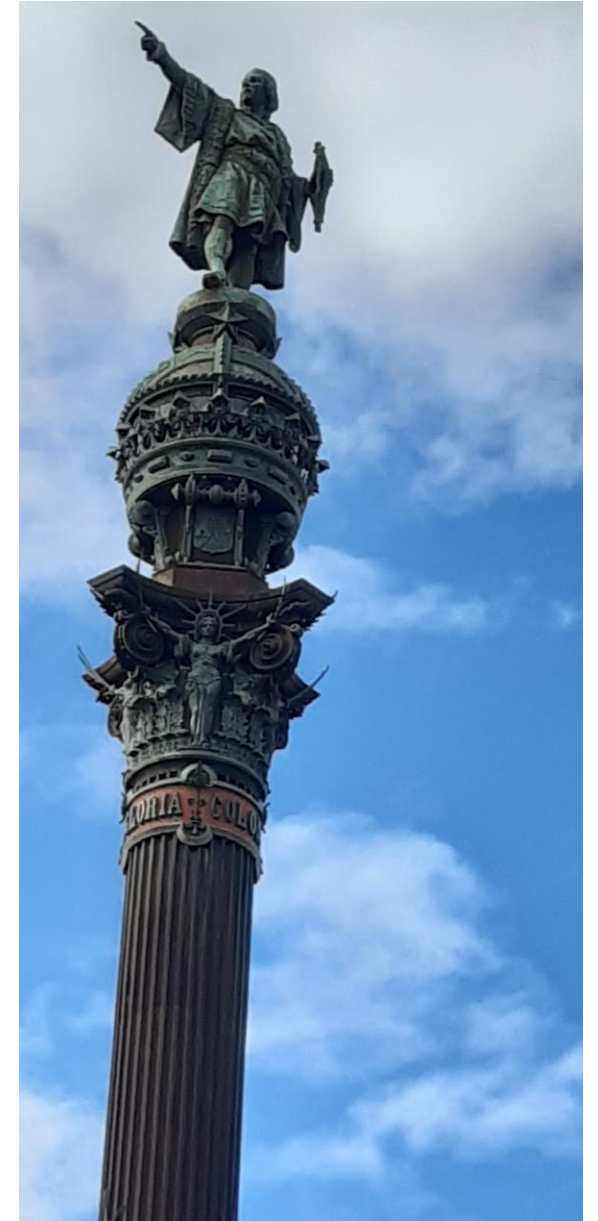


The Constitution of Cádiz



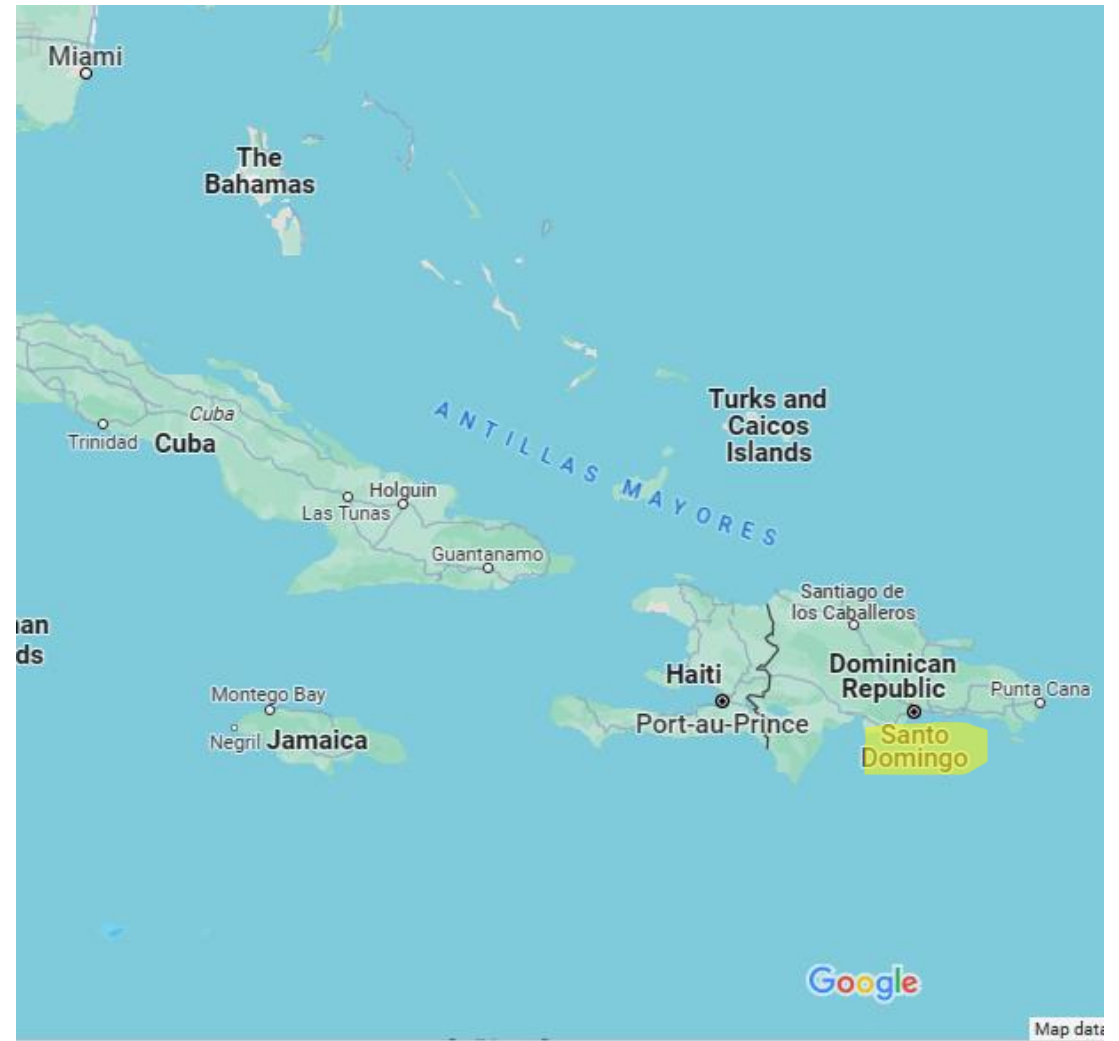
Christopher Columbus

- The bloke on the pole is Christopher Columbus.
- The statue is in Barcelona but that is not relevant to the story.
- You can all probably remember that Columbus first crossed the Atlantic and found America in 1492.
- Today's question is when did he last cross the Atlantic.
- Columbus made four voyages of discovery to the Americas returning to Spain from the fourth voyage in 1504.
- On 20 May 1506, aged 54, Columbus died in Valladolid.



Christopher Columbus

- In about 1536, the remains of both Columbus and his son Diego were moved to a cathedral in Colonial **Santo Domingo**, in the present-day Dominican Republic.
- Columbus had requested to be buried on the island.



Christopher Columbus

- In 1793, when France took over the entire island of Hispaniola, Columbus's remains were moved from Santo Domingo to **Havana**, Cuba, which remained under Spanish rule.



Christopher Columbus

- After Cuba became independent following the Spanish–American War in 1898, at least some of these remains were moved back to the Seville Cathedral where they were placed on an elaborate catafalque.
- Tomb in Seville Cathedral. The remains in the casket are borne by kings of Castile, Leon, Aragon, and Navarre.



The Spanish–American War

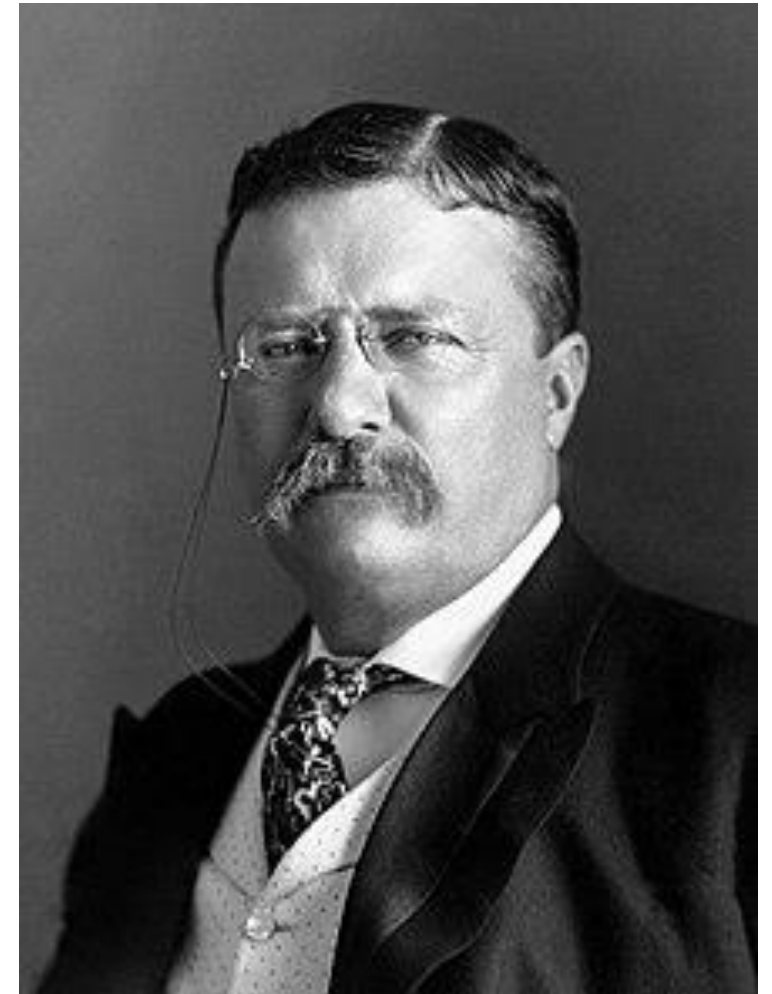
- So that's the answer. Columbus last crossed the Atlantic sometime after 1898 more than four hundred years after his first crossing.
- But it does raise the question of what the Spanish–American War was about.
- The main issue was Cuban independence. Revolts had been occurring for some years in Cuba against Spanish colonial rule. In the late 1890s, American public opinion swayed in support of the rebellion because of reports of Spanish atrocities.
- President McKinley though not seeking a war, made preparations in readiness for one. He unsuccessfully sought accommodation with Spain on the issue of independence for Cuba.
- The U.S. Navy armored cruiser, Maine, had been sent to Havana to ensure the safety of American citizens and interests, and to underscore the urgent need for reform.
- The Maine mysteriously exploded and sank in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898.
- The casualties were the biggest loss of life for the American military in a single day since the defeat at the Little Bighorn twenty years earlier.
- Political pressures then pushed McKinley into a war that he had wished to avoid.



This demonstrates the tone of the American press on the subject.

The Spanish–American War

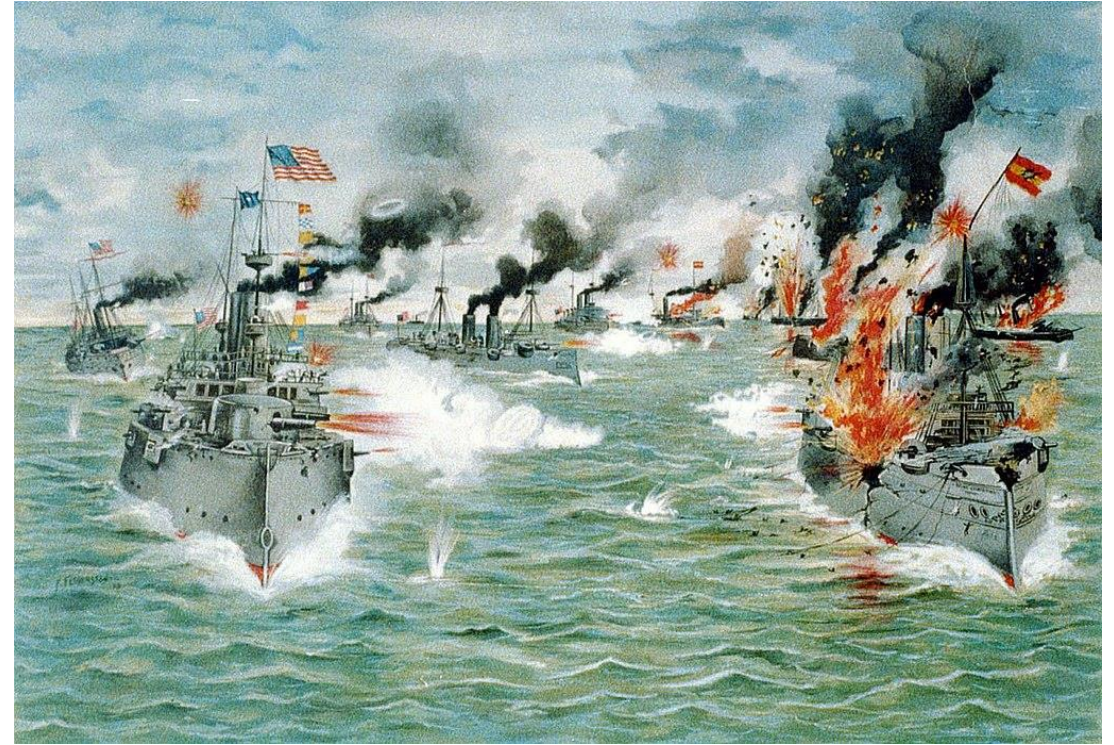
- Congress committed that the U.S. would not establish permanent control over Cuba after the war but demanded Spanish withdrawal and authorized the President to use as much military force as he thought necessary to help Cuba gain independence from Spain.
- In response, Spain severed diplomatic relations with the United States on April 21. On the same day, the U.S. Navy began a blockade of Cuba.
- On April 23, Spain reacted to the blockade by declaring war on the U.S.
- Theodore Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, ordered Commodore Dewey, commanding the Asiatic Squadron of the US Navy: "Order the squadron ...to Hong Kong. Keep full of coal. In the event of declaration of war with Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast, and then offensive operations in Philippine Islands."
- Dewey's squadron departed on April 27 for the Philippines, reaching Manila Bay on the evening of April 30.



Theodore Roosevelt c. 1904

The Spanish–American War

- The first battle between American and Spanish forces was at Manila Bay where, on May 1, Commodore Dewey, commanding the U.S. Navy's Asiatic Squadron of four protected cruisers and two gunboats, in a matter of hours defeated a Spanish squadron under Admiral Montojo. Dewey managed this with only nine wounded.
- The Spanish ships, which were all unprotected and were outgunned, were all sunk or scuttled.
- On 2 May, Dewey landed a force of Marines at Cavite. They completed the destruction of the Spanish fleet and batteries and established a guard for the protection of the Spanish hospitals.
- Dewey cabled Washington, stating that although he controlled Manila Bay, he needed 5,000 additional men to seize Manila itself.
- The naval war in the Philippines devolved into a series of torpedo boat hit-and-run attacks for the rest of the campaign.



Battle of Manila Bay, 1 May 1898. “Delivering the Last Broadside.”

The Spanish–American War

- Commodore Dewey transported Emilio Aguinaldo, a Filipino leader, who had led rebellion against Spanish rule in the Philippines in 1896, from exile in Hong Kong to the Philippines to rally more Filipinos against the Spanish colonial government.
- By June 9, Aguinaldo's forces controlled the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Bataan, Zambales, Pampanga, Pangasinan, and Mindoro, and had laid siege to Manila.
- On June 12, Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines.
- On August 13, with American commanders unaware that a peace protocol had been signed between Spain and the U.S. on the previous day in Washington D.C., American forces captured the city of Manila from the Spanish in the Battle of Manila.
- This battle marked the end of Filipino–American collaboration, as the American action of preventing Filipino forces from entering the captured city of Manila was deeply resented by the Filipinos. This later led to the Philippine–American War, which would prove to be more deadly and costly than the Spanish–American War.



The Spanish–American War

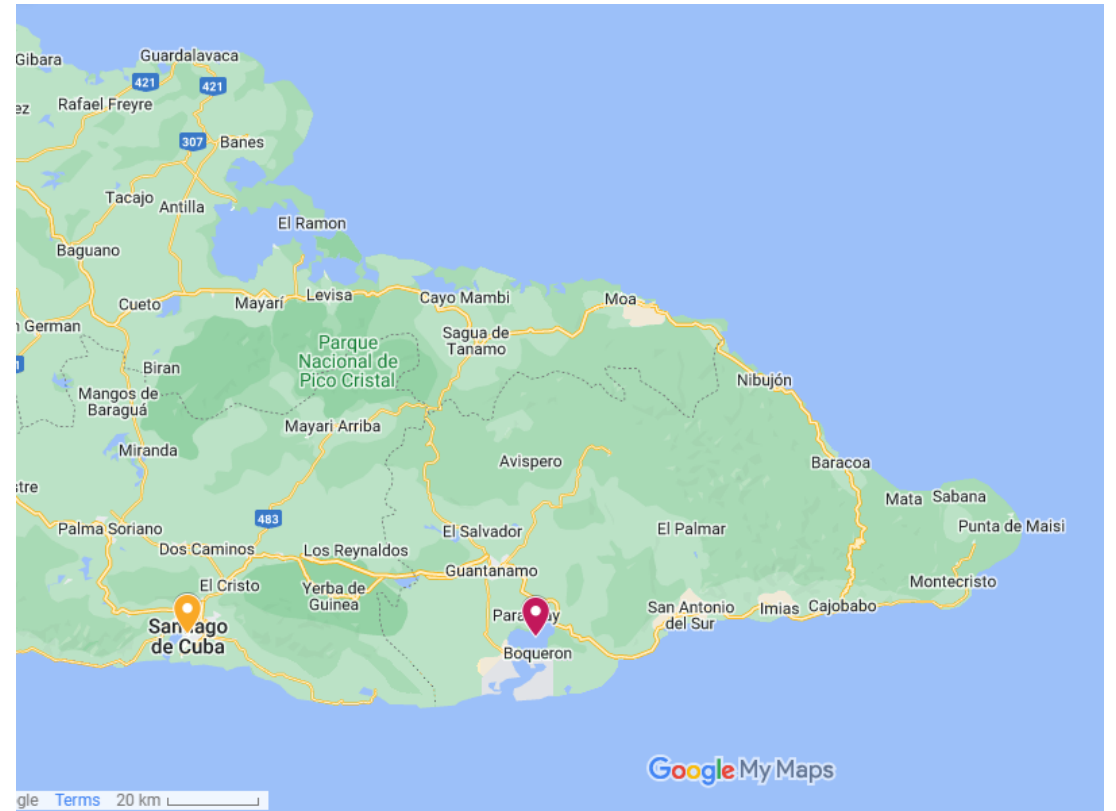
- The U.S. had sent a force of some 11,000 ground troops to the Philippines.
- On August 14, 1898, Spanish Captain-General Jaudenes formally capitulated and U.S. General Merritt formally accepted the surrender and declared the establishment of a U.S. military government in occupation.
- The capitulation document declared, "The surrender of the Philippine Archipelago." and set forth a mechanism for its physical accomplishment.
- That same day, the Schurman Commission recommended that the U.S. retain control of the Philippines, possibly granting independence in the future.
- On December 10, 1898, the Spanish government ceded the Philippines to the United States in the Treaty of Paris.
- Armed conflict broke out between U.S. forces and the Filipinos when U.S. troops began to take the place of the Spanish in control of the country after the end of the war, quickly escalating into the Philippine–American War.



Major General Wesley Merritt (1898). On June 29, 1863, he was appointed brigadier general for his "gallant and meritorious service" at Brandy Station and Upperville. Promotion from captain to brigadier general was unusual, even for the Civil War, but he shared this honor on that date with Captain Elon J. Farnsworth and Captain George Armstrong Custer.

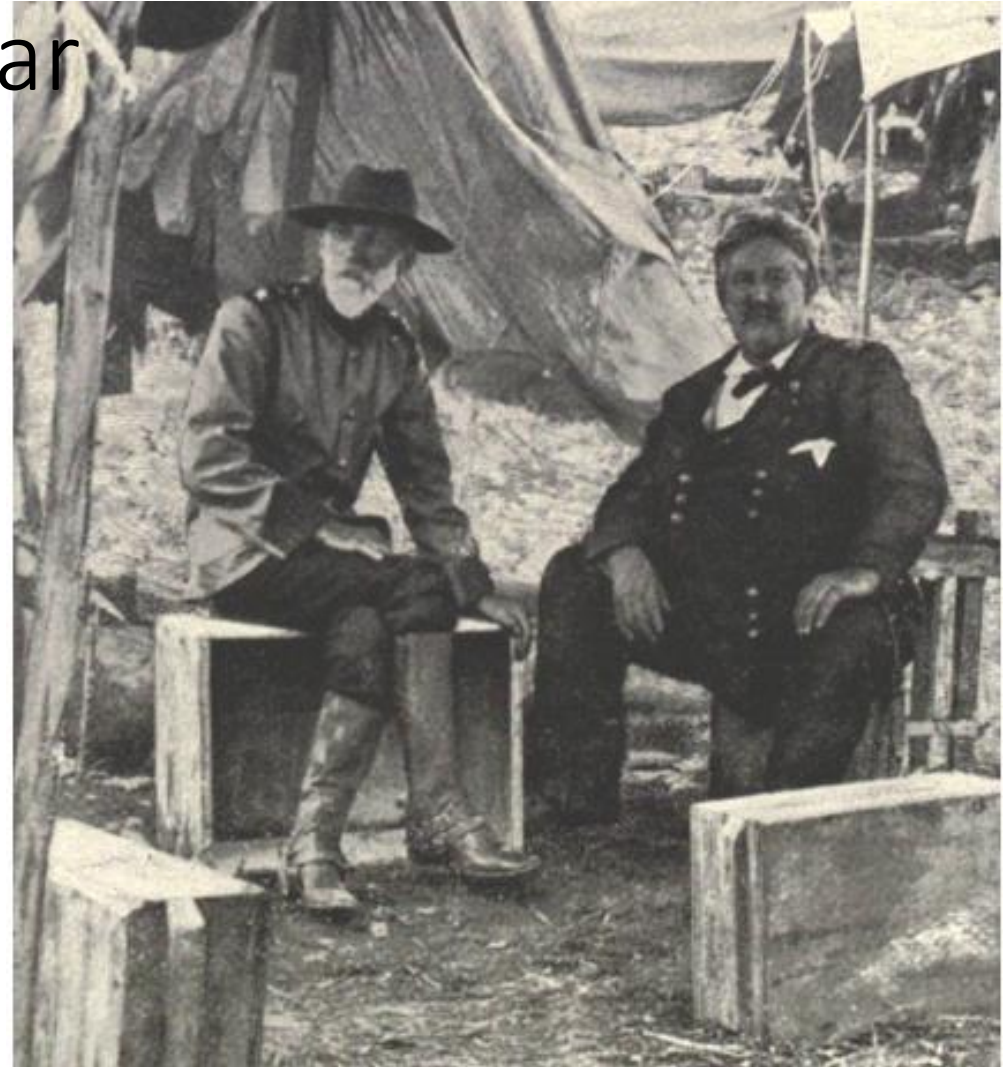
The Spanish–American War

- The major port of Santiago de Cuba was the main target of naval operations in the Caribbean during the war. The U.S. fleet attacking Santiago needed shelter from the summer hurricane season; Guantánamo Bay, with its excellent harbor, was chosen.
- The 1898 invasion of Cuba happened between June 6 and 10, with the first U.S. naval attack and subsequent successful landing of U.S. Marines with naval support.
- On July 3, the Spanish squadron finally attempted to leave Santiago de Cuba.
- The American forces destroyed or grounded five of the six ships.
- Only one Spanish vessel, the new armored cruiser named after Cristóbal Colón, survived, but her captain hauled down her flag and scuttled her when the Americans finally caught up with her.



The Spanish–American War

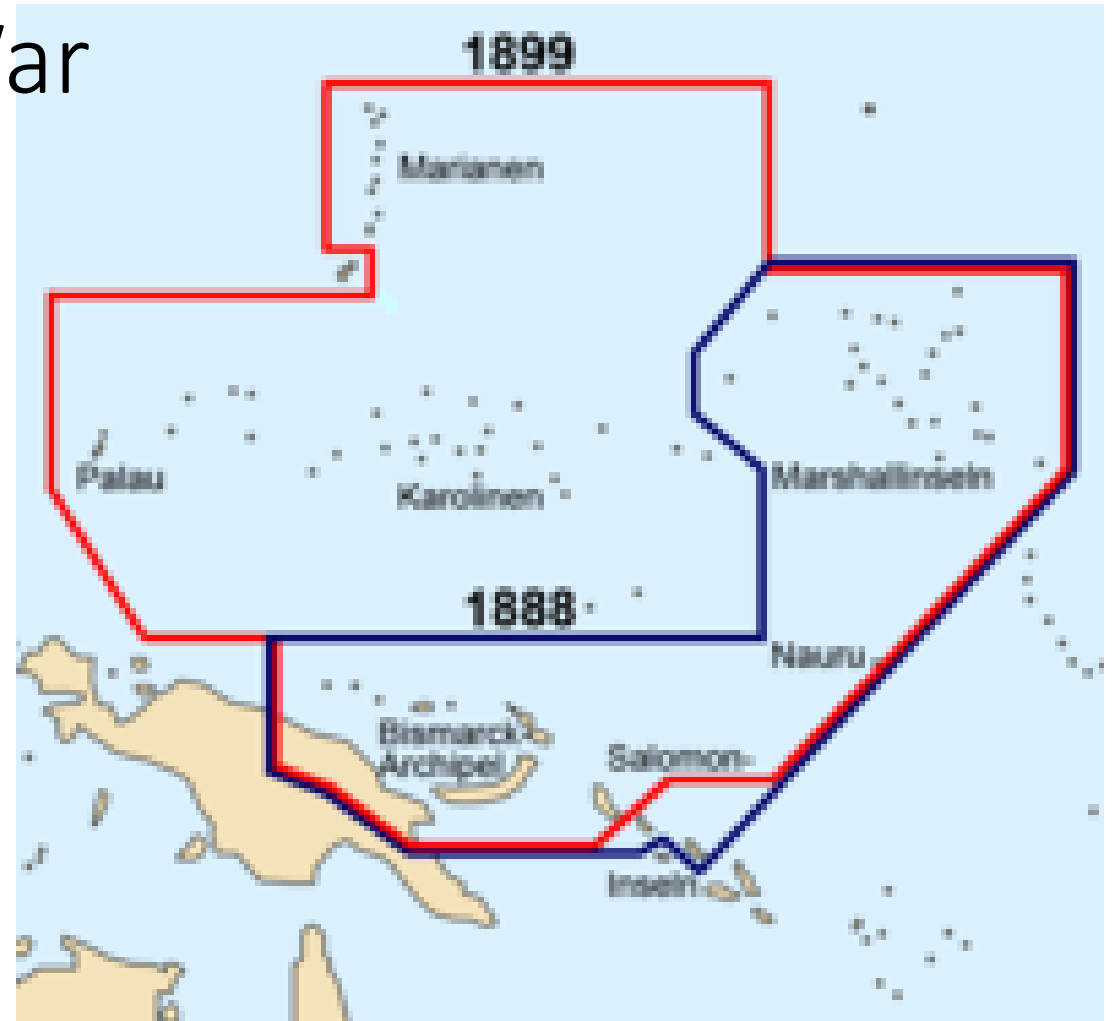
- In June the Fifth US Army Corps landed in Cuba east of Santiago, the Spanish retreated while fighting rearguard actions.
- Yellow fever quickly spread among the American occupation force, crippling it. A group of concerned officers of the American army chose Theodore Roosevelt to draft a request to Washington that it withdraw the Army, a request that paralleled a similar one from General Shafter, who described his force as an "army of convalescents".
- On August 7, the American invasion force started to leave Cuba.



Generals Joseph Wheeler (left) and William Rufus Shafter in Cuba, 1898. Wheeler had fought for the confederates and Shafter for the Union.

The Spanish–American War

- Hostilities were halted on August 12, 1898, with the signing in Washington of a Protocol of Peace between the United States and Spain. The formal peace treaty, the Treaty of Paris, was signed on December 10, 1898.
- The United States gained Spain's colonies of the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico in the treaty, and Cuba became a U.S. protectorate.
- Cuba formed its own civil government and gained independence on May 20, 1902, with the announced end of US Military Government over the island.
- The U.S. imposed various restrictions on the new government, including prohibiting alliances with other countries, and reserved the right to intervene.
- The U.S. also established a de facto perpetual lease of Guantánamo Bay.
- With the loss of the Philippines, Spain's remaining Pacific possessions in the Caroline Islands and Mariana Islands became untenable and were sold to Germany in the German–Spanish Treaty (1899).



Borders of German New Guinea before (in blue) and after (in red) the 1899 German-Spanish treaty

The Spanish–American War

- This talk was originally given as part of a course titled Australian Military History.
- This has all been a bit peripheral to Australian Military History but it is interesting to consider how the Japanese war, which started only 42 years after these events, might have been different had the Philippines and the Pacific Islands been either still Spanish colonies or independent countries.

The Spanish Empire

- We have seen how the Philippines and Cuba left the Spanish empire shown in the 1812 constitution map.
- The fate of the South American Empire reminded me of a snap from a previous trip.



Valparaíso, Chile.

- This is a monument to Admiral Lord Cochrane, Commander of the Chilean Navy in the War of Liberation from Spain.



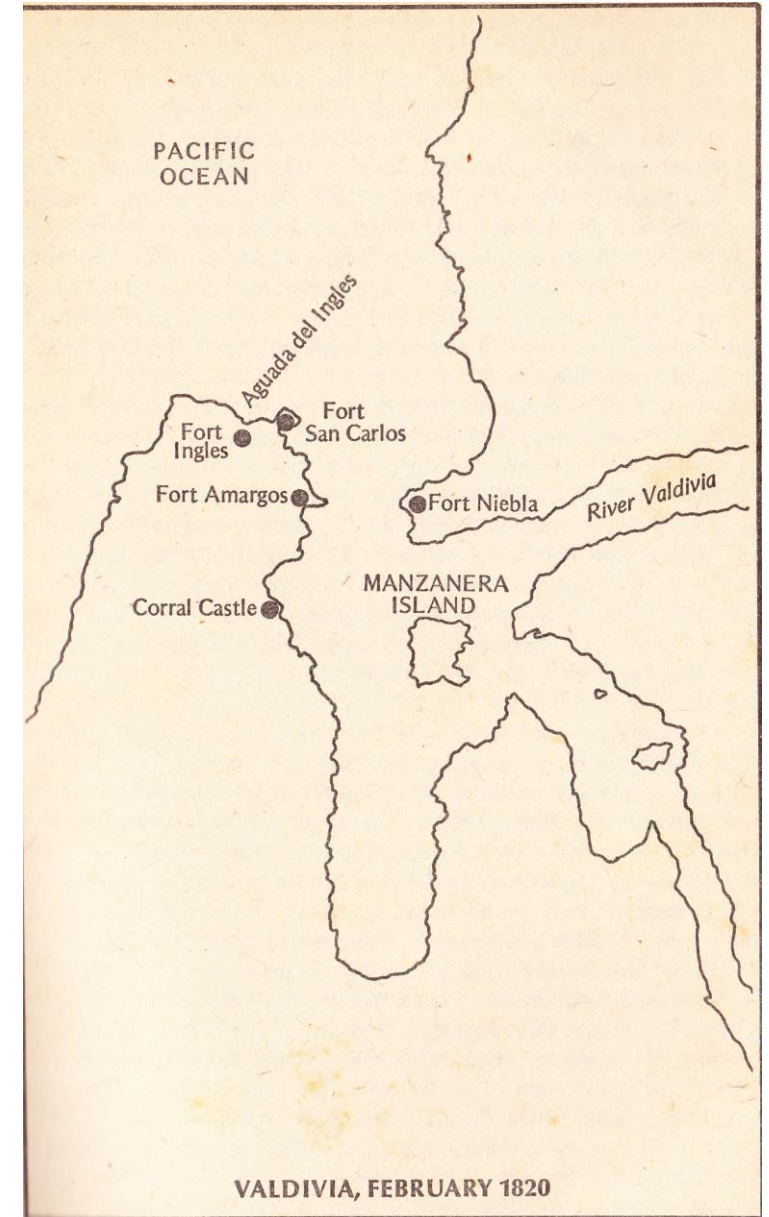
- Everything in Chile has graffiti on it.
- Cochrane's monument has less graffiti on it than most things.
- Cochrane is evidently still held in high regard even by the young protesters who cover all the buildings with their political slogans.

Admiral Cochrane

- Thomas Cochrane was a British officer of the Royal Navy, a mercenary and a radical politician.
- He was a daring and successful captain during the Napoleonic Wars, leading Napoleon to nickname him Le Loup des Mers ('The Sea Wolf'). He was successful in virtually all his naval actions.
- He was dismissed from the Royal Navy in 1814 following a controversial conviction for fraud on the Stock Exchange.
- He helped organise and command the rebel navies of Chile and Brazil during their respective successful wars of independence through the 1820s.
- While in command of the Chilean Navy, Cochrane also contributed to Peruvian Independence through the Freedom Expedition of Perú.

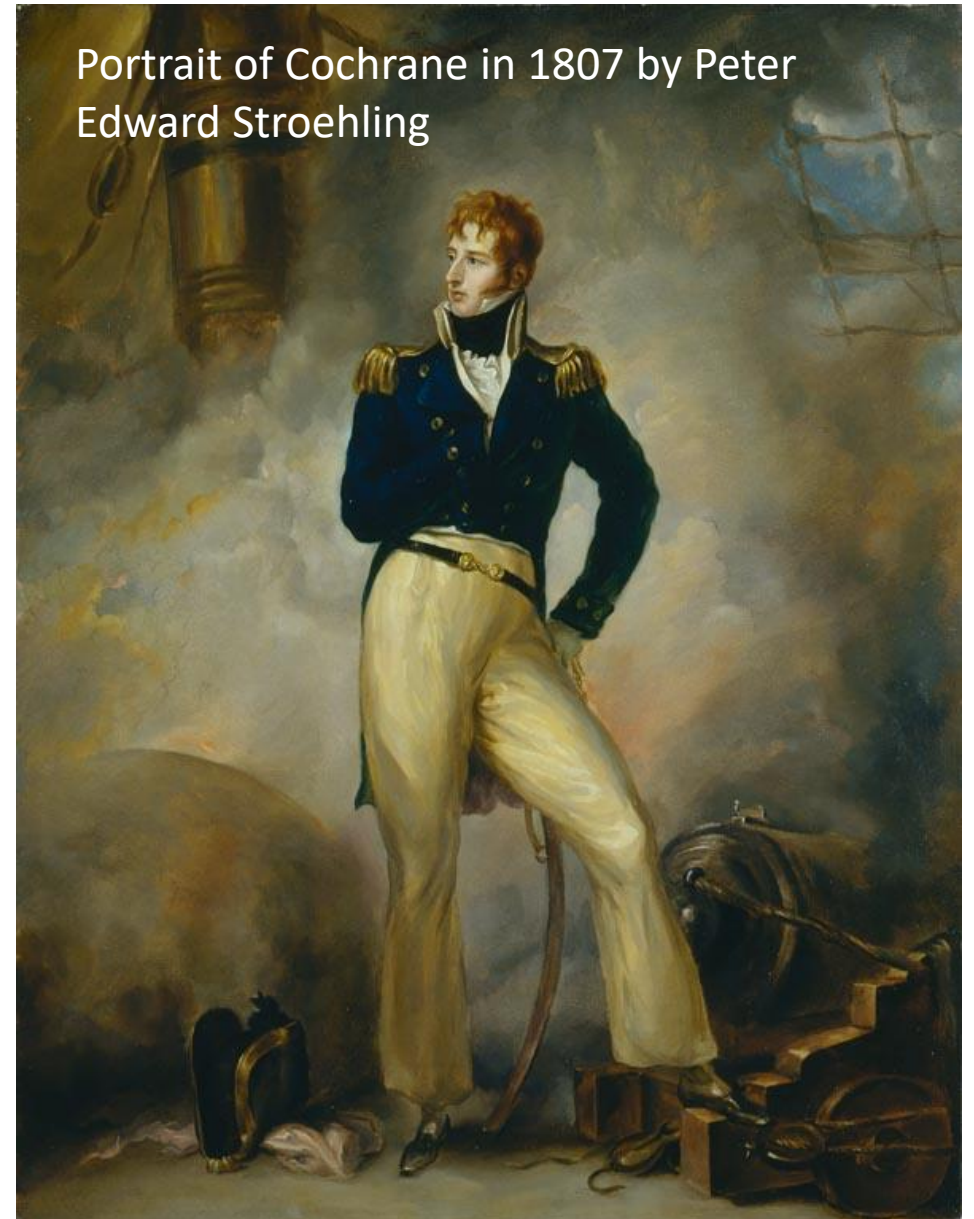
The Capture of Valdivia.

- In 1820 Valdivia was the remaining Spanish stronghold in Chile.
- A natural harbour was protected by five forts, whose guns covered the whole of the harbour.
- The surf prevented a landing on the Pacific coast.
- Cochrane decided he must land at Aguado del Ingles with his 300 Chilean soldiers and capture all five forts in succession.
- The dramatic simplicity of his decision was greeted with misgivings.



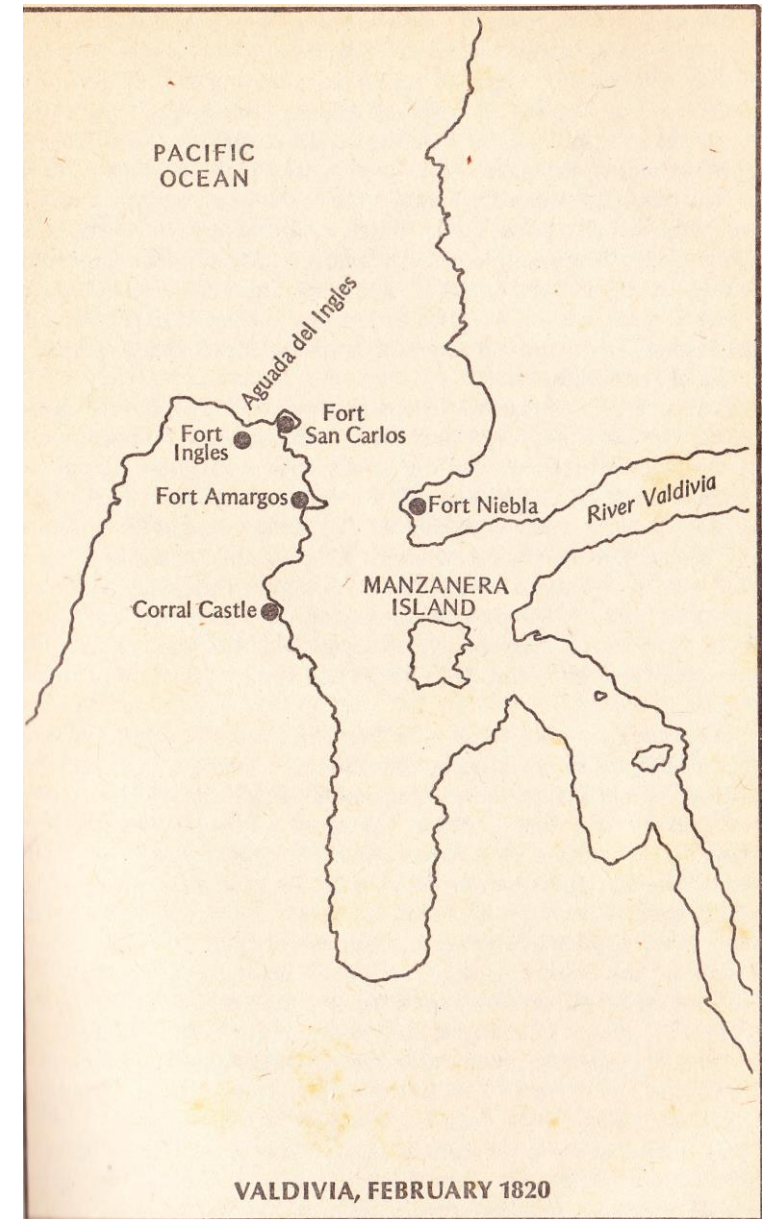
The Capture of Valdivia.

- Cochrane's argument was one he had employed throughout his career.
- "Cool calculation would make it appear that the attempt to take Valdivia is madness. This is one reason why the Spaniards will hardly believe us in earnest, even when we commence.
- And you will see that a bold onset, and a little perseverance afterwards, will give a complete triumph."



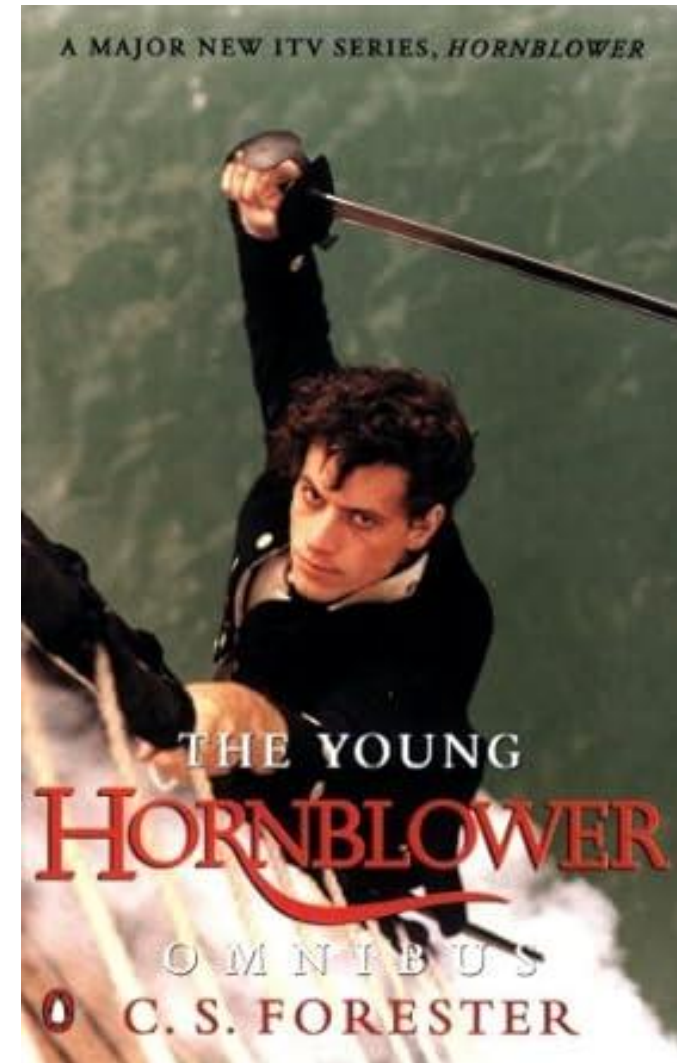
The Capture of Valdivia.

- The four western forts were captured on the run in the first night.
- The eastern fort was captured the next day.
- Two days later Cochrane embarked his men and sailed up the river to capture the town.
- One of his two little ships ran aground.
- It didn't matter. The Spanish Army and Governor had grabbed what they could carry and fled.
- The last Spanish base in Chile and a mass of arms including 128 artillery pieces had been captured at a cost of 26 casualties.



Admiral Cochrane

- Cochrane was also hired to help the Greek Revolutionary Navy during the Greek War of Independence but did not achieve the same personal impacts as he had in South America.
- In Chile and Brazil, as on earlier occasions, Cochrane's joy at his successes was rapidly replaced by quarrels over pay and prize money, and accusations that the authorities or subordinates were plotting against him.
- Cochrane was pardoned and restored to the Royal Navy list in 1832 but his full return to Royal Navy service was delayed by his refusal to take a command until his knighthood had been restored, which took 15 years.
- Cochrane became the prototype for fictional naval officers. Many of the exploits of Horatio Hornblower and Jack Aubrey were lifted directly from Cochrane's log books.



- Thanks for your attention.
- As usual the overheads from this presentation will be available on my website (jerrymcbrien.com) tomorrow.