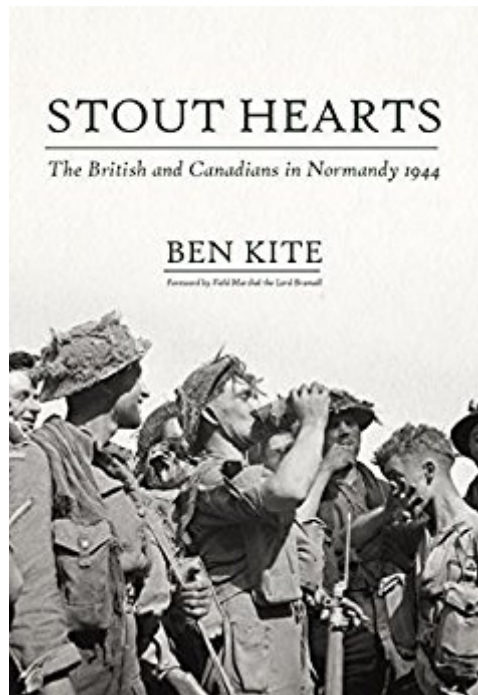




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Stout Hearts: The British And Canadians In Normandy 1944



Synopsis

REVIEWS " " | " At last a book has been written that forensically examines how the British Armed Forces fought its way through Normandy. Ben Kite compellingly demonstrates that these forces were highly effective, well trained, motivated, and superbly equipped, capable of taking on and beating the Germans. Combining painstaking research with his own practical appreciation as an active soldier, the result is an important and utterly absorbing book that will be read and studied for decades to come. • James Holland, bestselling author " Ben Kite has clearly used his widespread experience of seeing a modern Army in action on operations to think carefully about the anatomy of a military force and how each of component elements can work together to produce victory. He has succeeded in getting beyond the narrative of events and explains clearly how and why units function as they do, using first-hand accounts of participants to bring the text to life wonderfully. • Dr Rob Johnson, Director Changing Character of Warfare programme, University of Oxford " | one of the best recent books which explain how a fighting army actually functions and is recommended purely on that, and for much more therein. • Society of Friends of the National Army Museum Book Review Supplement " Those with an interest in studying the Normandy campaign in 1944 will certainly devour this splendid heavy-weight book. It is a book packed with facts and details, and carries an impressive wealth of useful appendices and images. It is certainly a "must have" book if one wishes to study the Normandy campaign in any depth. • Britain at War " | Ben Kite provides the reader with an excellent insight into the details of how each separate part of the British and Canadian Armies in Normandy worked. I have read many books on this campaign, and this really does offer something new to the reader - an excellent combination of first hand accounts and operational details. • Recollections of WWII website

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A wonderfully balanced book where the depth of technical detail is beautifully balanced with the very human stories of those who were there.

A summary of the review on StrategyPage.Com'Former career British Army officer Kite takes an intimate look at British and Canadian forces in the Normandy Campaign, a subject generally neglected on this side of the pond. He does so in an interesting fashion, not only telling us what took place, but also how it took place. So we not only get troop movements and desperate fights, but also the ways and means by which those took place. After a short introduction which gives a concise overview of the Normandy Campaign, for much of which British and Canadian forces comprised the bulk of the troops engaged, he follows with chapters on the operations and inner workings of the various branches of the services, infantry, naval, artillery, air, armor, intelligence, medical, and so on. So while we learn about the fighting that went on, we also get an education in the procedures and tactics of the several arms, learn how the air forces built forward bases, see the gunners operate their 25-pounders, learn how the medical services took care of the flow of casualties, get a look at how information flowed through the army, and more, often illustrated by personal accounts. This is excellent stuff, well worth a read for anyone interested in World War II, or in how an army functions.'For the full review, see StrategyPage.Com

Serving British Army officer Ben Kite has written a deeply engrossing book about how the various components of the British and Canadian forces in the 1944 Normandy campaign (eventually to become 21st Army Group) functioned and worked together as an integrated whole, and exactly how and why they so comprehensively defeated the Wehrmacht and Waffen SS formations ranged against them. The chapters forensically examine different components of the British and Canadian armies and the other forces (RN & RAF) directly supporting them:

1. Introduction & Campaign Overview
2. Closing with the Enemy – Infantry
3. Neptune – The Navy's Trident – Naval

Support4. First in, Last out "Engineers5. Queen of the Battlefield " Artillery6. By Air to Battle " Air Power & Air Support7. Knowledge Gives Strength to Arm " Intelligence & Reconnaissance8. Penetrating the Fog " Command & Control9. Faithful in Adversity " Medical Services10. Grim Summer " Life in Normandy 194411. From Mud through Blood to the Green Fields Beyond " Armour12. Our Greatest Generation (a short, 2-page concluding piece)Each chapter describes in detail how its subject-force functioned. Chapter 3 examines the different Naval vessels deployed and what role each played in relation to the others; Chapter 5 how the range of artillery pieces of differing calibres were crewed, moved about and sited, co-ordinated and used in conjunction with the other components of the allied forces (with testimonies from several veteran Wehrmacht officers that in their experience British artillery was the most accurate and effective of any enemy they faced). The story of how the diversity of German sea mine types was dealt with by the minesweepers and the sea lanes cleared is fascinating, likewise how the Royal Engineers executed all manner of complex tasks such as land mine clearance and bridging the Seine under fire. I personally found the chapter on close air support the most hair-raising: how for example forward airstrips were created often under direct enemy fire, all-weather runway surfaces designed & built and how rocket & bomb attacks on German ground forces were planned and executed by Typhoons (51% of all Typhoon pilots operational between 6 June and 1 September were KIA, the highest attrition rate of any allied fighting force).The narrative is replete with personal accounts from participants made more poignant by their often matter-of-fact descriptions of the death and injury of colleagues around them, and drives home the fact that although the infantry suffered the highest mass casualty rates in the campaign, everyone involved was in continuous danger under fire."Stout Hearts"™ joins a growing body of revisionist work which effectively demolishes the myth that the Allied forces were "inferior"™ to those of the Germans and won in Normandy only by weight of numbers and material. In recent decades writers such as Max Hastings have been responsible for perpetuating this myth. This has puzzled veterans of the campaign, typified by a thoughtful piece from a serving British infantry officer on p80:"Over the past 20 years it has become the custom for some young military writers to extol the professional ability of the Wehrmacht while decrying that of our own fighting arms, particularly our armour and infantry.This has perplexed me because it runs contrary to my experience. My 18 Platoon were better soldiers than any we fought. So was D company and the whole 4th Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry. "These writers are too young to have taken part in the operations about which they write.Although they lost, the German soldiers and their families are proud of their exploits, many of which were considerable"it is very much in their own

interest to encourage the myth that they were beaten only by numerically superior forces & firepower. In my experience this was not so. In many attacks the prisoners we took outnumbered our attacking force and German units who continued to resist at close quarters were few indeed. Unlike us they rarely fought at night, when they were nervous and unsure of themselves. Where we patrolled extensively, they avoided fighting us. If our positions were reversed I doubt they would have performed better than we did. The only minor gripe is that the text might have been better edited and proofread by the publisher, as the author overuses commas while underusing more appropriate punctuation, misuses apostrophes and for example confuses "affect" with "effect". But this is a minor issue in an overall excellent work. No doubt "Stout Hearts" will be widely read in the UK and in Canada by anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding how their armies fought in Normandy, but I would also strongly recommend the book to American readers.

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