



6th Airborne Recce Corps

In 1942 C Special Service Squadron of the Royal Armoured Corps, formed partly from men of the 10th Hussars, was attached to 1st Airborne Division, complete with its Tetrarch light tanks. Later it became known as 6th Airborne Reconnaissance Regiment in 6th Airborne Division and was based at Larkhill, on Salisbury Plain

The British 6th Airborne Division was commanded by Major General R.N. Gale, who led the Division from its creation to 8 December 1944, when he was succeeded by Major General E.L. Bols



The task of the Division in Operation Overlord was to land units by parachute and glider in the area to the east of the seaborne landings for the establishment of an air-head whose two primary tasks were the capture of the Canal de Caen and River Orne crossings midway between Caen and Ouistreham, and the provision of a left-flank guard for the seaborne landings against German attacks from the east.

The British 6th Airborne Division had been created on the 3rd May 1943 with the formation of the divisional headquarters; but the divisional commander assumed command only four days later and the divisional headquarters was only brought up to full establishment on the 23rd September 1943. The division's first element was the 6th Airlanding Brigade, which came under command the 6th May 1943. This was joined later in the same month by the 3rd Parachute Brigade and the 72nd Independent Infantry Brigade, which arrived on 15 and 28 May respectively. The latter unit remained part of the division for only three days to the end of the month and was replaced on the 1st June 1943 by the 5th Parachute Brigade, whose HQ was created out of elements of the 72nd Independent Infantry Brigade. For the rest of the war the British 6th Airborne Division's units were the 3rd and 5th Parachute Brigades and 6th Airlanding Brigade.

The British 6th Airborne Division served under GHQ Home Forces command from its creation until the 3rd December 1943, when it passed to the command of HQ Airborne Troops for the period between 4th December 1943 and 5th June 1944. From the next day the British 6th Airborne Division came under the command of the British 1st Corps for the Normandy campaign and remained under its command until the 30th August 1944. Command was then passed to the British 21st Army Group before returning to England on the 3rd September 1944 as part of the British 1st Airborne Corps from the 5th September 1944. Command passed to the War Office on the 12th September and then back to the British 1st Airborne Corps on 1st October 1944.

The division returned to North-West Europe on the 24th December 1944 under command successively of the British 21st Army Group, British XXX Corps, 21st Army Group, British VIII Corps and finally 21st Army Group. The division saw no action during this period and returned to England and control of the British 1st Airborne Corps on the 24th February 1945. On the 19th March 1945 the division was allocated to the US XVIII Airborne Corps and fought under its command in the first stage of the Rhine battle (23 March — 1 April 1945) before coming under the command of the British VIII Corps on 29 March 1945.

The division saw no further action after the Rhine battle and command reverted to the US XVIII Airborne Corps on the 1st May 1945. The division saw out the remaining days of World War II under US command and reverted to the British 1st Airborne Corps only on the 19th May 1945 when it returned to England.



Note the mess tins and petrol fired stove on the rear wing of this car F329619.
This vehicle reputedly belongs to 6th Airborne Recce



image courtesy of the IWM

Photographer: Jones (Sgt) No 5 Army Film & Photographic Unit
Churchill tanks of 6th Guards Tank Brigade pass a burning Daimler scout car **F206486** of the 6th Brigade Airborne division, during the advance towards Coesfeld, 30 March 1945.



East Meets West, a soldier of the red army inspects vehicles belonging to the 6 airborne Recce