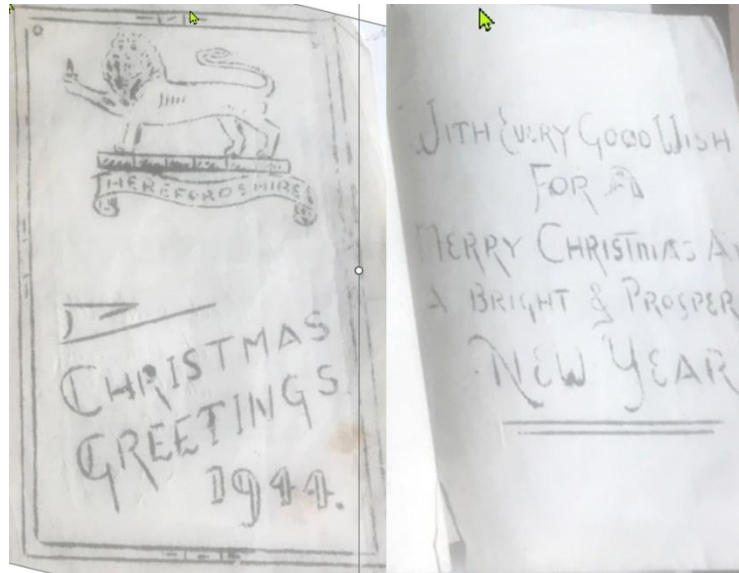


## 1<sup>st</sup> BATTALION THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT – DECEMBER 1944

December arrived, Christmas beckoned and the Battalion settled down to routine in the damp, dull lowlands bordering on the River Maas. No doubt men's thoughts turned to home and better times past or to come; makeshift Christmas cards were produced and sent:



In the UK life remained hard with shortages of most Christmas commodities including foodstuffs, and the worry of servicemen (and service women) on duty and at threat throughout the world would have played heavily on their family's minds.

The threat of invasion had however gone, manpower and resources were required in Europe and as a result the Home Guard was stood down. In Herefordshire at stand down there were over 7,000 men and women serving across the County's 6 Battalions. A disbandment parade was held on Edgar Street football ground:



## WAR DIARY

The Brigade War Diary

Sheet 1

In lieu of AF C2118

Month and Year : DEC 44

Unit: HQ 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE (incorporating 1<sup>st</sup> 159 Inf Bde HQ Def Pl and L.A.D. att).

WAR DIARY

Commander J.E. CHURCHER, DSO. Brig

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Ref to Appendices.
B.I.A.	1 Dec 44		During the day the 4 KSLI took over from 3 MON loons as follows. Bde HQ 853194, 3 MON 848184, 4 KSLI 885189, 8 RB 884232, 1 HEREFORD 884168. By the end of the day a further 35 POW were brought in by the MONS, 8 being sent by Medical channels. The total bag being 45 incl the Coy Comd. All identified as 6 and 5 Coy of Grassmehl. On further investigations, 3 MONS losses were even higher; a total of 8 Offrs killed and 2 wounded, whilst 30 men killed and 80 wounded. This high number has been put down to the fact that the men are new and very untrained, and as soon as their leader was wounded, they all sat down and did nothing. Some of the reinforcements being youngsters with little or no trg with no experience of battle. Little activity was reported during the day.	
	2 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. No activity reported W of river MAAS, although movement was observed E of river. At 1400 hrs, a funeral service was held at MIEDERSLO cemetery for the Offrs and men killed in 3 MON at BROEZELEN. Nothing reported during the night. Civil Affairs stated evacuating civilians up to 1,000 yds W of MAAS.	
	3 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. Nothing reported during the day. At 1130 hrs, the new Corps Comd, LIEUT-GEN. E.H. BARKER, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, visited this HQ and spoke to all unit comds. No major activity reported.	
	4 Dec 44		Bde in same loons. Int Course was started at HERST, with an opening address by the GOC. No activity reported during the day.	
	5 Dec 44		The Bde remained in the same loons. Activity reported by fwd CPs of troops in an around enemy ponds.	
	6 Dec 44		At 1115 hrs, the Army Comd visited Bde HQ to see all unit comds. Little activity reported on front, certain amount of shelling. 3 MON moved to a trg area HEMBERG 820168. The 8 RB moved to the vacated area of 3 MON at MIEDERSLO around Bde HQ. The Inns of Court Regt taking over from 8 RB.	
	7 Dec 44		No activity reported during the day. No 1 course for the Bde Battle School opened, duration 10 days at WETERICK. Comd - Major Northey MC, of 1 HEREFORD.	
	8 Dec 44		No activity reported on the Bde front. The Int Course was concluded with a lecture given by CHESTER WILLMOTT the BEC reporter.	

WAR DIARIES SECTION  
 No. 10 JAN 1945  
 G.H.Q. 2nd Edition

Sheet 2

In lieu of AF C2118

Month and Year : DEC 44

Unit: HQ 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE (incorporating 1<sup>st</sup> 159 Inf Bde HQ Def Pl and L.A.D. att).

WAR DIARY

Commander J.E. CHURCHER, DSO. Brig

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Ref to Appendices.
B.I.A.	9 Dec 44		Slight increase in enemy shelling and mortaring during the day. Normal activity observed by CPs on E side of MAAS.	
	10 Dec 44		Bde in same loons, usual activity reported.	
	11 Dec 44		Bde in same loons, usual activity reported.	
	12 Dec 44		Bde in same loons, usual activity reported.	
	13 Dec 44		1 HEREFORD were relieved by 8 RB. 1 HEREFORD moved to MIEDERSLO. No activity reported.	
	14 Dec 44		No activity reported.	
	15 Dec 44		Recon parties of 185 Bde, 3rd Br Div visited this HQ preparing to take over our front on the 17 Dec. Our Bde to take over from 160 Bde, 53 (W) Div in the ROEMOND area.	
	16 Dec 44		All quiet on the Bde front during the day. By 2100 hrs the two fwd Bns had been relieved by the 185 Bde. The Bde was preparing to move to the ROEMOND area on the 17 Dec to hold another sector of the MAAS. 8 RB returned to comd of 29 Armd Bde who were out of the line for re-fit.	
	17 Dec 44		During the morning, the Bde moved to the new area. By 1400 hrs, Bde HQ was in new loon N of BAEKAL 708942. 1 HEREFORD taking over from RVF and 3 MON from 2 MON. 4 KSLI in reserve at BAEKAL. During the move down, enemy Jet Planes were seen overhead. One plane actually strafed the 3 MON column with no effect. Div HQ moved to BEL at 645532 and the 4 Armd Bde HQ at the CASTELL at 648864. The front was reported to be quiet with spasmodic shelling and mortaring.	
	18 Dec 44		3 MON reported 30 civs crossing the MAAS - quite an amount of info was gained. At approx 1200 hrs 3 MON reported they had taken 4 POW from 6 Coy, 11 Bn HERNER who were on patrol with orders to take a POW. Details of their orders were obtained. A party was arranged to catch the boating party who were going to collect them. On hearing the given signal of 3 shots fired, two on a Lager. This operation was not successful owing to the fact that the patrol split up into two parties and then owing to the darkness and general tension, fired on each other which scared the enemy boat party which had answered the pre-arranged signal and therefore turned back.	
	19 Dec 44		Little activity reported. Spasmodic shelling and mortaring. During the evening, a recon party was arranged to try and cross at the Lock gates at 734878 with sp from arty on the known ponds of the enemy which was timed to come down at the time of the reported change over of pla. The patrols reported the shelling to be effective as cries were heard from the other side. The patrol was unable to cross the Lock owing to trip flares and booby traps which brought down the fire on fixed lines.	



Sheet 3

In lieu of AF O2118

Unit: Bq 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE (incorporating 159 Inf )  
HQ Def Fl and L.A.D. att).

Month and Year : DEC 44

WAR DIARY

Commander J.B. CHURCHER, DSC. Brig.

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	Ref to Appendices.
B. L. A.	20 Dec 44		No activity reported during the day. Although one enemy raiding party successfully winkled out a sec post of the 3 MON, at the time the relief was expected.	
	21 Dec 44		During the night, a party of loyal Dutch people crossed the MAAS, and came into our lines. Also, one very doubtful person, who admitted he had been trained as a Saboteur. No enemy shelling reported during the day	
	22 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. Little to report. Enemy reported to be patrolling on this side of MAAS.	
	23 Dec 44		Bde in same loons. A general stripping up of the Hun pens was laid for 1300 hrs, to help them celebrate their Xmas, which we heard through civ reps was being held on the 23rd.	
	24 Dec 44		Bde in same loons. Recce parties of the 338 Bty arrived in the area in readiness to take over a Coy pen in the 1 HEREFORD area, in an inf role.	
	25 Dec 44		During the night, two of a crew of a RAF Halifax (one F/O and one Sgt) crossed the MAAS accompanied by four Dutch boys and one girl, having been in hiding since May 24. Little activity reported during the day. The new Btl, MAJOR P.M. SLANEY MC., joined the Bq in replacement of MAJOR R.T. ST JOHN, who left as instructor at the Staff College. The new Btl had just left the Staff College. One GAF pilot was picked up by 3 MON. (He and three others were part of a bomber crew brought down during the night. The three others had been captured previously).	
	26 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. Little enemy activity reported.	
	27 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. 4 BRILL took over from the 1 HEREFORD in the area HEIDE. Capt Higson, G III Div joined Bde Bq for a 5 days stay. A Testosse was made by sending an empty boat down the MAAS to try and draw fire. Two Spandaus opened up soon after the launching.	
	28 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. No activity reported. During the night, 4 boats were seen floating down the river; these were shot up successfully.	
	29 Dec 44		Bde remained in same loons. No activity reported.	
	30 Dec 44		" " " " " "	
	31 Dec 44		" " " " " "	

The Battalion War Diary

Sheet one.

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.2119. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

Month and Year: Dec 44

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

Army Form G. 2118.  
Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire  
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G. R. Turner, Caim., D.S.O.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
GRUBBENVORST - 1st			O.Ps established at 896147, 896154 and 877173.	
HOUTHUIZEN			Spasmodic shelling at WILDEEN and GRUBBENVORST.	
			Patrols, nothing to report. Reinforcements - 1 Offr & 12 O/Rs.	
			The u/m offr and O/Rs were awarded the following decoration and take effect from 27 Nov 44.	
			D.S.O. Major, R.C. Fripp. 210. HELCHETEREN 9.9.44.	
			M.C. Major, L.P. Northey. 'C' Coy. N of " 10.9.44.	
			D.C.M. Cpl. I.R. Everall, 1502 " HELCHETEREN "	
			D.C.M. L/c.D. Evans. 'D' Coy. " 9.9.44.	
			M.M. Sgt. L.F. Raines. " " 9.9.44.	
			M.M. Sgt. H. Dunn. " " "	
			M.M. Cpl. A.G. French, 1482 'C' Coy. N of HELCHETEREN. 10.9.44.	
			M.M. Cpl. S.H. Haywood. 'A' Coy. HOENRICK. 10.9.44.	
			M.M. Cpl. A.C. T. Bond. 'A' Coy. " "	

WART DIARIES  
No. 10 JAN 1945  
G.M.O. and SCHELOW

WL 47718 988 2,000,000 348 W.H.A.S. 81/8375



Sheet TWO

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WAR DIARY  
or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner Cdn. D.S.O.

Month and Year Dec. 44.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
GRUBBENVORST & HOUTHUZEN	2.		Similar enemy activity to yesterday. Evacuation of <del>XXX</del> civs from all houses E of Rly commenced. <del>Flares and</del> <del>transmission</del> S.A.A fire from E side of river during night, but patrols NTR.	
"	3.	1230	O.P at 896154 shelled and forced to withdraw to alternative posns at 889150. No cas. otherwise much the same as yesterday. Re-inforcements :- 6 O/Rs.	
"	4.	1400	R.A.O.P. at 889150 shelled for 30 mins, no cas and O.P. remained in posn, similar enemy activity as previous days.	
"	5.		'B' Coy mortared in A.M. One Cas-(Wounded) Evacuation of civilians complete. O.P now at 892159 instead of 896154 otherwise NTR.	
"	6.		13 R.H.A. take over from 151 Fd Regt. R.A. in support of Bn. Building of strong points at HOUTHUZEN 8917 and GRUBBENVORST 8914 and KALDENBROEK 8916 commenced	

WL 67734 928 2,000,000 2-48 W.H.A.S. 51/52

Sheet THREE

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WAR DIARY  
or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner Cdn. D.S.O.

Month and Year Dec. 44.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
GRUBBENVORST & HOUTHUZEN	7.		slightly more shelling than usual during 24 hrs. 2 Germans seen in E fringe of GRUBBENVORST (possibly recce patrol). Subsequent clearing party could not find them. Activity much the same as yesterday. R.Es laid mines in circular arc S of GRUBBENVORST 894146 to 897145.	
"	8.		Less enemy flares and S.A activity during night than usual. Re-inforcements :- 9 O/Rs.	
"	9.		Working party in strong point at GRUBBENVORST brought more shelling and mortaring than usual. Area of Bn H.Q. lightly shelled A.M. and P.M. by a single gun, but many shells were apparently 'dud', this caused 3 O/R casualties (slightly wounded) in the Bn.H.Q. area and 4 more O/Rs at GRUBBENVORST during the day. 2 O/Rs slightly wounded by 69 grenades during training.	
"	2200		Returning from night firing posn at 888149, one mor carrier	

WL 67734 928 2,000,000 2-48 W.H.A.S. 51/52



Sheet FOUR

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.219. 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 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt

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

Month and Year Dec 44.

(Delete heading not required).

D.S.O.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
GRUBBENVORST & HOUTHU IZEN	9	Cont.	blew up on mines on track at 888150. The carrier had been down the track earlier in the evening and it was subsequently found that the mines had been quite deeply buried. One O/R killed and two wounded. Enemy quiet during night apart from short and spasmodic mortar stonks.	
"	10		Increased shelling and mor activity continues during day. R.E. completed single belt of A.P. mines in circle around GRUBBENVORST. Line of mines now 894146, 897145, 897147, 895148.	
"	11		Enemy generally quieter than last two days with reduced shelling and mortaring throughout d. hrs. Re-inforcements :- 71 O/Rs.	
"	12		Work continued during the night by 'D', 'C', and 'A' Coys on their respective strongpoints. Bad weather restricted observation to the EAST of the R. MAAS.	

W. 4724 998 2,000,000 A.43 W.H.A.S. 81/5775

Sheet FIVE

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WAR DIARY  
or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt

Commanding Officer Lt Col G.R. Turner Cain

Month and Year DEC 1944

(Erase heading not required).

D.S.O.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
GRUBBENVORST & HOUTHU IZEN	13	1200	Bn commenced handing over to 8 RB, coys moving back independently to reserve area at MELDERSLO 8518. This operation was considerably helped by heavy mist and was uneventful.	
			The following awards have been made to the u/m:-	
			D.S.O. Lt Col G.R. Turner Cain. Commanding Officer.	ZOMEREN 21 Sept 44.
			M.C. Capt E.L. Mills. Second i/c 'C' Coy.	ZOMEREN 21 Sept 44.
			M.C. Lt G.de Carle. 'D' Coy.	IJSSELSTEIN 17 Oct 44.
			M.M. Cpl H. Pearson. 'D' Coy.	ZOMEREN 21 Sept 44.
			M.M. L/cpl Constable. R. 'C' Coy.	ZOMEREN 21 Sept 44.
MELDERSLO	14		Bn located as follows:- 'A' Coy 853188, 'B' Coy 855192, 'C' Coy 847193, 'D' Coy 856198. Bn HQ 834182. Working parties from coys cleared road HORST-MELDERSLO. Baths and entertainment.	
"	15		Road clearing parties, baths and entertainment.	
"	16	0800	Advance recce party left for area WEST of ROERMOND.	
		1800	Bn 'O' Gp in connection with Bde moving to take over positions	

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Sheet SIX

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

Army Form 118.  
1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE Regt.  
Unit.....  
Commanding Officer Lt Col G.R. Turner Cain D.S.O.

Month and Year DEC 1944

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
MELDERSLO	16	(cont)	...from 158 Bde (53 Div)	
"	17	0900	Bn moves to new location, area HORN to take over from 6 Bn RWF 158 Bde 53(W) Division.	
		1500	'B' Coy shelled whilst taking over. 2/Lt Bache wounded.	
		1530	Bn complete in new positions apart from forward sections. Bn HQ 733921, 'D' Coy 760928, 'A' Coy 751923, 'C' Coy 751915, 'B' Coy 737905. Flares and spandaus active during the first half of the night.	
HORN	18	0235	Heavy stonk (approx 150 shells) in HORN area, 151 Pd Regt replied Remainder of night quiet, but spasmodic mortaring or shelling of forward areas during the day. O.P. established 754915. 'D' COY HQ moved to 762931 and pl positions slightly altered.	
"	19		Heavy mist throughout the day. Less enemy shelling and mortaring than usual. RE's clear enemy minefield in the vicinity of Bn HQ.	
"	20	0120/0215	Period of enemy activity along the whole front, consisting	

M3324/218 1200M 10/41 H.B. & Co. Ltd. 81-1841

Sheet SEVEN

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

Army Form C.2118.  
1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE R  
Unit.....  
Commanding Officer Lt Col G.R. Turner Cain D.S.O.

Month and Year DEC 1944

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HORN	20	(cont)	... of SA fire, mortar, <del>80mm</del> , and possibly <del>one</del> 15cm gun. No casualties, and heavy mist obscured observation. Very little enemy activity during the day, again heavy mist "blanketed" operations.	
		1500	Carrier Pl shoot up area East of 'D' COY <sup>with MMC's</sup> Normal spandau activity during the night.	
"	21		Two civilians in pay of Germans reported to have crossed to our side during the night. Patrols were sent out to search with the aid of the O.D. without result. Very quiet throughout the 24 hrs Mist continues.	
HORN	22		Enemy patrol seen in WEEED area during morning. Fog prevented patrol from locating the enemy. 1930 R. Es with one pl of A Coy as protection, laid AP and Schu mines along river side of bank at 785916. AP mines laid in double row with Schu mines in between in straight stretches	

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Sheet 8.

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

Army Form C. 2118,  
Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt.  
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner Cain.  
D.S.O.

Month and Year Dec 1944.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HORN	22	(cont)	at 774921, 774916 and 774913. RE suffered 2 cas (wounded) during the operation.	
		0253.	Minefield completed. During the night enemy patrol of 6 reported at 752920 and another 4 at 746915. One of the latter injured by rifle fire.	
HORN	23		Day and night quiet. Enemy thought to be celebrating Christmas as sounds of revelry were heard at midnight. Troop of 474 Ind S/L Battery under command to produce artificial moonlight when required.	
HORN	24		Again quiet, small amount of enemy shelling and mortaring only. Recce Troop of 15/19 Hussars under command of 'A' Coy to thicken defences. (infantry role)	
HORN	25	0700	Party of 4 civilians and 2 RAF personnel crossed the river MAAS from ROERMOND bringing useful information of crossing point and routes of enemy patrols, and also local information on enemy defences. 338 Bty. A/Tk took over D Coy area. (infantry role) D Coy moved to area W of HORN 740911. B Coy also moved posn nearer to HORN on the E to make a stronger Bn locality. 2 Coys therefore spent Christmas day digging in.	

W147724/998 2,000,000 2/48 W.H.A.S. 61/573

Sheet 9

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

Army Form C. 2118,  
Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt.  
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner Cain.  
D.S.O.

Month and Year Dec 1944.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HORN	26	0130	Section of 'C' Coy which had been placed in posn at HATENBOER 762897, successfully ambushed enemy patrol of 25 to 30 strong. Seven believed killed and several injured. Our casualties NIL. The enemy took great pains to withdraw his killed and injured and means of identification left behind. Civilians still living in the farm in the vicinity reported that the Germans had been there for 3 days.	
HORN	27	1800	Operation to clear HATENBOER farms and vicinity of Germans and civilians, found area clear of both. Civilians believed to be "hiding up" in the vicinity.	one, 14PE 07 aff.
		0545	Enemy raid on section and platoon H.Q. of 'C' Coy unsuccessful. Enemy seen and fired on by the section. Enemy fired 6 Panzer-faust bombs at platoon H.Q. house which all fell short, and this was silenced by the second bomb of a P.I.A.T. Enemy casualties believed at least 5. Own casualties NIL.	

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Sheet 10.

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

Army Form C. 2118.  
Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire R  
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G. R. Turner Ca in.  
D.S.O.

Month and Year Dec 44.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HORN	27 (cont)		1300 to 1800 hrs. Bn relieved by 4 K.S.L.I. without incident and established in billets in reserve area at <del>BAXEM</del> BAXEM 7092	
BAXEM	28		Bn celebrated Christmas Lay.	
BAXEM	29		P.T., Baths and Entertainment.	
BAXEM	30		P.T., Baths and Entertainment.	
BAXEM	31	1100	C of E Church Parade.	
<p><i>C. J. King Maj</i> <i>for Lt Col;</i> Officer Commanding 1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE Regiment 1st January 1945</p>				

**Wintering on The Maas – Part 3**

The type of warfare endured during these months may not sound very strenuous but it was tiring. Men were living in slit trenches all the while, digging or wiring by day or night, on sentry duty or patrol by night and subjected to shelling all the time.

It was during these winter months that the feeding problem became acute. Patrols had to start out about 1600 hours to be in position by dark and did not return until 0800 hours, a period of 16 hours out. This meant that the hot meal either had to be issued before the patrols went out, leaving a long gap before anything hot again, or it had to be carried in containers and dished out at the forward post – not very satisfactory and usually meaning the addition of pine needles to the rations prepared by the cooks. The patrols were of the greatest importance and any inconvenience had to be tolerated. The only 2 occasions in the whole campaign the Battalion was surprised by night were due to patrols not being in position in time owing to the meal being late.

On 6 Dec Bob Price had returned to the Battalion after recovering from wounds [see October post], a time of mixed emotions – greeting old friends but with some familiar faces missing with new ones taking their places; also the realisation of the sudden immersion to living and fighting in the field after living in heated accommodation and sleeping in a bed!

Wednesday 6th December 1944, another memorable day for me, the day I joined the battalion again. The company were dug in alongside a river; I was taken to my old platoon and was immediately greeted by Jack Carrol, the lad who bandaged my leg when I was wounded. I was eager to find out how many of the old platoon were left; Jack was the only one I'd seen.



When I put the question to him, he told me that when they reached their objective on the day I got wounded there were only eleven of them left out of the platoon.

'We had plenty of grub that night', he said with a grin on his face. 'I think there's only about six of us left now' he mused counting them up on his fingers.

'Bob' someone shouted I recognised that voice, turning round there was the beaming face of Sparky.

'Am I bloody glad to see you', he said giving me a big hug.

Of course my next question was, 'Where's Taff?'

'He was wounded a few days after you' he replied. 'He was in a cellar one night with our cooks when a German patrol put a land mine down the coal chute, he was one of the survivors, some died including the cook sergeant'. We'd also got a new platoon commander and platoon sergeant; it was almost like joining a new unit. The section I joined were all young lads about my age, it didn't take me long to fit in.

Jim the section leader was a corporal, perhaps a little older than me, then there was Simpson (Simo) the Bren gunner, Geoff his number two, and five riflemen, including me Tom, Stan, Maurice and Ted. What I found strange was more than half the platoon came from the Nottingham area and knew one another before joining the army. They were in the same school together or lived in the same street, it was like a big happy family, and I'm glad to say I was soon accepted as one of the family!

The next few days I found it very difficult adapting to living outside again after the comfort of the last seven weeks. The weather in December was very different to when I got wounded in October. After all the rain the whole area was a sea of mud, and at night the temperature was dropping below freezing making the nights long, cold and miserable. We remained in this position for the next week; this gave me a chance to get to know all these young soldiers. By the end of the week I felt as if I'd known them forever! Then much to our surprise we were relieved and moved back behind the line, not far from the little town of Weert. There the accommodation for our platoon was a big old barn with a hayloft, it felt like the 'Hilton' after where we'd come from. We were there only few days but it gave us a chance to clean up and do some training with tanks. The new platoon hadn't had much experience with tanks, some none at all. The reason was because of the weather and the static nature of the campaign over the last few weeks, and also because our tanks, 29 Armoured Brigade had retired from the forward area to Helmond and Deurne. Here they'd handed over their tanks (Shermans) and were no longer under our command.

It had been rumoured for some time that our Division was to be re-equipped with a new tank, the Comet, similar to the Cromwell but with thicker armour and mounting a new 77mm high velocity gun. The change was viewed with enthusiasm by the tank crews.

By the middle of December the new tanks started to arrive, but the process of change over had hardly started when it was interrupted by the German offensive in the Ardennes, and the brigade found itself obliged at very short notice to collect again its old tanks and drive to the scene of the battle. The Battle of the Bulge — as von Runstedt's offensive in the Ardennes became known — severely upset the expected programme of regrouping of the British forces, all plans were postponed indefinitely. Meanwhile, 29 Armoured Brigade took up positions along the river Meuse covering the bridges at Dinant and Givet. They did much to save the situation in the Ardennes, but it was well into January before they were released to continue their training with the new tanks.

After over a fortnight in the position, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 8 Bn Rifle Brigade took over and the Battalion went into reserve at Melderslo.

On 17 Dec the Battalion moved to take over the Horn sector of the river north west of Roermond. Here the role was similar but much more active than the previous one. The enemy was more enterprising, frequently crossed the river and in fact operated patrols from bases somewhere on our side. The Battalion frontage was something like 6,000 yards and to start with the task was a difficult one. With companies and detachments so spread out it would be comparatively simple for the enemy to 'winkle' them, especially at night, which all called for extra vigilance and alertness.

C Coy had a particularly unpleasant time: C Coy were responsible for the village of Horn and also for maintaining control of the river on its immediate front. It was thus necessary for one platoon to be on the banks of the Maas, roughly one mile away for 24 hours at a time. Their position overlooked the Roermond bridge which had been blown. Coy HQ was established in a brewery which was not functioning.

The village was a difficult place to control owing to the number of refugees (not all bona fide) and also to the fact that the Bosch were frequently crossing the river with patrols of 5 or 6. The forward platoon, which was changed every 24 hours under cover of darkness, maintained an OP by day and patrolled by night. For some technical reason due to the proximity of the Roermond power station, 18 sets would not work and reliable means of communication could only be restored after it had got dark and line parties could go out. It was impossible to move unobserved to the platoon position by daylight. Thus the platoon was always liable to be an isolated outpost completely out of touch with the rest of the Battalion. This drawback was later overcome by the introduction of 22 sets. Early in the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> the platoon position was attacked by an enemy fighting patrol believed to be from 15 to 20 strong. The sentry spotted them when they approached to within grenade range and raised the alarm.

The platoon manned their battle posts in time and opened up with Brens and grenades. The enemy then pulled back and started straddling the buildings with bazooka type bombs, most of which fell short. C Coy replied with Piat bombs, a second of confusion and the patrol disappeared.

Our Coy Comd had several uneasy nights, as one of these patrols was reported to have told the locals that they were coming back the next day to get to the captain in the brewery. Not unnaturally he took elaborate steps to spoil their plans and any visitor after dark had to climb under a tank (placed to block the entrance), follow a maze of passages and eventually gain access to a room behind locked steel doors!

The Dutch Orange men gave valuable assistance in checking up on civilians. It was known that the enemy had contacts with certain houses and previously his patrols had visited them regularly. However with our increased patrol activity and after three or four patrol skirmishes he lost heart and the Battalion dominated the situation. An account of S Coy's Christmas night exemplifies the precautions and steps taken to repress these nocturnal visits, and to ensure that even if the enemy did cross the river an appropriate welcome was waiting for him. Early on Christmas morning a German patrol had crossed the Maas. After what must have been a good stalk around Horn and district they approached a carrier section by S Coy HQ fired at it and disappeared when fired at, leaving behind a bloodstained hat and a trail of blood which led to the river. During Christmas Day Dutch civilians warned us that they had been told by the patrol which had entered their house that they would return the next night and bring 30 men with them. S Coy HQ was in a farm set in the shape of a square with the entrance to the yard in one corner. From it a path led to the river 400 yards away, cross open country. At dusk the ambush was prepared. No 3 detachment ATK PI were sited to cover the lane, and it's 2 inch mortar and Bren guns fixed to cover the same area. The remainder of the platoon was disposed around the farm 6 pits, with six Brens and five rifles all told; two more pits manned by the



mortars and two carrier sections with Brens and two Vickers machine guns. A total of 24 men standing outside, with reliefs inside, and a mobile force of three rifle sections or their equivalent made-up from the PI HQ and Pioneers. A really formidable force nearly 100 strong in one farm area. It was a very cold frosty night, and not the best way to spend a Christmas night.

Unfortunately our keen anticipation of a good night's shooting disappeared as morning drew on with no sign of the enemy. So at 0800 in the morning we returned to our daytime positions, feeling a little annoyed at the wasted night.

Patrolling under conditions such as they were here was an eerie and difficult business. Snow had fallen making concealment more difficult, and later when it became crisp with the keen frost every footstep had to be watched.

An account is given of 24 hours of the life of one platoon of C Coy. On Christmas night as the relieving platoon, going to the forward position, move down the road, slowly and silently for their feet were wrapped in sacking, they noticed on the white frosted ground a track seeming to lead to a farmhouse silhouetted in the moonlight. Once the relief was carried out the PI Comd got on the phone and explained to his Coy Comd what he had seen. Later in the night he got permission to go and investigate the farm area with orders to leave a section in ambush if considered necessary.

The patrol left the main position at the end of the bridge and moved to the suspected farm buildings about 1000 yards further along the river bank. Here they picked up the tracks again in the frosted ground leading right into the farm. They carefully surrounded the buildings and the patrol leader led a small party into the courtyard. The first thing they heard were men's voices coming from a stable. Slowly and with great expectancy they crept to the door and quietly lifted the latch. Putting their shoulders to the door they burst into the room. It would be impossible to say who were the most surprised, the patrol who had expected to capture a Hun hideout or the Dutch civilians so rudely interrupted at their table conversation. These civilians, who had no right to be in no man's land, did however inform the patrol that the Germans often came to the farm and had in fact left that evening. As a result of this information a section with two Bren guns was set out in ambush and the remainder of the patrol moved back to the main forward position.

This information was passed back to the battalion headquarters and on the strength of it a change of plan was made. Originally the section set in ambush was to return one hour before daylight and now it was decided that they would remain until relieved the following night when the relief platoon came up as normal. Accordingly a small patrol composed of platoon headquarters was dispatched with these orders and rations for the day.

As these four men neared the farm they saw movement in the orchard and on challenging were greeted by bursts of German carbine fire as about 15 Huns moved from the shadow of the trees. The patrol was extremely fortunate in being able to roll into the shadows and crawl down a dyke and away, miraculously uninjured.

This shooting immediately put the section waiting in ambush 100% alert, not knowing quite what was going on. The Germans, talking, rounded the corner of the farm buildings and came inside to the waiting section. They were bunched up and carelessly carrying their weapons over their shoulders. About ten of them came between the two waiting Bren guns who opened fire simultaneously, mowing them to the ground. This however was not the whole German patrol, being perhaps only a third, for

in a few moments Spandau fire and grenades were being hurled at that part of the farm held by the section and one Bren was put out of action. Under the cover of this fire the Germans went to extraordinary measures to recover their casualties the reason for this was discovered in the hours of daylight when civilian caps and clothing were found.

This action evidently shook the Germans up somewhat, for there were no more instances, during our stay in Horn of patrols being reported in the company area. The

Patrick Delaforce in his book 'The Black Bull' covers this period for the Battalion in one paragraph:

The Herefords spent 10 days from the 17th in the Horn sector, NW of Roermond, where enemy cross over patrols were particularly aggressive. In between training and integrating reinforcements from the RASC, CMP and the RAF, Ken Crockford, 1st Herefords led a patrol to Hatonboer on the 26/27 December. In the fighting, their ammo ran out and their CO said on the phone: *If you are taking prisoner, I know you will all uphold the best traditions of the British Army.* Fortunately, 4 KSLI arrived in time.

Ken Crockford researched this operation and wrote a detailed account after the war; it is reproduced in full in a separate post.

*Crockford Patrol Report 1*  
*Crockford patrol Report 2*



Christmas Day arrived with the Battalion in the Front Line, and it was a perfect Christmas setting with snow on the ground and frost in the air, tempered by the light rather than the heat of brilliant sunshine. In the morning a Carol Service was held in a farm loft in F Echelon area. Representatives from each company attended to sing amongst the cobwebs, drying tobacco leaves and bales of straw. Wreaths of steaming breath rose in the lantern light and condensed against the unplastered slates and rafters. The hot heavy smell of the cows below blended or rather mingled with the smell of HQ Coy's cooking. It was a pleasant service and the carols fitted in as well with these surroundings as with any church or Chapel. The midday meal was roasted and a pint of beer per man issued to produce a token Christmas dinner. It was gladly accepted and the meal was eaten with thoughts in pleasanter lands. The CO and 2ic made a special effort to get round as many of the companies and section posts as time would allow to greet the men and carry on an old Christmas tradition even under these conditions.

At Battalion HQ the picture was rather more rosy. Officers contributed miscellaneous oddments of soap, cigarettes, chocolate and NAAFI brilliantine etc and gave the family of the house their first Christmas party for five years. They had dug out their Christmas tree decorations and were highly delighted to find that the tree had produced such exotic luxuries overnight. With fitting ceremony the



gifts were presented to all from the old boy of 80 to the young child of 3 and it was a pleasure to see the gratefulness with which they were received.

Brigadier Churcher, as Lieutenant Colonel Commanding Officer of the Herefords had before leaving England given instructions that the Battalion Band's instruments were to be moved to the continent. In his memoirs he says: *The lorry arrived. About the end of November. It was kept back in the transport line away from the battle area, but now was the moment to bring the band into operation. But naturally enough, a good many of the bandsmen in the Herefords had been killed or wounded, and there were not enough players. So I searched the whole brigade for instrument players, drummers and buglers. I eventually managed to produce a nearly full strength band under an ex Bandmaster who was a surplus sergeant major in the transport company of the Royal Army Service Corps. I put them to work in the rear area and they played their first band concert to the troops on Christmas Day 1944.*

The Battalion finally left Horn on the 27 Dec and held its Christmas Day celebrations in the reserve area at Buexem the following day. The cooks and Quartermaster had made a worthy effort and produced a Christmas dinner comparable to any Christmas dinner in England. One company fed in a school, another in a convent and a third in a windmill but they all fed and fed well.

After spending its official Christmas Day out of the line on the 28<sup>th</sup> the Battalion got down to training. Once again the opportunity was taken to brush up individual and subunit training. Despite adverse weather conditions the companies were out every day carrying out a thoroughly organised programme. Weapons were tested, ranges erected and every man put through a practice in every weapon. It was surprising to find how many recruits had not had the opportunity to fire a PIAT or even prime a 36 grenade before joining the Battalion. And yet at any moment he might be expected to engage a tiger tank. These conditions brought out the versatility and priceless knowledge of the CSM. Once again he had to supervise the newly promoted SNCOs in all forms of barrack life and individual training. He had to take the company in drill, reprimand a man for not having his hat on straight, inspect weapons and ammunition and, by his personal example, illustrate to all the meaning of the word discipline. And all this on top of his battle responsibilities. Little is said of the sergeant major's achievements they are somehow taken for granted. What a tower of strength they were! In the training annals his main duty is connected with ammunition but in fact this proved the least arduous of his tasks. He was responsible for organizing the company headquarters by night and day on the move and at the halt he had to supervise the distribution of rations. He had to deal with the collection and dispatch of POWs. He had to stand in for the company commander on the numerous occasions when the latter was called away to an O Group or was visiting his platoons. He would share the turn of duty at night with his company commander. He would supervise the evacuation of the wounded. He would see to the fair allocation of leave passes. He had to be familiar with wireless procedure and be able to give a summary of the situation or take orders from the CO when his company commander was away. He was the direct link between the company commander and his men, seeing that the one understood the wishes of the other. All these and a host of other duties did he perform and on several occasions his personal courage and example on the field enabled his company to bring forth that extra effort so essential in a tight corner.

### Casualties

One casualty was recorded in December

Name	Initial	Rank	Number	Company	Cause	Date	Location

Edwards	H	Pte	4033786	S	KIA	09/12/1944	Grubbenvorst
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Pte Edwards Medals (1939/45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defence and War medals) were awarded to his next of kin.

(C.S. 20)

**APPLICATION FOR ISSUE OF CAMPAIGN STARS AND MEDALS, Ex-Army Personnel**  
WRITE IN INK IN BLOCK CAPITALS

I desire Campaign Stars and Medals, as shown below, awarded to me (or to the late)

Number <b>4033786</b>	Christian or First names <b>HENRY</b>	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary <b>EDWARDS.</b>
Class of Release or Discharge and Date <b>—</b>	Age and Service Group No. <b>—</b>	Rank <b>PTE</b>
Last Regiment or Corps according to cap badge worn (R.A. to state Branch; Home Guard to insert H.G. with County and Battalion number)		<b>K S L I</b>

to be addressed to me as follows:—(State Rank, Title, Mr., Mrs. or Miss)

(Name) **MRS. EDWARDS.**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number —if appropriate)  
**12 CAER RD.  
OSWESTRY  
SALOP.**

NOTE—YOUR STARS or MEDALS may not be issued for **SEVERAL MONTHS**

If you should change your permanent address before receiving them, send a postcard at once to War Office marked "Medals: New Address" and showing (i) the new address and (ii) No., name and last Regiment or Corps.

Signature of Applicant.....

If claiming as legatee or next-of-kin, state relationship to deceased.....

Box for War Office Use Only

**5 STARS/ CLASPS**

**51 26 FEB 1950**

MEDALS EL

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

**STARS**

1939-45       PACIFIC  
 ATLANTIC       BURMA  
 AIR-CREW       ITALY  
 EUROPE       FRANCE & GERMANY  
 AFRICA

**MEDALS**

DEFENCE       WAR **4-0**

### Wounded

There are no reports of woundings in December

### Honours & Awards

There were no Honours or Awards made in December

### Officers' Plot

See Separate post

### ORs' Strength Return

Date	WO1	WO2	CSjt	Sjt	Cpl	Pte	Bglr	Total	Remarks
<b>Establishment</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>689</b>		<b>813</b>	
13/06/1944								913	Rail Party 384; sea party 529
01/07/1944	1	7	7	39	72	673	6	805	
29/07/1944	1	7	8	38	74	594	6	728	
02/09/1944	1	7	9	41	70	582	6	716	
30/09/1944	1	6	13	36	62	539		656	
28/10/1944	1	7	10	39	64	565		686	
28/12/1944	1	8	8	36	71	764		888	