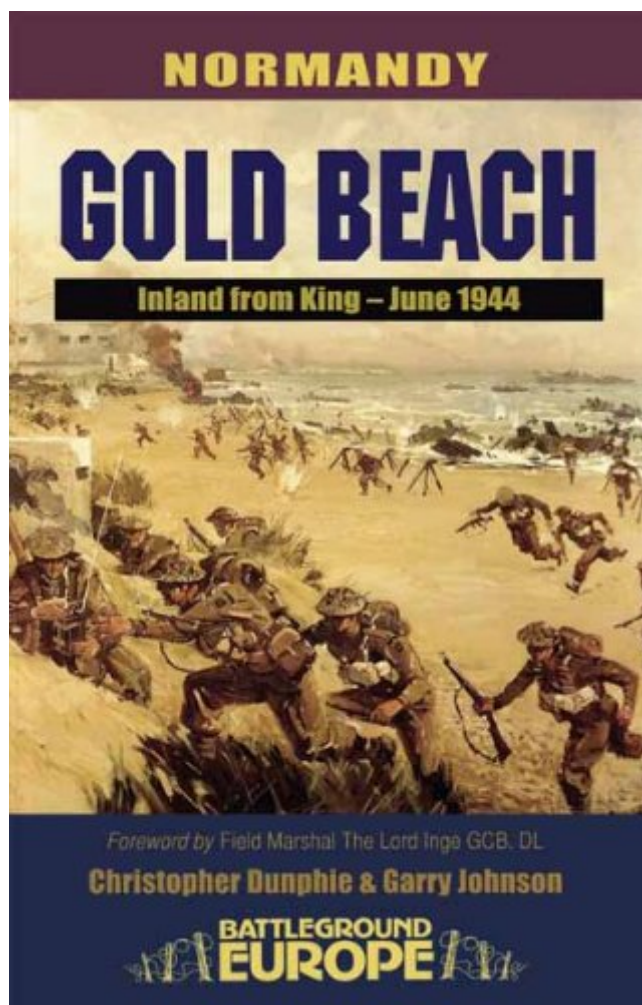


The book was found

Gold Beach : Inland From King – June 1944 (Battleground)



Synopsis

The two authors, both formerly senior professional soldiers, have compiled an easy-to-follow itinerary to the British landings on 6 June 1944 on Gold Beach and the ensuing bitter fighting. Covered in detail are the actions which earned CSM Hollis of the Green Howards his VC and other inspiring battle stories

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a good overview of the landings on Gold Beach, 6 June 1944. However, after the opening, the book then focuses on the landing and inland assault of the 6th Battalion, The Green Howards, one of the 12 infantry battalions and three tank battalions with the British 50th Division that day. While this is a good close look at what this battalion of the Green Howards did on D-Day and immediately afterwards, there were 14 other battalions on Gold Beach which are not covered. I thought this made the book's title slightly misleading. There is an excellent, very detailed look at the pivotal battle of Villers-Bocage, which followed the Gold Beach landings and served as a climax to the initial phase of fighting. This is really well done, but might be better in a book by itself, and use the space to focus on some of the other units which actually fought on Gold Beach.

Complements the Gold Beach -- Jig book in this series, but is mostly a collection of personal recollections by selected veterans that comes from active military staff studies of the invasion.

Readers should be forewarned about the weakness of this book by a statement in the introduction that, this "is a collection of inter-linked snapshots of specific incidents on the route inland [from Gold Beach]." In other words, the author deliberately lowers expectations from the get-go. Readers expecting a detailed account of the British landing on D-Day at Gold Beach will be vastly disappointed by this collection of bric-a-brac. The quality of the Battleground Europe series varies widely from volume to volume, from very good to poor, but Gold Beach certainly defines the lower spectrum of its bell curve. Gold Beach: Inland from King consists of eight chapters, with the first providing only a general introduction to Operation Overlord. The second chapter, concerning a British destroyer that did not participate in the landings at Gold Beach, is a totally irrelevant waste. My biggest problem with this book is the incredibly short shrift given to the actual landings on Gold Beach - only about 15 pages, including photos. More than half the British landing is ignored, with very little mention of the 56th Brigade landings on "Jig" Beach or the Royal Marine Commandoes attempt to seize Port en-Bessin. Nor is the great effort of General Hobart and his 79th Armored Division "funnies" given any attention. In fact, most of the actual landings and fighting on the beach are ignored in favor of following one individual in the 6th Battalion, Green Howards. This is the problem with attempting to convert veteran's reminiscences into military history: it easily becomes overly narrow and incoherent. The fourth chapter covers a clumsy British tank action inland on the evening of D-Day, which does little to improve the reader's impression of the expansion of the beachhead. Indeed, the author makes virtually no attempt to even display what objectives the 50th Division achieved at Gold on D-Day and which objectives it failed to achieve. The German defenses in the area and their reactions to the landing are not even mentioned until the fifth chapter, and the actual German defenses on Gold Beach are never really addressed. Even as a tour guide, this book is a failure, since despite what the cover description reads, there is no full description of the Gold beach landing sites. The sixth chapter reverts to following the exploits of a few individuals in the 6th Green Howards - obviously the main source of information for this book - in a minor action around Tilly on 11 June 1944. The only part of this book that has any value is the chapter on the Battle of Villers-Bocage on 13 June 1944, with the epic ambush of the 7th Armored Division by Michael Wittman's Tiger tanks. While this battle is not really germane to either the Gold landings or the British 50th Division, it is much better told than the other chapters. In fact, the many excellent photographs and maps of the action allow the reader a much better appreciation of this famous

action than provided in many other accounts. Unfortunately, the author slips back into his previous mode in the final chapter, which covers the capture of Lingevres on 14 June 1944. At that point, the book abruptly ends for no fathomable reason; why stop at D-Day plus 8? Incredibly, there is no detailed order of battle for the 50th Division units which landed on D-Day, which is unusual for a Battleground Europe title. While it was obviously not the author's intent to provide a detailed history of the entire D-Day landing or the Normandy campaign, it seems that his intent was not even to cover the Gold landings in any real detail. This book could just as easily have been titled "Villers-Bocage," since the author spends more time on that one action than the actual D-Day landing at Gold. Instead, the author wasted much space on irrelevant side-issues because he chose to stuff this account with whatever personal recollections were at hand, rather than attempting to provide a useful historical framework. A valuable opportunity to illuminate the effectiveness of British amphibious tactics and the lessons learned from the 1942 Dieppe landings was wasted here. The successful British landing on Gold at such low cost is virtually obscured by the bric-a-brac approach of this author.

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