

1st  
Division



4th  
Division



50th  
Division



3rd  
Division



3rd  
Division



## RAF Old Sarum & Operation Overlord Part 3

By Tim Cornish



It was decided that each camp would be self-contained, each Camp being a Station, so to speak, within the Station of Old Sarum. Some measure of dispersal was considered necessary, and arrangements were made to erect seven camps numbered 1 to 7 within a radius of two miles of the Airfield. Three camps were laid out North of the Airfield – No.5, 6 and 7 Camps, and four camps South of the Salisbury-Winterbourne Road – Nos 1, 2, 3 and 4 Camps. Each Camp was equipped to the following scale of semi-permanent buildings.

Officers' Mess Cookhouse – 1 Nissen hut 36' x 16', fitted with 2 48" ranges, set side by side.

Sergeants' Mess Cookhouse – 1 Nissen hut of the same, fitted with 1 72" range.

Airmen's Cookhouse – 2 Nissen huts each 42' by 16', each with 2 72" ranges.

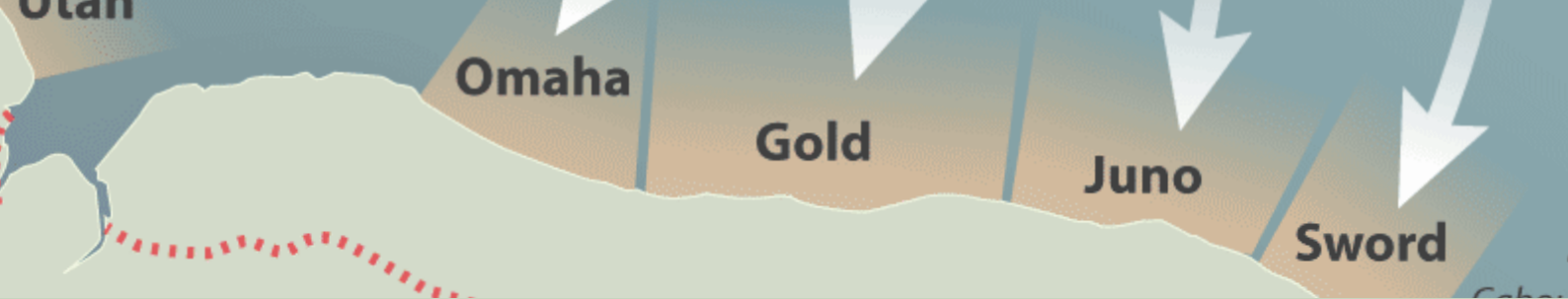
Original planning was to accommodate 80 officers, 90 senior NCOs, and 900 other ranks on each site, and sleeping accommodation was provided in 14' x 14' 160lb ridge tents with the following scale:

- S/Ldr and above – 1 per tent
- F/Lt and above – 2 per tent
- Warrant Officers – 4 per tent
- Sergeants – 6 per tent
- Other Ranks – 8 per tent

In addition, Camps were also supplied with the following tentage for officers, etc:-

- 2 Ridge Tents for M.I (Military Intelligence)
- 1 Ridge Tent for Guard
- 3 Ridge Tents for offices
- 2 E.P.I. Tents for Medical
- 2 50' x 50' Stores Tents for NAAFI
- 2 50' x 50' Stores Tents for Stores
- 2 50' x 50' Stores Tents for Officers' Mess
- 2 50' x 50' Stores Tents for Sergeants' Mess

A total of 182 14' x 14' Ridge Tents, 18 Stores Tents, and 2 E.P.I. Medical Tents for each camp. In actual practice, tentage had to be varied, and in replanning accommodation was provided as follows (no of personnel):-



## RAF Old Sarum & Operation Overlord

### Part 3. continued

- Senior and Junior Officers – 76
- Warrant Officers – 16
- Senior NCO's – 64
- Other Ranks – 904

This gave accommodation for 76 officers and 1004 NCOs and Other Ranks on each Camp. One group of Nissen huts, including a boilerhouse, was provided on the Main Station at Old Sarum and fitted with showers for Officers, senior NCO's and Airmen. Some 52 showers were provided for airmen, and a further Nissen hut was fitted up with Romesse stoves as a drying room. This layout, together with tank capacity and satisfactory heating, was quite sufficient to deal with a peak number of transit personnel, who marched over to Main Station for showers.

Stores Tents originally allocated for messing were also used as cinemas, two laced together side by side providing a reasonably comfortable cinema capable of seating 400 to 500 personnel. 50' x 20' marquees were used by officers and senior NCOs as mess tents and as anterooms. These were made very attractive, and bars were provided. As weather deteriorated in the autumn messing tents were fitted with an inner lining of blankets, which provided cosy accommodation for recreating or for eating/meals.

Erection of semi-permanent accommodation such as cookhouses, laying of drains, building of cesspits, etc, was undertaken by attachments from several Works Squadrons totalling some 400 Works Flight personnel, and a party of some 50 to 60 men were put on each Camp under a Warrant Officer. Some 5 miles of piping was laid on to sites by April 4th 1944, and all sites were equipped with Tannoy apparatus involving some 40 miles of copper cable; Tannoy was completed, together with telecommunications, within one month of starting the Camps.

Static staffs on transit camps were drawn from quarters and a large number were airmen just back from North Africa and Canada. Many of them would have been glad to go overseas with the personnel they were looking after; nevertheless, they kept up a keen spirit right to the end of the operation, although at times they had to compete against extremely adverse conditions on camps; dust towards the middle of Summer, gluey mud and cold towards the end of the operation.

To find out more about activity at old Sarum Airfield visit the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection and speak to one of their volunteers, to uncover a wealth of information of the history of aviation and insights into activity around the airfield in the first and second world wars

[www.boscombedownaviationcollection.co.uk](http://www.boscombedownaviationcollection.co.uk)

