

July 1944

The month started with the Battalion holding the bridgehead over the River Odon. This was a bitter period and several defensive fire tasks were brought down on the Battalion front. Between midnight and 0430hrs on the morning of 1 Jul over 35,000 shells were put down in front of the Battalion. On the 5th the Battalion was relieved by 4DORSETS and retired to a rest area about Fresny-le-Crotteur.



Brig JB (Jack) Churcher

Lt Col Churcher was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for this action; his citation reads:

During the operations over River Odon from 27 June to 07 July 1944, 1 Hereford and 4 KSLI were occupying an isolated bridgehead position across the river. It was the first battle experience of these Regiments who were mortared heavily for the whole of this period. During the first four days they were subjected to several counter attacks. Lt-Col. Churcher Commander 1 Hereford organised his position most skillfully and during a period of considerable strain was an outstanding example of coolness and efficiency to his whole Bn. The successful defence of the whole bridgehead position was in fact largely due to this officer's personal efforts, as in addition to leading his own Bn, he was of great assistance in supporting the Bn on his left.

Lt Col Churcher was promoted Brigadier and took command of 159 Bde on 2 July; he was succeeded by Lt Col Turner-Cain.

On 16 July the Battalion moved forward to take part in OP GOODWOOD, a massed assault north east of Caen to break through and open the Falaise Gap. At 0700hrs on the 18th the Battalion moved to the Forming Up Position (FUP). Following a massive air bombing assault the troops advanced and the Battalion took some 80 (bomb shocked) prisoners. The Battalion concentrated and were subjected to accurate mortar and shell fire which continued all of the 19th and casualties increased.

On the 22nd the Battalion was withdrawn and reconstituted in the area about Bitot and during this rest period the Regimental Band played for the last time; bandmen were roled as stretcher bearers and had had a demanding time; only 14 of the original 30 bandmen remained.

On the 29th Jul a further attempt at breakout took place - OP BLUECOAT. The Battalion moved forward, the bocage country determined that THE Herefords were joined with the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and the 2nd Northumberland Yeomanry. The fighting was bitter and became known as the Battalion's Black Sunday. CSM AF Evans was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for this action his citation reads:



CSM Evans receives his DCM from FM Montgomery

In the break out from Caumont on the morning of 30 July 1944 a depleted 'A' Coy advanced under heavy enemy mortar fire to the first objective, where it had to wait for two hours pending air bombardment of enemy positions. Their location was in fact the DF (SOS) task, and this area was mortared and shelled by the enemy consistently for two hours.

During this time the Coy endeavoured to dig in as best they could in the open. About twenty, including all stretcher bearers, became casualties. In the midst of this heavy enemy fire CSM Evans with complete disregard for his personal safety, went round all the casualties, bandaging up their wounds, comforting and cheering them. Whenever there was a short pause in the enemy shell fire he collected men and evacuated the wounded. By his untiring and courageous efforts CSM Evans succeeded in moving all the wounded to a place of safety.

The Reserve Platoon had suffered most casualties losing their Pl Comd and Pl Sgt. After evacuating all the wounded he then re-organised this Platoon so efficiently that when the time came to advance, they were completely ready to move forward in good heart. He presently led them forward with such determination that they successfully captured the next objective against stiff enemy opposition.

The fearless example and courage of this WO undoubtedly raised the morale of the whole Coy at this critical stage. It can be stated that it was through his personal bravery that the enemy position was overcome; and the successful attack by his Coy enabled the subsequent break through by the British Forces later the same day.

The War Diary for July 1944 is reproduced below.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. I. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.2119. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Delete heading not required).

Sheet -4-

Army Form G. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year July 1944

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
FRESNAY le CROTTEUR	7	1215	All ranks addressed by new Bde Comd, Brig. J.B. Churcher.	
	8		Div Comd Maj Gen G.C. Roberts D.S.O. visited the Bn	
	12	1400	Demonstration by Pioneer Pl and D Coy of new drill for clearing mines from rds and verges.	
	13		TEWT for Offrs and senior N.C.Os. Consolidation.	
	14	1400	Recce grp carried out provisional recce of Le HAUT du BOSQ area for possible pivot ref 9066.	
	15	1800	C.O. attended conference at Bde H.Q.	
	16	1130	Recce party left for conc area, ref 1/25000 map 40/16 NW.1174	
	16	2015	Bn move to conc area RANVILLE, ref 7F/2 108787. Route-BRETTVILLE- BRAY-HEROUVILLE-BENOUVILLE-LONDON br.	
Ranville	17	0400	Bn in psn RANVILLE area. Recce made for attack S.E. CAEN.	
	17		Orders received for operation GOODWOOD.	
	18	0715	Bn moved up to FUP, high ground 107727(7F/2)	
	18	0811	First Phase. D Coy and one sqn Northants Yeo put in attack	

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WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Sheet 5.

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year July 1944

(Delete heading not required).

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
RANVILLE.	18	0811	on high ground E. of CUVERVILLE 112690 to obtain firm base for next phase. Attack successful.	
	18	0830	2nd Phase. Remainder of Bn moved up behind D Coy, A, right C, left, B in reserve, and passed through to capture wooded area E. of DEMOUVILLE. Attack successful and Bn consolidated area 110687. Considerable numbers of prisoners captured by C Coy.	<i>Tung</i>
DEMOUVILLE	18	2020	Bn ordered to occupy high ground taken by armour-GRANTHEVILLE area. Pivot taken up 095657.	
	18	2130	Bn in posn.	
	19		Area subjected to shelling throughout day, evidently all wooded areas, landmarks etc. registered enemy D.F. tasks.	
	19	1615	29 Armd Bde attacked and captured BRAS.061632 and HUBERT-FOLIE 066622. 159 Inf Bde followed up attack to take over from the armour, and mop up. Objectives-3 Mons, BRAS, AKSLI, HUBERT-FOLIE-1 Hfds. reverse slope at 067632	

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WAR DIARY OF INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Delete heading not required).

Sheet -6-

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year..... July 44.

References to Appendices

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
	19		<p>(cont) Order of march, 3 Mns, 4 KSLI, 1 Hfds. Bn attained objective at last light but there was insufficient time to co-ordinate defences of pivot posn before dark. It was very difficult ground on which to read a map, consisting of large open wheat-fields with few landmarks, and no fences. It was impossible to find one's way round the Bn posns after dark, even Coy Comd lost themselves in their Coy areas. During the advance a certain amount of trouble was experienced from LMGs on the left flank from the area of SOLIERS 0862. SOLIERS was reported in our hands and whether the Bn was fired on by the occupants of SOLIERS or by enemy still in its vicinity was never determined. Fwd Bn posns were in hedged fields and copes marked on map, and consequently came in for considerable enemy D.F. fire. In this matter we were lucky being 500 yds down the reverse slope and were little troubled by mortars.</p>	

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WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Sheet -7-

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year..... July 44.

(Delete heading not required).

M M
Pte William Wirmill
(Sketches Beavers)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
	20	1200	Two fwd Bns were relieved by Cdn Inf and whole Bde withdrawn to take up pivot posn at 105665 7F/2.	
	22	1530	Bn moved to BITOT for rest and refit, Part of route was over tracks prepared by Bulldozers. Track was consequently not marked on map and owing to dark night it was difficult to distinguish the track from the soft ground on either side, owing to vehicles getting off track and becoming bogged, Bn had ultimately to halt and await daylight, before proceeding.	
BITOT	23	0730	Bn arrived at BITOT, ref 003713 7F/1. (21 miles in 17 hours) Lloyd carriers insufficiently powerful to drag guns through thick mud and had to be assisted by Carriers Universal.	

Under fire anti personal bombs from A/c.

[Signature] LIEUT COLONEL
Comdg. 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Regiment

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SHEET ONE. ORIGINAL
WAR DIARY

Army Form G. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt.

or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. R. K. Turner O.M.

Month and Year August 1944

(Delete heading not required)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Bitot	24-28 July		Bn rested and refitted after taking part in the thrusts East of Caer.	3713 Sheet 7F/1
	29 July	0300	Bn left Bitot to conc W. of Caumont for the operation that was to result in the Allied break-out of the Normandy Br Hd.	
		0645	Bn arrived in new conc area Ref. 5654 Sheet 6F/2 west of Caumont.	
	30 July	0300	Bn left conc area and marched fwd to attack in the area 6859-6858. During the night R.E.s. cleared a lane through a mine-field laid by the allies but it was not done properly, and at the very commencement of the attack a carrier was blown up. The attack was carried out with the co-operation of tanks and a way was found round the mine-field. The Bn quickly gained the 1st obj, Orchard, where it had to wait 2 1/2 hrs whilst air bombardment of successive objs. took place. Coys took up posns preparatory to advancing to line of rd Caumont 7059 and Torigny 5654. The orchard area was one of the enemies D.F. tasks and was covered by M.G.s. the latter	G.H.Q. and [redacted]

MC
Sgt Joe Phillips
Capt Bob Heath
Pte. Richard Home (404)

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SECRET T.R.O.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2118.

1st. Bn. The Herefordshire Rgt.
Unit.....

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner, Oain.

Month and Year August 1944.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
			cont from page 1. being eliminated by degrees. Many cas. were received in these posns both to offrs and men probably 100 in all. Enemy mines were encountered on leaving the orchard but by 1500 hrs the rd was gained.	* K 1 OAS 1 W 2 OAS 104
			The tks adv south of the rd firing into the hedgerows with the inf in close sup for some 1,000yds, and we then were through the enemy posns.	
			The 4 K.S.L.I. then passed through and first Herefordshires then followed conc in for the night at La Casslière by 2100 hrs.	
			The cas. by the bn in the operation were, Wounded 28 Offrs, 102 O.R.s	49:1
			Killed 16 Offrs, 19 O.R.s. Revised figures above. K 27 W 106 = 133 Ratio 5:1	
	31 July.	0430	En adv on foot unopposed.	
		0830	Arr. at La Fouquerie. Ref 6653. Sheet 6F/4.	
		1100	En cont adv on foot and took up posn for the night at X rds 6540.	
			Contact was made with the Americans on our right flank for the first time.	
	1 Aug.	0500	En moved slightly E. in order to marry up with the 2 F&F preparatory to the adv.	
		0930	Liason by higher fmn with the American forces appears to have	