

2./Fallsch. J. Rgt. Huebner.

Gef. Stand, dem 27.12.1944.

TKTB 99

Betr.: Stosstrupp am 27. 12. 1944.

Fallsch. J. Rgt. Huebner
Eing. 27.12.44
Br. Nr. / 10
Beob. Nr.
1. Bericht
1. Periode

Am I./Huebner.

Beilage 77

Stosstrupp setzt aus um 0350 Uhr.

Annäherung von rechts rückwärts an die 4 Einzelhäuser rechts der Maasbrücke. Von rechts beginnend, wurden 3 Häuser durchsucht, sie waren leer. Offensichtlich hatten sich die Besatzungen vorher zurückgezogen in das am weitesten links liegende Haus. Nachdem auch dieses Haus umstellt war, wurde plötzlich aus dem Keller, Erdgeschoss und 1. Stockwerk Feuer mit MG, MP und Karabiner eröffnet.

Olt. Heine wurde gleich durch Gesäßdurchschuss verwundet.

Das Feuer wurde vom Stosstrupp erwidert. Unter 3 Panzerfausts war 1 Versager. Das Feuergefecht dauerte etwa 25

Minuten. Die Absicht des Stosstruppführers, das Haus im Sturm zu nehmen, konnte deshalb nicht ausgeführt werden, weil 5 Mann des Stosstrupps, die das Haus von hinten abschirmten, sich auf Grund des Feuers abgesetzt hatten.

Feind muss Verluste haben. Ein MG wurde durch Handgranate ausser Gefecht gesetzt. Auch durch Kampfpistole wurden Treffer im Hausinnern erzielt.

Rückkehr des Stosstrupps um 0645 Uhr.

Beobachtungen: Am zweiten Haus von links war die verlassene MG Stellung. Munitionskasten befanden sich noch in der Stellung.

Unter den Häusern sind Stellungen und Laufgräben ausgehoben, die sich zur Hauptstrasse hinziehen.



TRANSLATION OF THE REPORT MADE BY A MEMBER OF
THE GERMAN PATROL WHEN IT RETURNED TO ITS BASE
(THE PATROL COMMANDER HAD BEEN WOUNDED)

2nd/Para J.(?) Rsgt?/Regt? Huebner Command Post, 27.12.1944

[Received stamp] Para. ?? Hübner
Rec. 27.12.44

(handwritten) Enclosure 77

Ref.: Shock troop unit, 27.12.1944

To I. (=title?) Huebner.

Shock troop unit crossed over at 0350 hours.
Approach from the back right to the 4 detached houses to the right of the Maas bridge. Three houses were searched, starting from the right: they were empty. Obviously, those manning them had withdrawn earlier into the house situated furthest to the left. After this house too was surrounded, fire was suddenly opened from the cellar, ground floor and first floor with machine guns, machine pistols and carbines. Lieutenant Heine was immediately wounded by a shot through the buttocks. The fire was returned by the shock unit. Of three anti-tank weapons one failed. The exchange of fire lasted about 25 minutes. The aim of the leader of the shock unit, to take the house by storm, could not be carried out, because 5 men of the shock unit, who were covering the house from behind, had withdrawn on account of the gunfire. Enemy must have incurred losses. An MG was put out of action with a hand grenade. Hits with combat pistol were also scored in the interior of the house.
Return of the shock troop ca 0645 hours.

Observations: At the second house from the left was an abandoned MG position. Munition boxes were still in the position.
Under the houses are positions and communications trenches extending to the main road.



Note:

In my report I state that we experienced five loud explosions which we assumed were panzerfaust anti-tank rockets. They looked like over-sized tadpoles, after the head was fired from the "stem", the "stem" or hand-piece was discarded. Lieutenant HEINE states "of these anti-tank weapons one failed". This would indicate that the patrol was armed with the German equivalent of the American bazooka and that the five explosions we experienced were five projectiles from two such weapons.

All of our return fire was directed from the ground floor!

EPILOGUE

In 1946 I was serving as the Intelligence Officer of the 2nd Battalion THE DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT, which was stationed in LUNEBURG, NORTH GERMANY. Also in LUNEBURG was the Headquarters of 30 BRITISH CORPS which had been involved with the trial of General KURT STUDENT who had formed, trained and commanded the GERMAN Airborne Forces during their operations in NORWAY, BELGIUM, HOLLAND and CRETE. In December 1944 he was commanding German Army Group G, in HOLLAND. This area of command included the town of ROERMOND.

One morning I was summoned to the office of the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel P.A.A. DOYLE OBE. He asked me whether I had ever heard of General STUDENT. I assured him that I had not only heard of him, but that I was the Orderly Officer of the 1st HEREFORDS when I received a message that we were to send a patrol to a certain farm near the Danish Border and escort the General and his ADC to Headquarters 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE early the next morning, this in 1945.

Colonel D'OYLY informed me that the General had been tried for alleged war crimes committed by the GERMAN Airborne Forces in CRETE. He had been found not guilty of the majority and the few outstanding charges has been considered so insignificant that they had been quashed by the Corps Commander Lieutenant General GALLOWAY.

I do not know of the details of how it came about, but the Colonel told me that General STUDENT was now being held in a police cell adjacent to the Town Hall in LUNEBURG. Apparently General GALLOWAY was concerned as to the health and well-being of General STUDENT and ordered that he should be visited by a British Officer each day. Presumably, because HQ 30 Corps was in the early stages of disbandment the role was passed to the 2nd Battalion The DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT with instructions that the Orderly Officer of the Day carry out these visits. Colonel DOYLY said he did not like the idea of a different officer performing this duty each day as it would not be possible to detect any deterioration in the General's health and well being, he therefore wished me to carry out the visits each day, at times to cause the General minimal inconvenience (ie not at meal times or too early in the morning or late at night).

I made my first visit that morning accompanied by a German civilian interpreter who was attached to my Intelligence Section. We found the General confined in a locked cell about five metres square and sparsely furnished. As the door was unlocked the General rose to his feet from the bed on which he had been sitting and stood to attention. He was dressed in his field grey uniform wearing his badges of rank and medal ribbons. I invited him to sit (he was 56 years of age) but he chose to remain standing. He had no complaints as to his treatment and, as I recall, only two requests. One that he be permitted to write letters to his family and, if granted, note paper be provided. Apparently his gaolers had declined both requests, presumably not knowing whether it was in their power to do so. I was able to ascertain that there was no reason to deny these requests which we met.

During each succeeding visit the General became more relaxed, indeed he appeared to enjoy them as a break from the monotony of being confined to the cell. In order to extend them he asked whether it was in order for him to enquire as to my regiment and experience in N.W. Europe. (He obviously believed I was too young to have been involved in any other theatre of war, which I was, although, had I not been sent for training as an officer I would almost certainly have been posted to Italy with those I had trained with as a Private soldier in the 9th BATTALION, THE BUFFS!) When I told him I had been with THE HEREFORDS of the 11th ARMoured DIVISION, he smiled and said, "Then we faced each in the Winter of '45/'46 in HOLLAND. He continued to show remarkable detailed knowledge of our positions opposite ROERMOND plus the fact the patrol established opposite the destroyed bridge over the RIVER MAAS at ROEMOND was commanded by a commissioned officer. He asked me what I knew of the forces under his command at that time. I told him that rightly or wrongly we had been told that they has been mainly made up of elderly and medically down-graded soldiers, some units in fact being fed on special diets. The General confirmed that this was true. The vast majority of his best troops had been withdrawn and sent Southwards in support of Field Marshall RUNSTEDT's Winter Offensive in the ARDENNES. He had however been permitted to retain a small nucleus of his own airborne trained forces for aggressive patrolling across the river. These he utilised to gain information and create the maximum amount of disruption on our (the Western) bank of the river. Some he assured me had penetrated some kilometres between our positions and achieved some success!

Although he received a constant stream of intelligence reports he was at loss to understand why the British were using "panzer grenadiers" (the rather grand title the Germans used to describe their infantry employed within their armoured formations - we rather liked it!) when logically they should have been resting and training with their armoured regiments. He suspected the casualties within the British infantry had been heavy (he was right) and that General DEMPSEY commanding the British 2nd Army had no alternative - he was right! General STUDENT had personally ordered that the officer commanding the patrol be brought back for questioning. I asked him what information he expected I would have given other than my number, rank and name? He just smiled. He then told me that a second unsuccessful attempt had been made. This has recently been confirmed by the publication of "After Antwerp, The Long Haul to Victory" - narrated by Major 'NED' THORNBURN MC, TD, MA which covers the activities of the 4th BATTALION THE KINGS SHROPSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY from September 1944 until May 1945. Interestingly, after they were attacked they were authorised to leave the house and prepare properly 'dug-in' positions in the snow covered ground, not an enviable task but much preferable to remaining in the house.

After a few weeks I was ordered to accompany General STUDENT to 2233 PRISONER OF WAR CAMP at MUNSTER LAGER in NORTH GERMANY. HQ 30 CORPS provided a staff car and arranged for an armoured car escort. The hand-over of the General to the Corp staff is not one of my happiest memories. I lodged an immediate protest to higher authority!

Personalities Mentioned in Foregoing Account

Brigadier J.B. Churcher DSO

Retired from the Army in 1959 as Major General Churcher, CB DSO. At present living in Colchester, Essex aged 87.

Lieutenant Colonel G.R. Turner Cain

Retired from the Army in 1966 as Major General G.R. Turner Cain, CB DSO. At present living at Stiffkey, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, aged 82.

Lieutenant N.A. Powley

Left the Herefords after the war, initially to work with BFN (British Forces Network) in Hamburg. After leaving the Army he worked with BBC. Lives in London.

Intelligence Officer (Bifkins)

Lost touch.

Captain K. Spence

Left the Army and became an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland, now retired. Full title Reverend Keith Spence, MC, TD, MD, BD. Lives in Helensburgh, Scotland.

Major L. Northey

Left the Army after the war, rejoined the National Provincial Bank. Became manager of the Truro, Cornwall Branch before he retired. Died a few years ago.

Sergeant A. Jackson

Left the Army after the war. With his wife, he ran a hotel in Bideford, North Devon for a number of years. Recently moved to Cullompton, Devon.

Private Parker

Private Parker was quite a remarkable person. Aged (I believe) 37, he carried a bren gun by choice from Normandy onwards. This was remarkable, a bren gun weighed 22.5 pounds as against 8.5 pounds of the number 4 rifle. Whenever I asked him whether he would rather become a rifleman he vehemently said No. It was not always easy to find the right soldiers to carry and operate the other two bren guns in the platoon. Private Parker alas has also "passed on".

Private J. Hindmarsh

Left the Army after the war. Lives at Bare, Morecombe, Lancashire.

Private Parkes

Unfortunately, lost touch.

Carrier Platoon

They were actively engaged throughout the period but I had no direct contact with them. They provided both mobile and standing patrols in order to fill some of the gaps in our defences. Captain Wardman, who commanded the platoon lives near Kington, Herefordshire and Sergeant Moppett, a section leader, lives in Birmingham.

Captain Wardman has been the Hereford representative of the 11th Armoured Division Old Comrades Association since it was formed.

JULY 1993 