

1st BATTALION THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT – AUGUST 1944

The 1st of August saw the Battalion engaged in an early phase of Op Bluecoat in order to maintain pressure on the German 7th Army to assist the American forces in striking south in Op Cobra towards Avranches before they would turn and strike to the East. The first day of the operation had been mauling for the Herefords with them losing perhaps 20% of their fighting strength on the day to become known in Regimental history as Black Sunday.

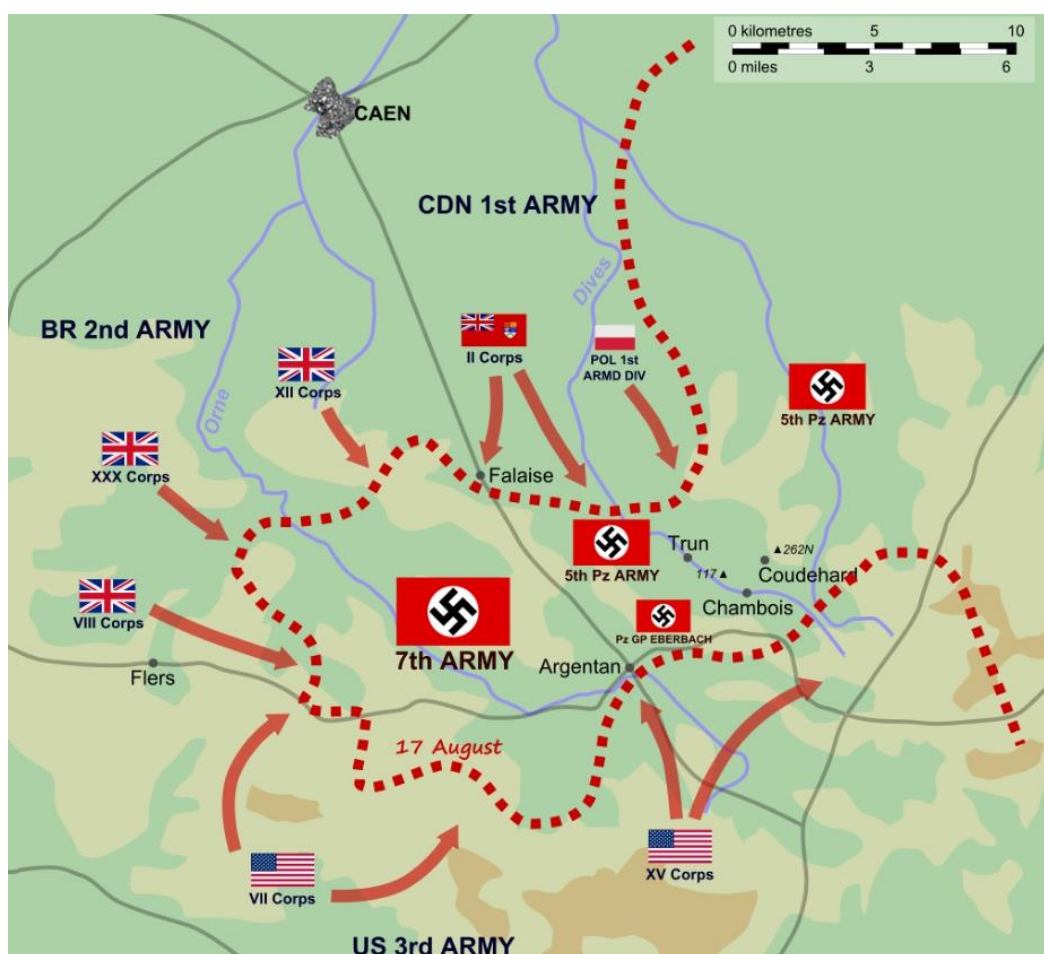
The German 7th Army had assaulted to the West to try and cut the American troops in 2, but failed and the Americans to the South and British and Canadians to the North were rushing to close a gap between Argentan and Falaise to squeeze and cut off the 7th Army in the 'Falaise pocket'.

The pocket was being closed in a fast moving and hard fought battle, Hitler issued on 10 August, for the only time an order to the 7th Army to 'Disengage', this led to their race to the east to escape capture in the pocket. Much heavy equipment was abandoned and many casualties inflicted.

The Allied effort was in full flow and the breakout from Normandy would be achieved leading to the race across France into the Low Countries – arguably after the breakout the defeat of Germany was assured but there was still a long and bloody fight to come.

Paris would be liberated on 25 August.

The closing of the Falaise Gap



The Battalion was to be 'in contact' for the next 23 days. The days were uncertain but repetitive with companies nominated as forward or reserve, then the move forward covered by artillery and direct armoured support. Closing with the enemy, holding the position, then the next company or battalion would 'leapfrog' forward to assault the next position. During this close battle the distances covered in the assault could be from a couple of 100 metres to a few kilometres – generally all on foot – sprinting, dodging, leaping and crawling! All physically draining and with the ever present threat of becoming a casualty.

After being 'passed through' a short period of relief, to assess casualties and reorganise, replenish ammunition, perhaps grab a drink and a snack, then receive orders and move on ready to leapfrog and carry out another 'advance to contact'.

Generally fighting stopped during the hours of darkness but it was not a rest period. Overnight positions had to be protected – trenches or shell scrapes dug, sentries positioned, patrols sent out, replenishment, maintenance, orders for the next day and hopefully the Quartermaster's team would bring forward some (hopefully hot) food and then perhaps a few hours uneasy sleep in full kit probably on the bare ground.

Then before first light a 100% stand to – dawn was considered the most likely time for a counter attack – then the first cigarette of the day (almost every soldier smoked) and hopefully a cup of tea and perhaps some breakfast. Then a repeat of yesterday but with perhaps a few gaps in the line up as a result of casualties from yesterday's encounter.

[Crockford] We experienced a number of battles and skirmishes before reaching the top of the hill at Cerisy in the early hours of 16 August. We were told that we had outstripped the units advancing on our flanks and that we should dig deep defensive positions as it was not known for how long we should remain in that position. We came under occasional shell and mortar bomb attack, but no bullets. During the morning I left the partly dug trench my batman and I were digging to receive orders at Coy HQ. As I returned I met my batman being led away with blood streaming down his face from shrapnel wounds. I continued my solitary digging. When I considered it deep enough I sank wearily down hoping to catch on some sleep, only again to be called to Coy HQ. This time I met Lieutenant Bill Kotchapaw. A Canadian who until he was wounded in Hill 112 had commanded 15 PI and naturally wanted to return to it. I was transferred to 14 PI. It was the best thing that had happened to me since my arrival in Normandy. I was given a most tremendous welcome, the sergeant (Sgt Ben Shotton) who had commanded it since late June telling me what a relief it was to him to be handing over command. He proved to be the best platoon sergeant I was ever privileged to know.

[Price] The battles over the next two weeks were nothing spectacular; they consisted of a series of thrusts, strong enough to exploit any weak points in the German defences. Each day was a story in steady progress and firm consolidation. It was decided that owing to the nature of the terrain it was necessary for the closest co-operation between tanks and infantry. It was anticipated that many local engagements would take place, and under these conditions reasonable progress could only be assured if the infantry accompanied the tanks, often riding on them. This system also worked well on many later occasions, and was more or less adopted as standard practice for the advance into Germany. Covered by the firepower from the tanks, the infantry were able to move in and finish the job.

WAR DIARY

To help set the scene extracts from the Brigade War Diary:

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).

Army Form C. 118

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Commanding Officer

Month and Year AUGUST 1944

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|-------|------|---|--------------------------|
| Field | 1 Aug | | During the day the advance continued. Very little opposition was met. 3 MON reverted to command of Bde. 4 KSLI under command 29 Arm'd Bde. The Arm'd Bde seen moved down across the River Saulvaire followed by the Bns. Contact was made with the 5 US Div who had conferred with us on the RIGHT, and on the LEFT the Gds Arm'd Div started to move down ending the day by being about two miles NORTH of the river. The Bde was ordered to pivot for the night, no patrols to be sent out, as much rest as possible to be taken and be ready to move SOUTH at 0530 hrs. | |
| | 2 Aug | | At 0525 hrs orders came through that the adv should be delayed 30 minutes. At 0600 hrs the adv continued, LEFT route 29 Arm'd Bde Co, on the RIGHT 159 Inf Bde Co. The HQ were sent ahead to clear the country direction of VIRE. Certain opposition met, consisting of Battle Gp with elements of 9 SS Inf Div and 21 Pz Div. At midday the div halted on the two routes on the line of the rd VASSY - VIRE, owing to the US Army on our right and the Gds Arm'd Div on the left being slow in conforming to our line. This left our flanks open. Positions were chosen for all round defence. | |
| | 3 Aug | | The adv was still halted owing to the two flanking divs being backward. Counter attacks were put in by the enemy with tks and inf. Enemy shelling was much more active. The 185 Bde of 5 Pz Div was put under command at 1100 hrs to assist the Div. It was intended to put the Bns of the new Bde into the line to bolster up our posns but owing to the flank positions, the 185 Bde had to be put on the ground to protect the L of O from infiltration. Small battle groups of tks, inf and arty of the enemy tried all day to infiltrate and break through without success. The 3 MON were also being attacked but successfully held off all attempts. | |
| | 4 Aug | | The Bde still held the same posns although certain infiltrations had taken place between the MONS and the rest of the Bde, this meant saps were unable to get up to the MONS. They continued to hold their posn and keep off any attacks. | |

*5072. W1.22661/1400. 300K. 8/42. WY.L.P. Op. 556.

WAR DIARIES
 No. 26 SEP 1944
 G.H.Q. 2nd ECHELON

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).

Army Form C. 118

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Commanding Officer

Month and Year AUGUST 1944

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|-------|---------|--|--------------------------|
| Field | 4 Aug | Cont'd. | attacks from the enemy. Bde HQ MAIN on the L of O were temporarily involved in a battle owing to three Tigers coming up the main road to where the HQ was located. A Tp of the N YEC plus 1 SP gun and a coy of the Norfolks and arty from the 5.5 medium regt managed to make them withdraw. The Bns sent out patrols to all the surrounding villages etc checking if they were occupied by the enemy, the method of the enemy seemed to be to infiltrate into a place, be a nuisance, and then go somewhere else leaving a couple of men behind to observe. It was reported many times during the day that the centre line had been cut; this was always cleared after a short time. | |
| | 5 Aug | | The Bde still continued to hold their posns, activity continued on all sectors, the Gds Arm'd Div, 15 (S) Div and US 2 Div continued to advance up with our posns. More opposition was overcome on all sectors but much more strength was met. Identifications of the 9 SS Pz Div, Army Engineer Troops were made. Large DP tasks were put down by the Germans. | |
| | 6 Aug | | Early morning patrols by the 3 MON found many dead bosche resulting from the DP tasks fired during the night. Identifications were made of the 10 SS Pz Div. It was ordered that the 185 Inf Bde should take over our positions and we would then be in reserve, ready to go into a further break through, but owing to strong counter attacks the take over by the 1 NORFOLKS was not completed, leaving the three rifle Coy's in the line. Orders came through that the future operation was postponed. Early in the evening the enemy put in very strong attacks of estimated strength of one regt, the 21 Pz GR of the 10 SS Pz Div. All attacks were warded off inflicting heavy cas on the enemy. All this time the MONS were suffering cas from shelling and mortaring. An extensive saps plan was planned for the night 6/7, so as to catch enemy in their camp areas. | |

*5072. W1.22661/1400. 300K. 8/42. WY.L.P. Op. 556.

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

Army Form C. 118

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Commanding Officer

B. H. ... King

Month and Year... AUGUST 1944

(Delete heading not required).

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|---------------------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Field | 7 th Aug | | All day of the 7th the enemy continued to counter-attack and attempt infiltration. All of these attempts failed. Arty was used all day including Typhoon and Thunderbolt fighter-bombers with good results, destroying trns and tank coms. The Dns remained in old locations, the 3 MON and 2 HEREFORDS of 185 Bde making one in locality owing to the fact that the relief did not materialise as a counter-attack was put in in force at the time the take over was taking place. The Bde was then ordered to remain in present posn. The counter-attack was beaten off by heavy arty fire. | ad |
| | 8 Aug | | The Dns still remained in present locations, being under arty and mortar fire. The 185 Bde took over comd of the Dns in the 159 Bde at 1700 hrs. Leaving 4 KSLI under comd of the 29 Armd Bde. 2ao HQ rejoined the Main Bde HQ. Listening watch was kept on the 185 Bde Net. | ad |
| | 9 Aug | | Regrouping of the 159, 185 and 29 Bdes took place, which resulted in the units of this Bde again coming under comd. Reorganisation took place during the night 9/10 and was completed by 0800 hrs 10 Aug. A programme of harassing fire was laid on to cover the reorganisation, which necessitated the movement of units, 3 MON and 1 HEREFORD moving into a new area and 4 KSLI taking over a quiet sector area LE BUSC. | ad A |
| | 10 Aug | | The day was spent cleaning up and generally looking the wounds. At 1700 hrs orders were received from Div to the effect that the 1 HEREFORD would be responsible for left flank protection of Gds Armd Div when their adv continued SOUTH on 11 Aug. | ad B. ... |
| | | | 11 / | |

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

Army Form C. 118

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Commanding Officer

B. H. ... King

Month and Year... AUGUST, 1944

(Delete heading not required).

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|--------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Field | 11 Aug | | At 0630 hrs the Gds Armd Div moved fwd, the 1 HEREFORD ^{on the} waiting start line to follow up. The adv was very slow and the HEREFORDS were not called fwd until 1250 hrs. They occupied their posn at the LE BAS PERREY without difficulty whilst the guards tried to break through but were held up on a line approx 1000 yards SOUTH of their Start Line. The night was spent patrolling and generally irritating the enemy. | ad |
| | 12 Aug | | The Bde was warned that the KSLI and HEREFORDS were to be relieved by the Gds and be prepared to go into new positions on the 15 (S) Div front. The Div was split up into two gps, 159 Bde Gp with 3 BTR and 2 N YBO less 3 MON and 29 Armd Bde Gp less 3 BTR plus 3 MON. The move was to take place on the 13th, 14th. | ad C-D |
| | 13 Aug | | The 3 MON moved during the night to come under comd 29 Armd Bde, the HEREFORDS were relieved by 32 Gds Bde and were brought into reserve area. At 1930 hrs the Bde moved to the area MONTCHAMP NORTH of ESTRAY, to the 44th Bde location, in readiness to take over their posns, the KSLI to take over the ESTAY posn, before the actual take over took place the Germans were reported withdrawing. Plans were made for a pursuit, 29 Armd Bde ordered to high ground EAST of VASSEY, 159 Inf Bde to area VASSEY, in readiness to follow up with 30 Corps. It is understood that 11 Armd Div is to become part of 30 Corps with 50 Div, 43 Div and 7 Armd, to act as follow up and pursuit corps. | ad |
| | 14 Aug | | The Bde moved fwd on two routes through PERREY, mines were encountered from the start and progress was very slow owing to the close country. The enemy were reported withdrawing leaving small rear-guard groups of the 9 SS Pz Div. By nightfall the Bde was half way to VASSEY on | ad |

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.2118. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Commanding Officer *R. H. ...*

Month and Year AUGUST, 1944

(Delete heading not required).

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|--------------------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Field | 14 Aug (Cont'd) | | the high ground SOUTH of VERIL. The HERTFORDS having certain amount of opposition to get on to the high ground. During night, patrols reported the enemy had withdrawn and PWs confirmed this fact. | rel E |
| | 15 Aug | | The adv continued, the Carrier Pl of 4 ESM was sent to VASSET and it was found deserted, very slightly damaged but completely looted, and booby trapped. | rel |
| | 16 Aug | | New orders were given to the Bde to continue adv in the direction of FLENS and then BERT. Less and less opposition was encountered, more and more deserters were coming into our hands, including an American Sjt of a Pontoon, who had bottled out and kept in hiding also a British Mustang pilot, who had been under French protection for 14 days. The advance was completely slowed up by mines, ant-tanks, demolitions etc, and the closeness of the country. The LHM came up against a certain amount of opposition SOUTH of the R VIER at ALBUSSON. By nightfall the 4 ESM had partly taken the village with the help of the 3 RTR. The HERTFORDS and the SOUTH units were halted to conform. | rel I |
| | 17 Aug | | The advance once again continued, more and more PW and deserters came back in a very disorganised condition. The Bde was given an enormous reception on going through FLENS. The population turned out in full strength to welcome their liberators. The 1st NBCourse on the main FLENS - MONTMAGNI road. | rel |
| | 18 Aug | | At 0730 hrs the adv continued, meeting only small pockets of resistance and mines. By mid-day the Bde was halted just short of BRIGUE, having contacted the US Army who had entered BRIGUE that morning. PW were coming in large numbers from various Divs in a completely disorganised state. At mid-day the Div was ordered to push on in the direction of BOUCHE, using the main BRIGUE - BOUCHE road, en route | rel J |

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.2118. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C.

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Commanding Officer *R. H. ...*

Month and Year AUGUST, 1944

(Delete heading not required).

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|------------|--------------------|------|---|--------------------------|
| Field | 18 Aug (Cont'd) | | the coln came under shell fire, by observation from our left flank; the route was altered to avoid casualties. Col Phillips, CO of the 151 Pd Regt and three of his staff had already been injured; also reports came in that 2 IC, AdjT and three of 1 HERTFORD had been injured. The Harbour Area was inside the Free French Armd Div locations, who were in and around BOUCHE. The Bde was ordered to clear the high ground to the NORTH of BOUCHE. | rel E |
| | 19 Aug | | The Bde HQ was moved fwd to the high spot SOUTH of BOUCHE, to control the battle; little opposition was encountered, the HERTFORDS gaining their positions around MONTGARAUPT with little opposition. Many more PW and deserters passed through the PW Cage. HQ was once again moved fwd to a location NORTH of BOUCHE. The Bde was ordered to remain in present location, so as to allow the 29 Armd Bde to conform and link up with us. This was completed. The 29 Armd Bde was ordered to continue advance, at the same time American div was ordered to attack ARGENTAN. On completion of the task the adv was to continue, through ARGENTAN to area LE BOURG ST LEONARD. This was carried out without trouble by 2100 hrs. | rel I |
| | 20 Aug | | At first light, the 29 Armd Bde continued the adv and the US Army attacked ARGENTAN. The Bde was ordered to move to an area around LE BOURG ST LEONARD, and be prepared to continue advance the next morning. | rel J |
| | 21 Aug | | At first light the advance continued very slowly owing to closeness of the country. PW were giving themselves up on all sides. Identifications of all Divs was made, by evening the 4 ESM and 3 RTR had attacked and taken GACE, where the Bde was halted for the night. | rel |
| 22 / | | | | |

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1 and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required)

Army Form C. 2118
Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade
Commanding Officer *W. H. King*

Month and Year. **AUGUST, 1944**

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|--------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Field | 22 Aug | | At first light 15/19 H followed by 1 HEREFORD continued the adv with the Armd Bde continuing on the Southern route. Little contact was made during the day. HQ was moved fwd two or three times during the day to keep up with the leading bns. During the day 50 Div was ordered to take over from the 159 Inf Bde. The Bde was moved onto the Southern route into a conc area just North of ST GAUBERGE in readiness to going into a rest area WEST of LAIGLE. | |
| | 23) | | The Bde moved to the area AURE and LAIGLE. Baths, ENSA concerts, dances etc were arranged, reinforcements arrived, making Bns up to 700 odd. | K. |
| | 24) | | | |
| | 25) | | | |
| | 26) | | | |
| | 27) | | | |
| | 28 Aug | | The Bde was ordered to move to conc to the area VERNON west of the SEINE, to be prepared to pass through the breach made by 43 Div. | L. |
| | 29 Aug | | Owing to the large collection of tpt from various units, ATRA's, 43 Div, 50 Div, progress towards the SEINE was slow. At 1415 hrs Bde HQ crossed the SEINE, from then on progress was good. The 29 Armd Bde brushed aside all opposition and by nightfall reached the area LONGCHAMPS, MANNEVILLE. The Bde formed a firm base SOUTH of BRUEPAGNY 5595 at CANTIERES - VILLERS EN VEXIN and PHILLERS EN VEXIN. PWs were taken and identified as 49 Div | M. |
| | 30 Aug | | At first light the Div continued its adv with the 8 Armd Bde on our right and 4 Armd Bde on the LEFT. At approx 1900 hrs the Bde arrived at the area ST GERMER, SE of GOURNAY. The 29 Armd Bde had pushed on a considerable distance towards AMIENS. Orders were received at very short notice | |

22293 Wt. 38096/1140 1.000m 12/40-McC & Co Ltd-51-8212 Form C2118/22

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1 and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required)

Army Form C. 2118
Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade
Commanding Officer *W. H. King*

Month and Year. **AUGUST, 1944**

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|--------------------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Field | 30 Aug (Cont'd) | | to move to AMIENS, as a night move. | |
| | 31 Aug | | At first light the Bde was on the high ground just NORTH of AMIENS. Bde HQ on moving through COMTEY 9643 were involved in a minor battle in the square, owing to a platoon of enemy inf losing their way and bumping up coln. The opposition was soon overcome by the Defence Pl with extra assistance of the Carrier Pl of the 1 HEREFORDS. The Bns moved into AMIENS with the 29 Armd Bde by mid-day, taking over protection of the br over the SCOLE. Bde HQ itself remained in the town, the reception was terrific. The Maguis helped round up the Bun in and around the town. Prisoners were taken from every kind of unit - everyone delighted to be taken prisoners. | |

22293 Wt. 38096/1140 1.000m 12/40-McC & Co Ltd-51-8212 Form C2118/22

The Battalion WD including annotations from Lt K Crockford



This unattributed map is held in the Regimental Museum and highlights the route the Battalion took during Op Bluecoat.



Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.219. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

SECRET T.O.

WAR DIARY
OR
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2118.

1st. Bn. The Herefordshire Rgt.

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

Month and Year August 1944

| Place | Date | Hour | cont. from page 1. Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|---------|------|--|--------------------------------|
| | | | being eliminated by degreasing gas. 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 88-1 W 88-2 O 88-104 |
| | | | The tks adv south of the rd firing into the hedgerows with the inf in close sup for some 1,000 yds, and we then were through the enemy posns. | |
| | | | The 4 K.S.L.I. then passed through and first Herefordshires then followed conc'n for the night at La Bassée by 2100 hrs. | |
| | | | The cas. by the bn in the operation were, Wounded 28 Offrs, 102 C.R.s | 49-1 |
| | | | Killed 16 Offrs, 19 C.R.s. Remained figures above. K29 W106 - 133 Ratio 5:81 | |
| | 31 July | 0430 | En adv on foot unopposed. | |
| | | 0830 | Arr. at La Fougère, 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 P&F preparatory to the adv. | |
| | | 0930 | Liaison by higher fm'n with the American forces appears to have | |

WL 4724 888 2,000,000 S. 42 W. H. & S. 51/875

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.219. 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).

Army Form C. 2118.

1st. Bn. The Herefordshire Rgt.

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Turner, Cais.

Month and Year August 1944

| Place | Date | Hour | cont. from page 2. Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|------|---|--------------------------|
| | | | been poor because En had to return to its posn of the previous night to protect the right flank. The En I.O. went off in a carrier and succeeded in contacting the Executive Officer of the American forces on our immediate right. The American information having been obtained it was passed to higher fm'n. | |
| | | 1400 | En cont adv. in T.C.Vs. through Forêt L'Éveque and took up a position for the night at 6342 first carrying out a clearing operation of the area in which no enemy were encountered. | |
| | 2 | 0430 | En moved to 6936 East of Vire. En was in reserve on reverse slope of high ground in this posn and adv of 11 Armd Div halted. | |
| | 3 | | En remained in this area in reserve. Subjected to dive bombing attack by American Thunderbolts. The only cas was a cow that was splattered over the Bde Comd A.C.V. (in next field to 1492. C. Coy) | |
| | 4 | | Still in reserve and subjected to slight shelling. An offr of the En seated himself at the side of the road to brief a small patrol | |

WL 4724 888 2,000,000 S. 42 W. H. & S. 51/875

* Capt Rommy Cowan - 2IC 'C' Company

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P.S. Regs., Vol. 1. 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).

Unit 1st Herefordshire Regt.
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner. Cain.

Month and Year Aug 44.

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|------|---|--------------------------|
| | | | of two men. While he was going so a car drove up and some Germans jumped out and was <u>was</u> surprised to see him as he was to see them. The Germans put the off and the patrol in the bag and drove off with them in their car. The third member of the patrol who had been lying in a ditch returned and reported the incident. (Cliff Dicks) | Capt Ronnie Gavan |
| | 5 | | 40 reinforcements arrived. | |
| | 7 | | Further reinforcements arrived. | |
| | 8 | 0615 | Recco party left for posn of 2 Warwicks at 7135. It looked to be a particularly unhealthy one and it was decided to affect a relieve at night. | |
| | | 2230 | Bn moved to relieve 2 Warwicks which was carried out without incident. | |
| | 9 | | Bn spent day in slit trenches and was subjected to frequent mortaring. During the afternoon reps from the I.W.G. arrived for relieve by them. During the day the P.A.D. which was situated in a quarry in rear of the | |
| | 10 | | Bn suffered particularly from enemy mortaring. Relieved by I.W.G. and moved to rest area at La Marviniere 7150. | |

WL47734 908 2,000,000 8 48 W.H.A.S. 51/5575

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P.S. Regs., Vol. 1. 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).

Unit 1st Herefordshire Regt.
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner. Cain.

Month and Year Aug 44.

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|------|--|--------------------------|
| | | | The relieve was carried out without being shelled and everyone breathed a sigh of relief when they were well clear. Having been told we were to rest and refit it came as a bombshell to be told at lunch time that we were to return the following day to the area we had just left.. | |
| | 11 | 0700 | Bn left rest area to take up posn at Le Bas Ferrier in Pressles. 7236. | |
| | | 1500 | Bn arr in area in rear of 1st W.G.s who were at Chemedolle 7335. and quickly dug in. | |
| | 12 | | The day we spent in active patrolling. A few mortar-bombs came over but the day was not nearly as unpleasant as our experience in the 2 Warwicks posn, half a mile away had led us to expect. | |
| | | 2300 | Bn of Coldstream Gds relieved 1st Herefords and we left the area of Le Bas Ferrier for the last time and returned to La Marviniere. | |
| | 13 | 1800 | Bn moved to take over a posn from a Bn of the 15 (S) Div immediately N of Estry. 7638. on arr there it became known that the enemy who had put up a very stubborn resistance at Estry had withdrawn. | |

WL47734 908 2,000,000 8 48 W.H.A.S. 51/5575

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. Form C-2119. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

Sheet 100.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2119.
Unit: 1st Bn The Herefordshire Re
Commanding Officer: Lt. Col. Turner Cain.

Month and Year: August

References to Appendices

my Peta Graft - MC
Capt. Reginald Stewer - MM
Sgt. Walter Pallard - MM

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|---------|---|--------------------------|
| | | 14 | At first light Bn commenced adv on two routes to the area of Thiel 7635 with 2 coys and sup arms L/O 21/0 known as Bar Force on one route and the remainder of the Bn on another. | |
| | | 0900 | Bn arr in the area of Thiel and were joined later in the day by Bar Force. In the late afternoon an att was put in on hill feature 212 with B Coy fwd right and D Coy fwd left, which despite fierce opposition was successful. | |
| | | 15 2000 | Bn took over posn from 4 K.S.L.I. N of Vassy. | |
| | | 16 0700 | Adv cont through Vassy Bn moving on two routes. | |
| | | 0245 | Bn reached conc area immediately N of Flers, the feature Mt De Carisi 8326 not being held by the enemy. | |
| | | 17 0700 | Bn moving on one route cont its adv. Flers was reached about 1000 hrs and we experienced for the first time the demonstrations of joy of the civil population. | |
| | | 1600 | Bn divided onto two routes to deal with minor opposition in the area of Durcet | |

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. Form C-2119. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

Sheet 7.
WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2119.
Unit: 1st Bn The Herefordshire Re
Commanding Officer: Lt. Col. T. R. Turner Cain.

Month and Year: August 14.

References to Appendices

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|---------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | | | cont from page 6. and St Opportune 9518. Bar Force carried out its task at Durcet and returned to the Bn. B Coy took an obj 500 yds N of the rd in the face of very slight opposition which 4 KSLI passed through them and cleared another enemy posn. Rifle coys had now been adv on foot since leaving La Marviniere on 13 August and the men were very foot-sore and weary. | my final attch with 1482. No. 475 |
| | | 18 0630 | Bn cont its adv with Coys sitting on the backs of tks. Leading elts passed through Orionze and reached the rly and river brs at 0416 at about 0900 hrs. The rly br was being subjected to a certain amount of shelling which was thought to be from American forces adv N. visibility was very bad there being a thick mist which made it difficult to sent out patrols to make contact. | |
| | | 1100 | Contact was made with the Americans and the Div cmd of 11 Armd Div and the American Div met in the Market-Place. The Bn moved to a conc area N.E. of the town and at least some of its personnel obtained | |

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

Sheet 8.
WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn. The Herefordshire R.

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. P.R. Turner Cain.

Month and Year August 1944.

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|------|---|--------------------------|
| | | | obtained/- a refreshing bath and swim in a tributary of the river Honore. | |
| | 1600 | | Adv cont in TCVS to SW of Ecouche 1816 The C.L. was being shelled by the enemy just W of Ecouche and one of our Carden Lloyd carriers was hit and set on fire, fortunately without any cas. <i>Goal shells delivered - some wounded - type of CV</i> | |
| | 1900 | | En arrived in conc area outside Ecouche. <i>hunched by shrapnel</i> | |
| | 2100 | | Two shells landed outside the Command Post vehicle killing two members of the Pioneer Pl who were digging in G.P. and wounding the 21/G and Adj. | |
| 19 | | | Contact was made with the French Armd Div in Ecouche. | |
| | 1200 | | En adv deployed to Montgaroult 182196. Opposition was very slight but unfortunately one Coy Comd who was leading his Coy and sitting up in his carrier instead of sitting well down and moving in a less conspicuous posn was hit in the shoulder by a shell from a tk. <i>Goal P. 182196</i> | |
| | 20 | | Adv cont to Bourg St. Leonards via Argentan without incident where we bivouached for the night at 2000 hrs. | |
| 25 | 0745 | | En cont adv and sat on Xrds W of Gace 5549 for the night while <i>4 KSLI 4549</i> | |

WL 4724 998 2,000,000 R.43 W.H.A.S. 51/5275

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

Sheet 9.
WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn. The Herefordshire R.

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Turner Cain.

Month and Year August 1944.

| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | References to Appendices |
|-------|------|------|--|--------------------------|
| | | | invested Gace and cleared it. | |
| | 22 | | En cont adv at first light passing through 4 KSLI at Gace. Part of En reached conc area 629396 at 1730 hrs. Confusion arose over conc area due to 2 Trig points being the same with the result that recon party proceeded too far and we got onto the Armd Xde Route. Part of En had to clear the rd while Armd Xde passed through with the result they did not reach conc area until after dark. A Coy Comd was run over by a 15cwt truck in the dark and had to be evacuated with a badly lacerated leg. | |
| | | | <i>M. C.</i> Lt. Col. Commanding Officer. 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regiment. | |

WL 4724 998 2,000,000 R.43 W.H.A.S. 51/5275

No war diary seems to exist for the period 23 to 27 August when the Battalion was under going a period of recuperation in the L'Aigle area or 28 to 30 August.

28 Aug

11 Armd Div to move across Seine through bridgehead of 43 Div.

1200 hrs Battalion commenced move forward; 29 Armd Bde leading. Arrived concentration area west of River Seine.

29 Aug

1200 hrs Battalion left concentration area to cross Seine

1800 hrs Arrived area Le Thilliers-an-Vix without opposition.

30 Aug

0615 hrs Battalion continued advance following 29 Bde
Bde moving to first bound at Hedvicourt

0715 hrs Arrived Hedvicourt

1200 hrs Harbour party left to recce area of crossroads north of St Germain.

1510 hrs Moved forward from Hedvicourt

2030hrs Change of route. Div moving forward to Amiens tonight.

All night drive – weather and visibility adverse.

| Month and Year: Sept. 44... | | | (Delete heading not required) | | References to Appendices |
|-----------------------------|---------|------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Place | Date | Hour | Summary of Events and Information | | |
| OGENTY | 31 Aug. | 0845 | Village reported clear, 40 P.Ws taken by B Coy mainly. Identification | | |
| | | | 12 S.S. Div 102 Arty Bn and 49 Div Fus. Bn. | | |
| | | 0845 | Harbour parties moved fwd. | | |
| | | 0900 | Bn commenced move fwd on wheels. | | |
| AMTENS. | | 1030 | Cauc area south of Amiens 0653. Pivot formed in area of German Army H.Q. | | |
| | | 1155 | Bn moved forward to held br in Amiens. | | |
| | | 1225 | Arrived locn 104576. NSLI 3 Coys across river, 3 mens to pass through. | | |
| | | 2230 | Bn moved out to N.E. Amiens and pivoted. 50 Div moved in and took over posns. | | |
| | | 2400 | All Coys in posn, Bn area 1160. | | |

After the initial stages of the breakthrough at Caumont the rout of the German 7th Army by British, Canadian and American troops began. The massed weight of the advancing Allied Armies could not be stopped but the enemy fought with skill and resilience. His first determined effort to restore the situation was by attempting to cut through to the French coast with an armoured wedge towards Avranches, in order to cut the rapidly advancing spearheads of the American troops from their supply bases. To achieve this he threw out a strong protective screen to his right (North) flank composed of one infantry and 2 panzer divisions in the path of the 2nd Army. Realising that this attempt at cutting up American forces had failed he then appreciated that the whole of his army group was in danger of encirclement by:

- The Canadian troops smashing their way from Caen towards Falaise
- The American forces cutting up from the South West towards Argentan

To prevent this and to extricate as much of his material and personnel as time would allow he fought a series of desperate rear guard actions all around the fringes of the rapidly forming Falaise pocket.

The Allies continued to squeeze the pocket relentlessly and eventually the 7th Army disintegrated, suffering much loss and damage to material as the British had lost at Dunkirk in 1940.

So far as the Battalion was concerned it was continuously in action from 30 Jul to 23 Aug; it was in contact with the enemy all the time most of which it was actually fighting. Part of the time companies advanced on foot, then when there was little or no opposition the infantry climbed on the tanks and pushed on.

Reference has already been made to the flexibility of an armoured division and it was during this phase that the infantry battalion/tank regimental group was really developed. Hitherto 29 Armd Bde and 159 Inf Bde had operated largely as independent forces. From now on it was more usual for each brigade to consist of 2 infantry battalions and 2 regiments of tanks, each of course with the necessary supporting arms. The gave the Div Comd 2 similar groups which he could switch about as the situation required – or if necessary he could quickly reform into the original armoured and infantry brigades.

Within the Bde Gp each battalion was married to a regiment of tanks so that the Bde Comd likewise had 2 similar groups which he could use to best advantage. The Herefords were married to the Fife & Forfar Yeomanry. At the battalion level companies were married to squadrons of tanks but since there were only 3 squadrons in a regiment, one of the infantry companies was always in Troop Carrying Vehicles (TCVs). Commanders and men became so accustomed to this method of operating that the CO was able by the briefest orders given out over the air to regroup his force into the order of march he wanted for the next phase of the advance. It is worth recording a typical set of such orders, usually received about 2330hrs the night before an advance.

CO 'Hello all stations Mike One – Orders – DF patrols tonight. M2 [call sign for battalion sub units] 500 yards down your track. M3 on the sugar end if your triangular green M4 Where Iron crosses the blue. Send in to fetch DF tanks. Alertness 33%. Tomorrow breakfast 0600hrs ready to move 0700 – Route will be sent round – order of march M3 with corresponding big brothers [tanks], QLC, M12, M10 (less 2 subs), M9, M2 with big brothers M1 with big brothers, M4, M5 will move later. Questions?'

*'M1R Out', 'M2R out', 'M3 what shall I do with my small packs?' CO 'Hello M3 put you b****y packs where I told you last time – out'*

This all meant very little sleep for anyone. We seldom stopped until after dark, then we had to dig in, find patrols eat 2 meals and prepare for the next day's move.

In addition to the tanks we nearly always had 3 Gunner Forward Observation Officers (FOO) (one for Bn HQ, and 2 for forward companies, 1 platoon Medium Machine Guns (MMG) from the Northumberland Fusiliers and sometimes anti tank (ATk) gunners, REs, Field Ambulance (Fd Amb) etc. They were all welcome and fitted obediently into the column until they were required to act.

The Div was operating on 2 routes with 29 Armd Bde Gp left and 159 Inf Bde Gp on the right. The Herefords were working with 2 Fife & Forfar Yeomanry. The rate of the advance came as a surprise to all after the heavy slogging and yard by yard progress which had been the form to date. Odd pockets of enemy were encountered here and here which necessitated methodical clearing of likely areas for enemy strong points. The few enemy encountered fought fanatically and had to be dealt with ruthlessly. By 2 Aug the Battalion was in position on a feature of high ground east of Vire where it

remained until 7 Aug. Spasmodic shelling was the main trouble – apart from a case of mistaken identity when we were dive bombed by Thunderbolts. Despite the accuracy of the attack no casualties were suffered. On discovering their mistake the same aircraft again flew over the Battalion and everybody held their breath as they saw dark objects again released from the planes. It was the American way of saying ‘sorry pal’ – the pilots dropped cigarettes and ‘candy’ in atonement.

It was in this area that the one and only officer of the Battalion to be taken prisoner disappeared – Capt Ronnie Cowans (Queens attached), 2iC C Coy. As reported by his batman (LCpl Dicks), and recorded in the War Diary, the circumstances were as follows:

I [LCpl Dicks] went with ? and Pte ? [the names of these 2 soldiers is not known] to visit the forward listening patrol. Everything was quiet and all right and I remained in the ditch on the side of the road while the others went on to the road. Just then a car came along the main road, stopped and I heard somebody ask in English ‘is this your company?’ then they disappeared into the car and it drove away – just like that.

[Capt Cowans PoW report on being repatriated is reproduced at the end of this month’s account – he does not elaborate on the circumstances of his capture.]

Whilst in this area more reinforcements arrived for the B attalion and the grimness of Black Sunday was slowly being absorbed by the job on hand. On 8 Aug the Battalion took over a very unhealthy and difficult position from 1 Warwicks. The relief was effected without incident by night but everybody felt uncomfortable. Enemy patrols were active and shelling and mortaring intense. This was at Le Bas Perrier.

Nearby were knocked out Shermans and Panthers and burnt out half tracks turned over on their sides or blown to pieces all told of a grim battle. There were still German dead lying around the area for intense enemy artillery activity precluded disposing of them. One fellow of A Coy will well remember, no doubt that the Warwicks hadn’t much opportunity to bury their dead. They had made use of slit trenches previously dug and occupied by the Boche, but had not occupied all of them. Suddenly out of the darkness, there was a piercing, terrified scream as a British soldier took to his heels and started to put distance and darkness between himself and something he has discovered. It was a gaping bursting German body which had caressed him with a cold marble hand when he tried to share his slit trench. An officer of Bn HQ, always anxious to avoid having to dig his own trench, unwittingly occupied an enemy latrine, He was so inoculated against the smells of the battlefield that he did not make the unpleasant discovery until morning.

The stay in this particular position was fortunately not very long, and on 10 Aug after holding it for 48 hours the Battalion was relieved by 1 Welsh Guards and withdrew to a rest area at Le Mauvindier, about 6 miles behind the line. The relief was carried out with out shelling and everyone breathed a deep sigh of relief when clear of the area. The rest turned out to be short lived. Regrouping for further operations was taking place and the Battalion had to be committed to holding another position just east of the last spot in order to release elements of the Guards Armd Div. They were trying to push on to Chenedolle and beyond. The Battalion dug in just behind this village – hacking away at the solid limestone rock to get better protection. Active patrolling was carried out and one platoon of D Coy along with a detachment of pioneers went out to lay 75 grenades across tracks known to be used by enemy vehicles. This party ran into an enemy ambush patrol and only by immediate and energetic

action did it escape with minor casualties. At midnight the following day a battalion of the Coldstream Guards took over and the Battalion left Le Bas Perrier for the last time and returned to La Mauuviniere.

[NAAFI] Bulk Issue Stores (BIS) chief comforter in war's dismal story, were collected from the supply depot the following day, but before it could be issued the Battalion was on the move again, this time moving east to form up in Estray, which had been captured and held against determined opposition by 15th Scottish 2 days before. Here it was necessary for the Battalion to split into 2 groups and to operate on 2 routes in order to clear the ground ahead. On the right route was half the battalion under the CO and on the left route the other half the Battalion commanded by the 2ic and known as Barforce. The Battalion formed up in this manner during the evening and at first light on the morning of the 14th advanced on 2 routes towards Le Thiel.

The going was very good and from intelligence sources the enemy was reported to have withdrawn. Where he would be likely to hold next remained to be seen, but apart from mines, snipers, stragglers and occasional mortar fire, no coordinated opposition was struck and Le Thiel was reached. Then it became apparent that this was where he intended to fight another delaying section. Accurate and heavy mortar fire mixed with shells of high calibre, probably 105s, began to make life unpleasant. By now Barforce had completed its clearing and rejoined the rest of the Battalion to take up a normal all round defensive position. Patrols were pushed out to locate the enemy and it was soon realised that he was holding hill feature 212 ahead of us in considerable strength. In the late afternoon an attack was put in on the hill with B Coy forward right and D Coy forward left. Despite fierce opposition and rapidly failing light the attack was successful. Casualties amongst the assaulting companies were heavy and it proved difficult to consolidate in the darkness, especially as enemy fighting patrols persistently attacked the companies as they were digging in. These patrols roved around all night. It was impossible to clear any further forward because of the darkness and the situation was fluid to say the least of it. After a night which seemed eternal, dawn broke and, although sore, the companies had carried out another successful operation. At 0300 hrs the enemy withdrew.

It was during this engagement that Jack Greenhouse – Serjeant Major D Company was wounded.



The view from Le Thiel towards Hill 202 [June 2024]



The following day the Battalion group moved south east to take over an area from 4KSLI and to get in position to carry on with another sweep south towards Flers. Life these days was a case of fighting as long as the light held, then pushing on again at first light. Thus at 0700 hrs on the 16th the advance continued along the route through Vassey. Early in the afternoon, the outstanding feature of Mt de Cerisse was reached and trouble anticipated. It was a tall, isolated hill feature rising sharply to a height of 900 feet which had been at some time a fortress. If not held in force it was almost certain to be used as an OP and a carrier patrol was sent to meander its way as far up the track as possible, then to dismount and check upon it. Surprisingly enough it was clear of enemy and everybody was thankful. In the meantime the companies were having a breather.



This IWM photo, taken on 18 Aug is captioned – *in an orchard an officer [Maj Barneby(?) – also wounded 18 Aug] of the Herefords, sits on top of his vehicle and marks on his map the very satisfactory progress of his men.*

It was while waiting here that we evidenced typical Boche bestiality. Busily scratching away in a garden of a small cottage was an elderly lady with 2 or 3 excited grandchildren running around her. After having dispensed with the usual 'cigarette for poppa' we took an interest in the old lady's activities and gambled whether she was about to unearth calvados or the family silver. It turned out we were all wrong. She disappeared into the house and returned with a beautiful wire haired terrier which she was about to bury. The Germans, after ransacking the house completely, had shot the dog in front of her for no reason whatsoever.

After the carriers had reported Mt de Cerise clear, the Battalion pushed on and eventually harboured for the night about 20 miles north of Flers. It had been a quiet day we made another 0700 hrs start and by 1000 hrs Flers was entered. Odd enemy stragglers had been picked up en route and a few others were collected in the town but there was no opposition. For a while nobody thought about Germans for the inhabitants would not let us. This was the first time we had witnessed and taken part in demonstrations of joy by liberated people. The populace clambered into the vehicles, over the vehicles and under the vehicles. The Battalion was greeted with wine and calvados and enjoyed it; they were kissed and enjoyed it. It was almost as good as a day's rest despite the fact that we did not stay there more than hour. Such a reception gave a much needed boost to morale. The rifle companies had marched continuously since leaving Mauviniere and the weather was extremely hot.

The advance continued through Flers and in the afternoon leading elements came under MG and mortar fire from the area of Durcet and St Opportune. Barforce was formed again and despatched to deal with the trouble at Durcet while B Coy attacked and cleared the opposition at St Opportune. The following morning rifle companies were grateful to continue the advance sitting in tanks. By the time the morning mist had lifted the Battalion was on the outskirts of Briouze and the leading elements passed through. At the exit to the town they came under shell fire and further movement was checked for the time being. Then it was discovered that we had just beaten the Americans to the town and that they were formed up ready to enter it from the south. It was in fact American shells which had checked our advance. Liaison was made with the American force and soon the market square was filled with high ranking British and American commanders jointly working out the programme for the next phase. The scene in the town itself surpassed that of Flers if there are comparative degrees of supreme happiness. Nazi flags were torn to shreds and the sign of the twisted cross was rudely obliterated from posters or wherever else it might appear. The Tricolour and Cross of Lorraine were soon fluttering from the top of the church steeple to the accompaniment of peals of victory bells, and the FFI now openly wore their Cross of Lorraine armbands for the first time.

In the early afternoon the advance continued eastwards in the direction of Ecouche, the companies being carried in TCVs. ATK gunners, mortar and carrier platoon personnel left Briouze in true carnival form. Their carriers were covered with flowers and their crews, wearing top hats, shaded themselves with umbrellas which had suddenly appeared from nowhere. The afternoon however resumed its normal grim countenance as the enemy started to shell the column on the move. The shelling came from SP guns and mortars and it was not practicable to get off the road or halt the column. One carrier received a direct hit and the crew became casualties but the remainder kept moving.

Finally by 1900 hrs the Battalion was concentrated in an orchard area near Ecouche and harboured there for the night. The situation was perfectly quiet and normal routine was adopted. The Gunner Officer was working out his artillery DF tasks, a liaison officer from the 1st French Armd Div whom we had just contacted was exchanging the local 'picture', the pioneers were digging the command post and everybody else was getting on with the evening meal. Suddenly, completely out of the blue, and

without any warning whatever, 3 shells arrived at Battalion HQ. Two pioneers were killed outright and the 2ic, adjutant and 2 signallers wounded. It was a disturbing ending to an otherwise successful day and it raised once more the difficult problem of replacing key personnel. However it was again proved that nobody is indispensable and Battalion HQ continued to function successfully.

After tying up plans with the French division, which had fought its way up from Marseilles, the Battalion pushed on northward the following morning in the direction of Mont Garoult. The enemy had pulled out leaving behind bazooka men and snipers, and there were still a few tanks and SP guns cruising about, lost and without orders, but making a general nuisance of themselves. A few casualties including one Coy Comd [Maj Phillips] were suffered and sufficient prisoners taken to dig slit trenches for Battalion HQ.

Ken Crockford and Alec Wardman recorded their experiences of this time:

[Wardman] We then moved over to the west, next to the American Army. We were to attack alongside the Americans towards Vire and then swing east to the City of Flers. 1st Herefords were to lead. We advanced to the first enemy opposition, which then withdrew, but we could advance no further, we were waiting a 500 bomber raid on the German positions. There we were, stuck on the side of a very rocky hill waiting for the raid, which was over an hour late, due to fog in England. The Germans knew where we were and had the accurate range for their guns, and how they used them! the shelling and mortaring was intense. The ground was too rocky to 'dig in' and a lot of the lads took cover in a sunken lane, my carrier crew and I crawled under the carrier as some protection from the blast and shrapnel.

After a while along came the bombers and we could then advance, leaving many dead and wounded to be buried or evacuated to Field Hospitals. As we advanced we came on members of one rifle company lying wounded in a sunken field, others were standing still. They had walked into a field which was mined with 'schu' mines, These are small mines which blow the foot off anyone who treads on one. There was only one thing to do, and taking the risk that there would not be any anti-tank mines as well, we drove the carriers into the field and picked up all the wounded and got them out, then we returned and brought out all the others.

Shortly after this, another of our infantry battalions took over the lead and captured the town of St Martin des Besaces early the next morning. Then came a stroke of luck. Our recce regt located a track which ran for about 10 miles through the Forest L'Eveque, and was not protected by the Germans. In less than 2 hours the division poured down the track and broke right through the Germans. By this time our regiment had lost over 200 men, either dead or wounded.

For the next fortnight our time was passed in combat with 2 German SS divisions and one tank division. German tanks were everywhere, I do not think some of them knew what they were doing. We ourselves were completely exhausted, as we had very little sleep for 3 weeks, and were short of men, who had become casualties. We learned afterwards that we had destroyed the 2 SS divs and most of the tanks.

Both remembered the entry into Flers as it was the first town of any size that they had liberated':

[Crockford] During the night we were told that units on each side had drawn level with us and that starting at 0700 hrs we would advance to Flers and commence clearing the town of the enemy. We were amazed. Armoured divisions usually bypassed towns to cut the enemy's supply lines, leaving the clearance of them to the following infantry divisions. The plan was for our carrier platoon to reach the outskirts of Flers and set up their machine guns to provide covering fire if necessary for the advance into the town. C Coy led by [my platoon] 14 Pl was to follow on foot. On arrival 14 Pl was to make its way as quickly as possible to the centre of the town before turning Eastwards towards Argentan. When clear of the town to halt and await the remainder of Herefords, opposition was to be 'contained by fire' we were not to divert from our aim by trying to eliminate it. Considering our rate of progress to date we thought this was 'a tall order'!

At about 1000 hrs 14 Pl arrived on the Northern edge of the town. The sergeant in charge of the machine guns said all was quiet. They had seen no civilians or enemy. With some trepidation we moved down the road, as spread out as possible although our single files provided excellent targets to any lurking enemy.

At first all was eerily quiet, and we wondered whether we were walking into an ambush. Then doors opened, heads popped out to be quickly withdrawn. Then doors opened and the people of Flers tumbled on to the street armed with bottles of wine, fruit and flowers. The soldiers struggled with their equipment to reach their tin mugs for the wine and I had the difficulty in keeping them moving, the temptation to halt and join in the celebrating population proving almost irresistible. Somehow I got them moving only to be met with what to me was an unforgettable sight. A nun came out of a house to our left accompanied by young children. They were all laughing as they formed a circle and danced and sang. This was the first (but not the last) time I had ever seen a laughing nun and I can still vividly picture the happy scene.

With great difficulty we penetrated the cheering happy throng and carried on, with, it might be said, some reluctance to the quieter outskirts of Flers. It seemed a very long time before the remaining Herefords joined us. Whilst waiting I was alarmed when a passing tank picked up a broken telegraph wire and when passing pressed me to a wall. Fortunately it snapped before I was sliced in two.

[Wardman] On the evening of 16 August armoured cars of the Inns of Court Regiment entered the town of Flers and reported it clear. The next day we entered the town. It was the first town as opposed to village we had occupied, and for the first time we began to speak of 'liberating' places rather than 'capturing' them. It was also the first time we were greeted by the people; they lined the streets and waved as we walked by offering us fruit and cider, which was very welcome on such a hot and dusty day. Before this our reception had been very indifferent. It was a great morale booster, by the time we'd cleared the town and were heading for our next objective everyone was in a happier frame of mind. It was becoming obvious that the enemy was now conducting a planned withdrawal to the east, blowing bridges and planting mines wherever he could. He also left behind organised rearguards if he thought they could hold us up. The lack of opposition in the morning of each day proved this point, it was usually in the afternoon before we overtook his rearguard. This situation was being forced upon him by the increasing threat to his flanks from the north and south. As the pressure increased his forces in the pocket faced the danger of encirclement south of Falaise.

Then we made a strong push and kept going towards Flers, which we liberated on 17 August. I say liberated because this was the first place of any size and with any people that we came to,

most of the other villages and towns had been destroyed during the battles. the city of Flers had been bombed by the Americans who had been trying to block the railway line, the main line from Normandy to Paris.

The people went mad with Joy and showered us with flowers and fruit. if you have never tried to catch a ripe tomato or plum thrown at a moving vehicle don't! they make a horrible mess as we found out. We were on the move now, and knew that the Germans were on the run. At Briouze we had an argument with an American Division which was trying to use the same road as we were. They were not on their route and had to allow us through; later we found out that they were General Le Clerc's French Division, who wanted the quickest road to Paris, and we were on it.

We were now on the southern edge of the Falaise pocket, as it was to become known, and here were the worst horrors of war, thousands of dead Germans and horses, killed as they tried to escape to the east, and what to them was safety, while the roads were blocked with the debris of wrecked vehicles and tanks.

A despatch rider of the Herefords hitching a tow from an anti-tank gun towed by a carrier towards Argentan. Note the unit number '63' on the carrier and the DR's helmet.



On we pushed through Argentan and Gace to L'Aigle, where we rested for 3 days while another Infantry Division forced a crossing over the river Seine. Resting means that we maintained our vehicles, which had been on the move for over 5 weeks with little chance of maintenance. *[Rest did not mean rest! It involved equipment maintenance, absorbing replacement men and equipment, cleaning and servicing, feeding, washing and of course catching up on sleep].*

This is when we first heard the term, the Falaise Gap. What it referred to was the only way his forces inside the pocket could escape, the gap between the towns of Falaise in the north and Argentan in the south. With all his transport being forced into this bottleneck it was being mercilessly strafed by

the allied air forces and shelled by our artillery until the roads to Bernay were completely choked with smashed and burning transport. Thousands of prisoners were taken and we took our first General. This was the commander of the 276 Inf Div Lt-Gen Kurt Badinski, and with him his staff, that was on 20 August. Within another few days all the German formations in the pocket were eliminated. With the defeat of his troops in the pocket there was no reason to fight rearguard actions or pursue other such delaying tactics, nor indeed had he sufficient troops left to do so. The only cause open to him now was to retire as quickly as possible behind the next line of defence, the water barrier of the river Seine.

The next 2 days operations were uneventful, By now the Falaise gap had been virtually closed and rocket firing Typhoons were well able to deal with tanks and troops hoping to use the only road and escape route open to the Seine. This road was also under Allied shell fire from north and south. The German 7th Army had been virtually destroyed, whilst many men escaped almost all of their heavy equipment was lost and over 40,000 PoWs taken. The German aim was to cross the Seine, destroy the bridges and gain time to regroup to present a defence. Clearly the Allied objective was to maintain the momentum of the advance and prevent this. The Armoured Divs with their mix of armour and infantry, speed and flexibility were ideal for this and the next phase of the Hereford's story begins.

The Battalion leapfrogged on tanks through the KSLI, passed through Argentan and eventually reached Gace. About 100 disorganised and disheartened Boche were picked up during the final sealing of the Falaise pocket. Apart from the speed at which the Battalion moved, the last few days of this operation provided nothing spectacular. The Battalion had been on the go since 30 Jul and by 22 Aug was all ready for a thorough wash down and sort out, which it finally got at L'Aigle. Here the men got down to accumulated stocks of BIS and forgot all about was for a few days.

[Crockford] At 1600hrs our wheeled transport joined us. We embussed and moved off towards Argentan to shortly come under mortar bomb fire (which punctured one of our tyres), and small arms fire from the edge of a small wood near Durcet to our left. I was ordered to deal with the situation. Finding a hollow in the ground we formed up to attack. I was wondering how my new platoon would react but I need not have worried. On the order to move every man rose to his feet and moved forward. As we reached the crest of the fold in the ground we were met by a hail of fire, it appeared no one could avoid being hit. We moved steadily forward firing from the hip. As we approached the enemy position the bullets went higher and higher over our heads as the Germans crouched lower and lower in their trenches. When we were about twenty metres away they surrendered, and we escorted them to the road. Astonishingly not one of 14 PI had been hit. Later that night the PI Sgt told me that he had been talking to the soldiers who had told him that they wanted to keep me as I must by their lucky mascot!

As Bob Price said – we settled down to a few days rest Reinforcements of men and equipment arrived We able to have a wash and a shave and get a change of underwear I hadn't had my boots off for 3 weeks.

The Great Swan

The breakout had started, the German forces were in a state of disorganisation, the momentum of the Allied advance had to be maintained to press home the advantage.

All Allied reinforcements and stores were still being received 'over the beaches' and through the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches. As the Allies moved forward the lines of communication would be

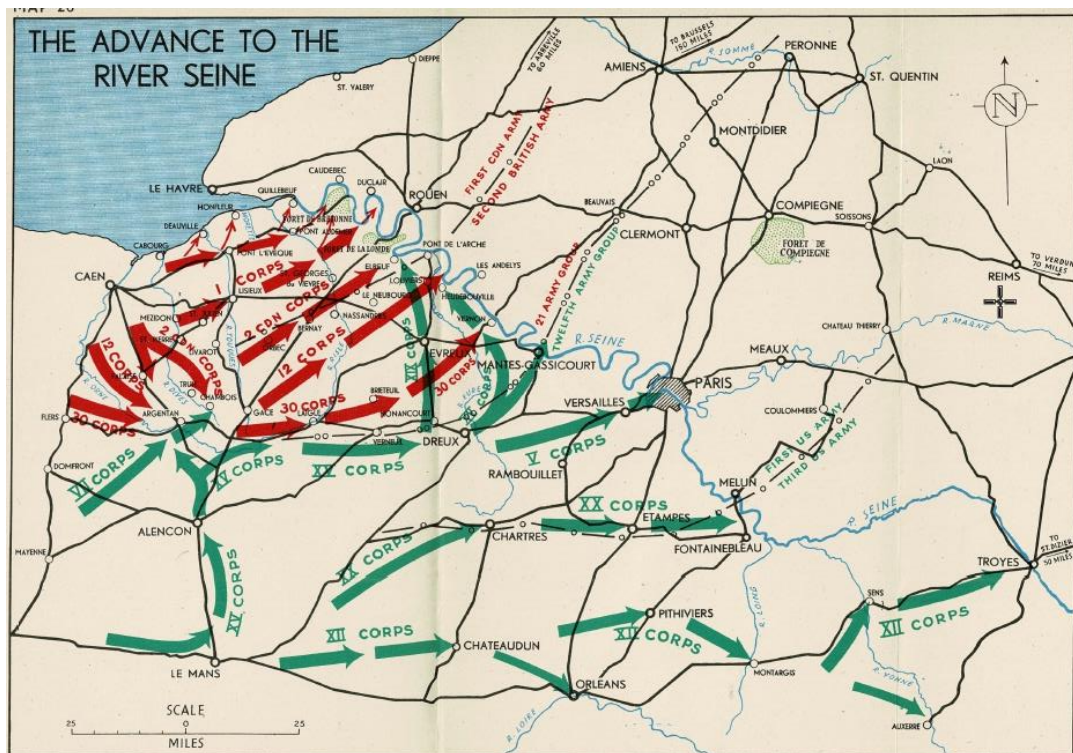
extended and the momentum of the advance more challenging to maintain. A forward port was needed and the Allied eyes were set on Antwerp.

The armoured divisions with their all arms configuration, flexibility and speed were ideal for the task, 11 Armd Bde was to be to the fore.

Soldiers of the Herefords on the 'Paris Road' supported by Cromwell tanks



Whilst 11 Armd Div rested, The Allies advanced, American troops to the south and British and Canadian to the North – the French were racing to liberate Paris. The advance was to move in step with each other to be known as 'the broad front'.



43 Div has moved forward and secured a bridge across the River Seine at Vernon. At 0600hrs on 28 August 11 Armd Div began their advance to the bridge.

The Bridge over the Seine at Vernon



There was considerable traffic congestion at the Seine crossing and everyone thought his unit had priority. OC D Coy left his wireless vehicle to help organise the traffic and while he was away part of the column was directed over another bridge. His 2ic was oblivious of his absence and also of the fact that his vehicle had been misdirected after crossing the bridge and was leading a large part of the Battalion column along a completely unexplored route. At the next village his driver stopped to ask for orders, when suddenly they were attacked – not by the enemy but by the usual shower of tomatoes and eggs. It was a harassed Canadian, who, after much warmth over the air and several disputes with those behind him, led his column back to the Battalion's correct position.

The advance was swift and as Bob Price remembered: *we sat in our TCVs on the move night and day, what opposition we met was quickly eliminated and we moved on; the next few days are difficult to describe as everything happened so fast.* The towns and villages quickly passed by with their names hardly registering.

By 30 Aug the advance was 30 miles short of Amiens where the River Somme presented another potential barrier to the advance. A night advance was ordered to 'dash' forward to seize the bridge. This was novel to advance in the hours of darkness, on a particularly dark and rainy night - but it was successful and a bridge was taken intact. The Herefords had dug in a few miles short of the town and were in reserve for the assault into Amiens; they moved forward into the town on the afternoon of 31st.

Alec Wardman remembered this night move: in pouring rain there was no moon that night. Our Column was moving on by-roads, little more than tracks in places, sometimes we found that German vehicles had Joined our route, and these were quickly despatched when discovered.

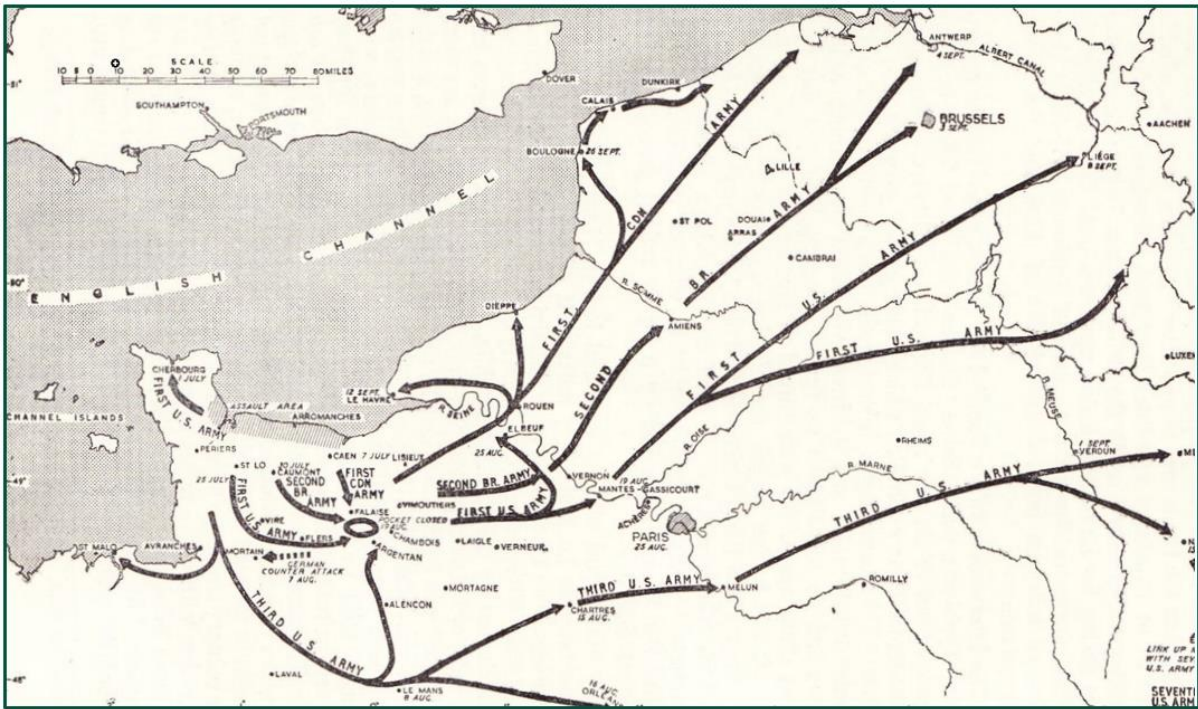
An unknown member of the Battalion who took part in 'the swan' describes his experience as follows:

From an individual's point of view the swan from L'Aigle to Antwerp was no more than a victorious ride, and even those who had problems to meet of a kind not met before, now remember only those things which were pleasant. To S Coy the ride was even better than for the rest of the Battalion, perhaps because of the carrying capacity of their vehicles and their easier access to the cheering populace.

The night drive to Amiens was a nightmare for carrier drivers following the small white light of the vehicle in front, many a vehicle seeing stationary white arrows on the roadside stopped thinking it was the carrier in front stopped. The night was pitch black and it was necessary to have someone by the driver stuck out on the front of the carrier to assist him pick out the way. But despite this difficulty and the fact that at times the carriers lost the more swiftly flowing wheeled vehicles in front, no one lost the way. At each difficult junction or village there was always one or more FFI a torch in hand, a rifle in the other, and a cheery word to guide us on our way and the signing of the route by C17PS never failed. These 2 facts were largely responsible for the success of this amazing night drive.

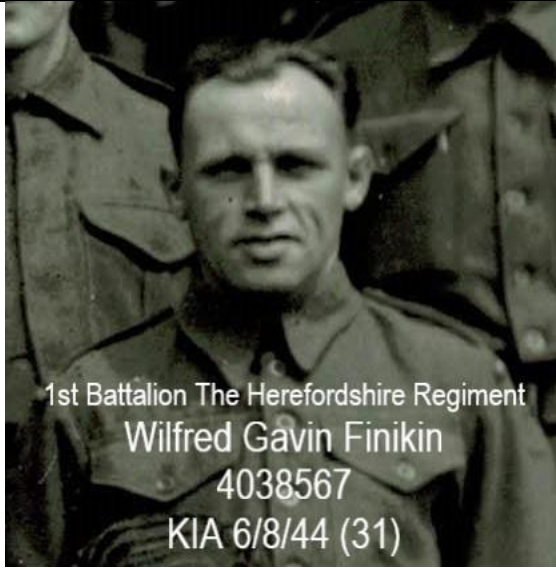
The following morning provided what was perhaps the strangest event of the campaign. At 0530 hrs the column halted in the semi darkness outside Conty. At the very end of the Battalion column a sleepy ATk section and pl HQ, with the Pioneers behind, was still stopped on the narrow road when out of the darkness a horses were heard approaching. In the dim light a hooded cart drawn by 2 horses was distinguished. Up went the normal shout 'pull into the side', everyone thinking such a harmless looking vehicle on a French road would be a farmer on his way to the village. The road cleared and the cart passed the rear 2 jeeps. As it passed the third the driver sleepily glanced at it and surprised us by shouting 'it's full of Boche!'. OC Pioneers jumped up and emptied his revolver into the cart. It was quite obvious that the Germans thought we were one of their own columns and were just as surprised as we were. The Germans scrambled out and fled across the fields. The last one to jump out was unlucky, and was effectively grabbed by a ham fisted Pioneer and made a prisoner; ATk crews sprayed the remainder with Bren and 2 or 3 rifles opened up, but it was still too dark to hit anything or to see more than 30 yards, and they got away from the column. OC B Coy warned over the blower and sent a patrol across their line of escape and rounded them up. Meanwhile the captor was proudly showing his prisoner, a poor frightened lad of 17, to all and sundry.

The Allied advance could continue.



Casualties

| Name | Initial | Rank | Number | Company | Cause | Date | Location |
|----------|---------|-------|----------|---------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| Amphlett | JA | Pte | 5735628 | D | KIA | 04/08/1944 | La Biste |
| Williams | FG | Pte | 13045954 | HQ | KIA | 04/08/1944 | Caen |
| Ankers | F | Pte | 5057799 | S | KIA | 05/08/1944 | La Biste |
| Finnikin | WG | Pte | 4038567 | S | KIA | 06/08/1944 | La Biste |
| Sharpin | AA | Pte | 4036652 | D | DOW | 09/08/1944 | Presles |
| Williams | HH | Cpl | 4105904 | B | KIA | 09/08/1944 | Presles |
| Farmer | GN | Pte | 5623310 | S | KIA | 11/08/1944 | Le Bas Perrier |
| Stringer | G | Pte | 4027918 | | Buried UK | 14/08/1944 | Caen(?) |
| Cutting | FJ | Pte | 4460325 | D | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Doughton | AB | Cpl | 5254336 | D | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Hands | AH | L/Cpl | 5118158 | B | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Husbands | GJ | L/Cpl | 4104469 | D | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Lewis | WT | Pte | 4040785 | S | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Pope | B | Pte | 4040797 | S | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Powell | S | Pte | 14708317 | B | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Worton | LG | L/Cpl | 4042419 | D | KIA | 15/08/1944 | Le Thiel |
| Davies | EEP | Pte | 4105770 | S | KIA | 18/08/1944 | Ecouche |
| Davies | EH | Pte | 14385082 | C | DOW | 18/08/1944 | Ecouche |
| Jones | HJC | Pte | 4038431 | S | KIA | 18/08/1944 | Ecouche |
| Plant | J | Pte | 4038484 | S | KIA | 18/08/1944 | Ecouche |
| Waythe | AAW | Pte | 4042802 | C | DOW | 19/08/1944 | Ecouche |



1st Battalion The Herefordshire Regiment
Wilfred Gavin Finikin
4038567
KIA 6/8/44 (31)

Cpl Reg Worton remembered: *Our carriers were parked all round the sides of a field when a Yankee Thunderbolt came snooping round at hedge height and you could see the pilot. A jerry gun shot at him which scared him and he sliced right down my section and hit Wilf Finikin, one of my drivers who died in my arms. An exchange which would now be classed as a 'blue on blue' a probable inevitability of war.*

An early, possibly original grave marker of the burial place of EEP Davies



One of the duties of the Regimental Padre was to write to the next of kin of those soldier killed, in many cases it would have been a 'standard' letter as he could not know every soldier, but one soldier he did know was Pte Glyn Williams.

The Rev. C. Maconochie. C.E.
Padres Rest Camp
C/08/690
B.L.A.

August 8th 1944.

My Dear Mrs. Williams,

I am afraid I have most grievous news for you, of which I hope you may have already been officially informed of, and this is to tell you that Glyn was killed in action in the evening of Friday, August 4th. I do send you my most sincere and heartfelt sympathy in this tragic loss, which I myself have felt most tremendously as Glyn had, as you may know, been my DRIVER-BATMAN for about a month. I was actually with him when he was killed and though somehow I escaped I have only just managed to put pen to paper again or I would have written to you over the week-end.

Glyn and myself were washing and shaving at the R.A.F. of the 1st. Batt. Herefordshire Regt., when we suddenly began to be shelled by German 86 m.m. guns. The first shell sent us to our six trenches behind my truck, but the second landed about 5 feet from us killing Glyn almost at once and smashed the truck.

I went to him at once and indeed I was almost touching him when the blow fell, but as soon as I could I staggered to my feet and picked him up. It may, I feel, be some comfort to you to know that Glyn never felt any pain as he never regained consciousness and died about 3 minutes after he was hit. It has been a most grievous shock to me as Glyn was such a grand lad. He was almost a brother to me and we had shared our meals and our work in a wonderfully happy way. I know myself how highly he was thought of and he set us all a wonderful example being himself tireless in helping the wounded and was quite impervious to danger. I was myself evacuated from the unit almost immediately but I was able to arrange for someone to take Glyn's funeral and his body lies now among those who fell, paving the way to victory.

You can indeed be proud of Glyn and I shall always remember his dauntless courage and devotion to me and to his fellow men. He has passed on to his greater reward and though this world is the poorer for his passing, that greater world has gained a great soul and Glyn is already enjoying his reward in the greater life beyond the veil.

If there is anything more I can do for you or tell you please write to me, as I valued Glyn's friendship out here beyond all else.

Yours in great sympathy,

Christopher Maconochie.
CHAPLAIN TO THE FORCES.



Pte Williams in the D Coy Rugby 7s team in 1941.

Below is the graves concentration report of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission showing that Pte Williams was removed from his temporary grave at Nr Burcy (Also the location of Pte Finnikin's initial grave) and laid to rest in Bayeaux CWGC

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

Salvador 22^E. 633 WEGRS/GONG/F/9437
Report No.

The following has been concentrated here:-
have

(Name of Cemetery) BAYEUX BRITISH CEMETERY, FRANCE.

(Full Map Reference) FRANCE SH. 3A & 8, 1/250,000, MR. T. 779795.

Nationality: BRITISH AND CANADIAN.

| (1) Serial No. | (2) Regt. or Corps | (3) Army No. | (4) Name & Initials | (5) Rank | (6) Date of Death | (7) K/A, D/W or Died | (8) Plot | (9) Row | (10) Grave | (11) Date of Reburial | Previous location of grave | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | Place & Map Ref. | Report Number |
| 1 | HEREFORDS | 4038567 | W. FINNIN | PTE | 6.8.44 | K/A | XXV | C | 12 | 20.7.46 | Nr BURCY, GSGS 4250, 1/50,000, France, SH. 6B/6, MR. 690360 | |
| 2 | " | 5057799 | F. ANKERS | PTE | 5.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 13 | " | " | |
| 3 | N. F. | 303062 | E. PHILLIPS | LT | 4.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 14 | " | " | |
| 4 | R. A. | 14449139 | R. A. N. COLES | DVR | " | " | XXV | C | 9 | " | " C. CAE 17255 | 7563 |
| 5 | 4 KSLI. | 13045954 | P. G. WILLIAMS | PTE | " | " | XXV | C | 11 | " | " | |
| 6 | F. F. YEO | 7925120 | B. F. NURSEY | TPR | 5.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 8 | " | " C. CAE 17196 | |
| 7 | " | 7878393 | T. BROOKSBANKS | SJT | 6.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 10 | " | " 11004 | |
| 23 H. | 24 L | 6351779 | PACKMAN A.T | OPL | 9.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 7 | " | MR. 698374 | F/1952 |
| WARWICKS | | 5115970 | F. A. DEEMING | L/OPL | 5.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 5 | " | Nr. BARDIERE, GSGS 4250, 1/50,000 (194) France, SH. 6B/6, MR. 697376 | DDGA |
| HEREFORDS | | 5735628 | J. A. AMPHLETT | PTE | 4.8.44 | " | XXV | C | 6 | " | Nr. COURTES, GSGS 4250, 1/50,000 15016 France, SH. 6B/6, MR. 689359 | ADPR |
| | | | UNKNOWN | | | " | XXV | C | 4 | " | Nr. COURTES, GSGS 4250, 1/50,000 6613 France, SH. 6B/6, MR. 676325 | |
| | 3 CAN. DIV. | CAN 502 | M. R. ROSE | CAPT | 7.8.44 | LT | XVI | B | 24 | " | Nr. La Lande, GSGS 4250, 1/50,000 France, SH. 6B/6, MR. 676333 | |

9 DEC 1947

grave has not already been registered, a Registration Report on A.F.W. 3372 will and attached to this FORM.

(Signed) *A. Maconochie*
Appointement COL, D. T. T. P.S. 4

5254336 Cpl 'Dolly' Doughton was a member of D Coy killed on the assault of Hill 212. He was in the same reinforcement draft at Bob Price and as a corporal had 'looked out for' Bob.

Wounded

Army Form B. 104—81A.

No. CAS/K.
(If replying please quote
above No.)

Infantry Record Office,
Shrewsbury.
24th August. 19 44

~~XXXX~~ MADAM,

I regret to have to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that (No.) 4105008.
(Rank) C.S.M.
(Name) Albert Jack GREENHOUSE.
(Regiment) Herefordshire Regiment.
has been wounded, ~~and is recovering~~ in North West Europe.
on the 14th day of August. 19 44. The
nature of the wound is Gunshot Wound Right Anus, and
Right Arm.

I am to express to you the sympathy and regret of the Army Council.

Any further information received at this office as to his condition will be at once notified to you.

Yours faithfully,
C. P. Brown
Lieut. Colonel.
Officer in Charge of Records.

IMPORTANT.—Any change of address should be immediately notified to this Office.

(55900) M22158/1358 500m. P.&G. 10/39 52-4101 Forms B.104—81A/3



Jack (front table 4th in) at a reunion dinner in the 1950s

Honours & Awards

| Name | Rank | Number | Award | For Action | LG |
|-------------|-------|---------|-------|------------|------------|
| Crofts WAP | Maj | 66667 | MC | 14/08/1944 | 01/03/1945 |
| Pollard, W | L/Sgt | 4038249 | MM | 14/08/1944 | 01/03/1945 |
| Stevens, BG | Cpl | 4038274 | MM | 14/08/1944 | 01/03/1945 |

(1066) W19766/796 120m 7/43 FHD Cf 0.

Army Form W.312F

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 38 Corps

Date recommendation passed forward: 25 AUG 44

Received: 26 AUG 44

Passed: 30 SEP 44

Schedule No. (To be left blank) Unit: Herefordshire Regt. Division: 38 Corps

Rank and Army or Personal No. (T/Maj) 66667 (Hampshire) Army: 25 OCT 1944

Name: CROFTS, William Arthur Peter

(Christian names must be stated)

| Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated) | Recommended by | Honour of Reward | To be left blank |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| At THEIL on 14 Aug 44, the Bn was ordered to carry out an attack on to the 212 feature (Map Sheet 1" to 1 mile FLERS ref 7634) to ensure a firm base for the further advance of the bde the following morning. The order came late in the evening and the attack had to be put in without full recce. On arrival in the area of the objective it was found to be held strongly by approx a coy of inf dug in with co-ordinated MG sp. Our attack was liable to come to a standstill when Major Crofts, the coy comd concerned, committed himself with his reserve and personally led his men onto the consolidation postn and personally placed his men in their posts. Having placed his reserve in position he then led fwd the remaining sections and placed them in posns. The whole attack was carried out under enemy mortar and MG fire and under the adverse conditions of lack of prior recce and growing darkness. | J.B. Churcher Lt Gen 30 Corps | M.C. (IMMEDIATE) | |

M.C.
J.B. Churcher
LIEUT. GENERAL
SECOND ARMY
P.T.O.
27818

Date recommendation passed forward

The attack was successful and the advance of the Bde ensured. The power of leadership shown by this officer and complete disregard of danger were almost entirely responsible for the success of this operation. At cross refs 966184, south of ST. OPPORTUNE, Map Sheet 7 G/1 1" to 1 mile on 17 Aug 44, this officer with his company, after a long and grueling march, was ordered to carry out an evening attack on a located enemy position. Owing to the closeness of the country it was not possible to reach the

the Start Point. Against this officer put new life into his tired men, attacked in the face of MG and enemy mortar fire, dislodged the enemy and captured the position. His personal example of cool leadership is outstanding.

B.L.A.
25 Aug 44.
/AP.

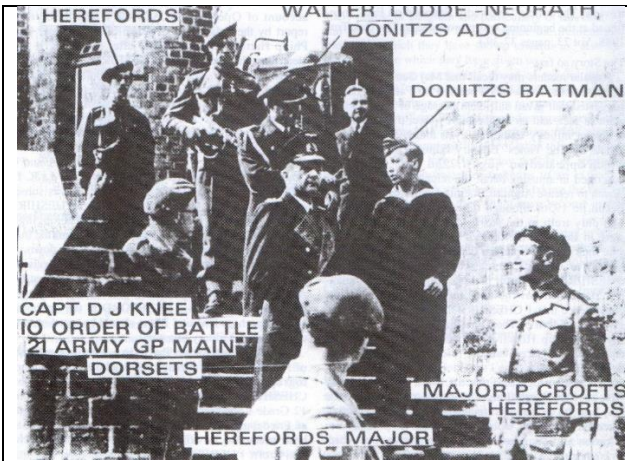
life into his tired men, attacked in the face of MG and enemy mortar fire, dislodged the enemy and captured the position. His personal example of cool leadership is outstanding.

Commanding Officer, Herefordshire Regiment of the 21st Army Group, (Lt. Col. G. R. Turner OBE) to whom the award is being made. The award is being made in recognition of the gallant and skilful leadership shown by this officer during the attack on 17 August 1944.

If a casualty as under, fill in date

| Nature of Casualty | Date | Rank | Name |
|--------------------|------|------|------|
| Killed in action | | | |
| Died of Wounds | | | |
| Died | | | |
| Missing | | | |
| Prisoner of War | | | |

Maj Crofts would serve throughout the war; he would be present at the arrest of Grand Admiral Doenitz and lead the Herefordshire Regiment on the Hereford City Freedom Parade in September 1945.



The arrest of GAdml Doenitz



Maj Crofts leads the Freedom of Hereford parade

Date recommendation passed forward

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 13 30 Corps
 Schedule No. Unit Herefordshire Regt. Division 29 Aug 44
 (To be left blank)
 Army No. and Rank 4038249. 1/Sjt Corps 16 Sep 44
 Name POLLARD, Walter. Received 25 OCT 1944 Passed 26 Aug 44
 (Christian names must be stated)

| Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated) | Recommended by | Honour or Reward | (To be left blank) |
|--|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| On 14 Aug 44 the coy was ordered to put in an attack on the high ground (Map sheet 101 to 1 mile FLERS, map ref 763344). The pl proceeded without interference from the enemy until reaching this feature, where they came under heavy enemy MG fire. It was at that time that [redacted] Cpl. Pollard's excellent handling of his section. Pl objective was reached and consolidated according to plan. Whilst digging in the enemy counter attacked with grenades and MG fire. Cpl. Pollard again showed excellent leadership by repelling this attack and re-organising his section. In the early hours of the next morning (15 Aug) Cpl. Pollard [redacted] was instrumental in repelling yet another counter attack which was put in by the enemy against our position. It was during this last action that this NCO suffered injury from | See overleaf Coy Comd Brig 159 Inf Bde (J.B. CHURCHER) Maj-Gen 11 Armd Div Lt-Gen Comd 30 Corps Lt-Gen COMMANDER, SECOND ARM Second Army | M.M. | A.I.E. 28320 M.M. 1.3.44 |

| Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated) | Recommended by | Honour or Reward | (To be left blank) |
|--|---|------------------|---|
| grenades thrown into our position by the enemy and had to be evacuated. [redacted] His complete disregard of personal danger during the battle and his excellent control over his men set an example which became infectious and the position was held and the enemy driven off. | [redacted] Comd 1st Bn Herefordshire Regiment (G.R. Turner Cain) [redacted] COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF 11 ARMY GROUP | M.M. | B.L.A. 25 Aug 44 /AP. M.M. A.I.E. 28320 LIEUT-GENERAL COMMANDER, SECOND ARMY |

(6357D) Wt 16305/203 120,000 6/41 R & L L 745 Forms/W.3121/6 Army Form W.3121
 Date recommendation passed forward

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 30 Corps
 1st Bn
 Schedule No. Unit Herefordshire Regt.
 (To be left blank)

Army No. and Rank 4038274. (A/Cpl) Pte

Name STEVENS, Benjamin George.
 (Christian names must be stated)

Received Passed
 Brigade 27 Aug 44 28 Aug 44
 Division 29 Aug 44 15 Sep 44
 Corps 16 Sep 30 SEP 1944
 Army 5 OCT 1944 - 8 NOV 1944

| Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated) | Recommended by | Honour or Reward | (To be left blank) |
|---|---|--|--------------------|
| <p>Pte. B.G. Stevens was a member of a rifle section during an attack at THEIL (Map Sheet 1" to 1 mile FLERS map ref 7634) on 14 Aug 44. During the attack, which took place under heavy enemy mortar fire and MG fire, the sec cnd was killed well short of the coy objective.</p> <p>Pte. Stevens immediately took charge of the sec and led them fighting on to the objective and consolidated. On the objective he organised the fire of his section and made his LMG open fire, thereby assisting other secs on to their objectives. The enemy opposition during the attack was considerable and it was this one LMG opening fire which enabled the remainder of the pl to move fwd. Pte. Stevens' determined leadership and disregard of personal danger won for his platoon the fire fight.</p> <p>B.L.A. 25 Aug 44. /AP.</p> <p>Comd: 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regiment. (S.R. TURNER-CAIN)</p> | <p>Coy Comd. J.B. Churcher Brig Comd 159 Inf Bde (J.B. CHURCHER) Maj-Gen Comd 11 Armd Div Lt-Gen Comd 30 Corps Lt-Gen COMMANDEER, SECOND ARMY Second Army</p> | <p>M.M. (IMMEDIATE) M.M 1. 3.45 28325 LIEUT-GENERAL</p> | |

Officers' Plot

See Separate post

ORs' Strength Return

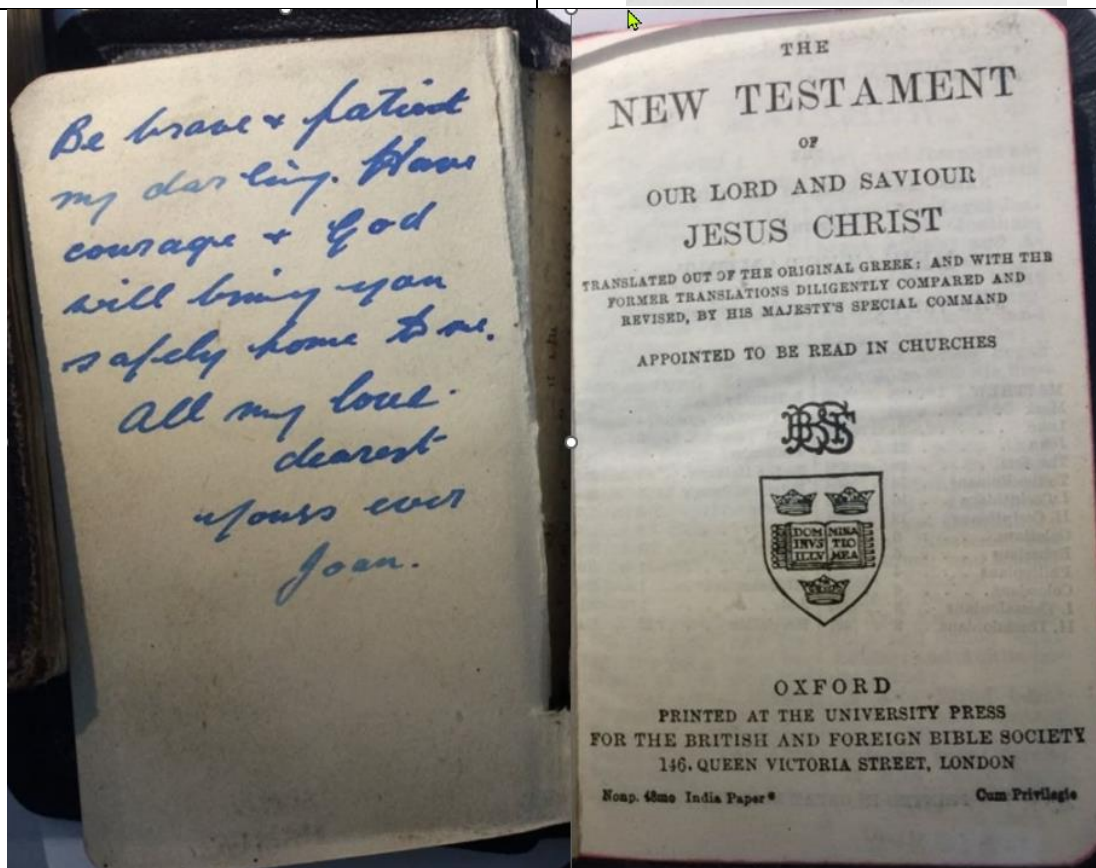
The strength returns do not present the full picture and they only give a snapshot total and do not include details of gains and losses.

| Date | WO1 | WO2 | CSjt | Sjt | Cpl | Pte | Bglr | Total | Remarks |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Establishment | 1 | 7 | 6 | 38 | 72 | 689 | | 813 | |
| 13/06/1944 | | | | | | | | 913 | Rail Party 384; sea party 529 |
| 30/06/1944 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 39 | 72 | 673 | 6 | 805 | |
| 29/07/1944 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 38 | 74 | 594 | 6 | 728 | |
| 2/9/1944 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 41 | 70 | 582 | 6 | 716 | |

Reinforcements continued to be received to make good losses.

Pte Arthur Brown, 7 Platoon, A Company - A reinforcement received in August.

The Bible given to him, and inscribed, by his girlfriend/fiancee – later his wife.



Capt Cowan's PoW Report

105861

PART I.

TOP SECRET
M.I.9/Gen/
MIS-X

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BRITISH/AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR

1. No. 124115 RANK CAPTAIN SURNAME COWAN
 CHRISTIAN NAMES RONALD CLARE
 DECORATIONS NIL

2. SHIP (R.N., U.S.N. or MERCHANT NAVY)
 UNIT (ARMY) 1st Bn. THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT
 SQUADRON (R.A.F. or A.A.F.)

3. DIVISION (ARMY), COMMAND (R.A.F. or A.A.F.) 11th Armoured

4. DATE OF BIRTH 5 NOVEMBER 1918

5. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 2 SEPTEMBER 1949

6. CIVILIAN TRADE OR PROFESSION PRINT SALES DEPT.
 (OR EXAMINATIONS PASSED WHILE P/W)

7. PRIVATE ADDRESS 56 MILLERS ROAD LTD
42 PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, W1

8. PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGINAL CAPTURE IN VIRE, NORMANDY 2 AUG. 1944

9. WERE YOU WOUNDED WHEN CAPTURED? NO

10. MAIN CAMPS OR HOSPITALS IN WHICH IMPRISONED.

| Camp No. | Location | From | To |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 7 | ALENCON | 6 AUG. '44 | 6 AUG. '44 |
| ? | CHALONS-SUR-MARNE | 18 AUG. '44 | 24 AUG. '44 |
| XII 2 Transit Camp | HADAMAE NE. LISIERS | 16 AUG. '44 | 3 OCT. '44 |
| 79 OPLAF. | BRUNSWICK | 6 OCT. '44 | 29 APR. '45 |

11. WERE YOU IN A WORKING CAMP?

| Location | From | To | Nature of Work |
|-----------|------|----|----------------|
| <u>NO</u> | | | |

12. DID YOU SUFFER FROM ANY SERIOUS ILLNESSES WHILE A P/W?

| Nature of Illness | Cause | Duration |
|-------------------|-------|----------|
| <u>NO</u> | | |

13. DID YOU RECEIVE ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT?
N/A

108801

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE. PART II. TOP SECRET.

TOP SECRET

M.I.9/Ge

MIS-X

1. No. 124115 RANK CAPTAIN SURNAME COWAN
 CHRISTIAN NAMES RONALD CLARE

2. LECTURES before Capture:

(a) Were you lectured in your unit on how to behave in the event of capture?
 (State where, when and by whom).

YES

Int. seminar

(b) Were you lectured on escape and evasion? (State where, when and by whom).

YES

Locally, School of Military Intelligence, Cambridge

Locally on unit

3. INTERROGATION after capture:

Were you specially interrogated by the enemy? (State where, when and methods employed by enemy).

NO

Only generally twice on 4 NOV. 44, surprisingly

fast + disinterested

4. ESCAPES attempted:

Did you make any attempted or partly successful escapes? (Give details of each attempt separately, stating where, when, method employed, names of your companions, where and when recaptured and by whom. Were you physically fit? What happened to your companions?)

Escape planned between PARIS & BRUXELLES via ST. PIERRE through side
 of tank. Captain Sir Richard Powell escaped + got through. Train stopped + hole
 discovered within ten minutes - so further escape possible. A.B.C. 44. FIT.

5. SABOTAGE:

Did you do any sabotage or destruction of enemy factory plant, war material, communications, etc., when employed on working parties or during escape? (Give details, places and dates.)

NO

6. COLLABORATION with enemy:

Do you know of any British or American personnel who collaborated with the enemy or in any way helped the enemy against other Allied Prisoners of War? (Give details, names of person(s) concerned, camp(s), dates and nature of collaboration or help given to enemy).

No

7. WAR CRIMES:

If you have any information or evidence of bad treatment by the enemy to yourself or to others, or knowledge of any enemy violation of Geneva Convention you should ask for a copy of "Form Q" on which to make your statement.

(NOTE: Form Q is a separate form inviting information on "War Crimes" and describes the kinds of offences coming under this title.)

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE, PART II. TOP SECRET.
(continued)

TOP SECRET
M.L.G. Gen/
MIS-X

K. Have you any other matter of any kind you wish to bring to notice?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

SECURITY UNDERTAKING.

I fully realise that all information relating to the matters covered by the questions in Part II. are of a highly secret and official nature.

I have had explained to me and fully understand that under Defence Regulations or U.S.A.R. 380-5 I am forbidden to publish or communicate any information concerning these matters.

Date

24 April 65

Signature

[Handwritten Signature]