

1st BATTALION THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT – FEBRUARY 1945

February arrived and the worst of the winter seemed to have passed, or perhaps it was psychological; longer days, leave had started both to UK and local, the Battalion had been brought up almost to full strength, they had been out of the 'line' and had some respite and relative comfortable billets. Morale was good but there were still hard times to come! The Spring campaign would soon start with Op BLOCKBUSTER against formidable fixed German defences on the Siegfried Line and the preparation for the Rhine crossing and the advance into the heart of the German homeland and Ruhr industrial centre. The battles would be hard and bitter against fanatical Nazis in the army and 'Volksturm' (local defence 'volunteers'); Hitler's orders were to fight to the last and he had instigated a scorched earth policy where anything and everything that could be of use to the Allies was to be destroyed.

WAR DIARY

The Brigade War Diary

Place	Date	Time	Incident	Ref to Appendices
			Sheet 1	In lieu of AF O2118
Month and Year : Feb 45			<u>WAR DIARY</u>	Unit : HEADQUARTERS, 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE (incorporating 159 Inf Bde Def Pl and L.A.D. att)
				Comd : J. E. CHURCHER, DSO
B.L.A.	1 Feb		1 HEREFORD were relieved by 46 Commandos (RM) and moved back to WEERT Barracks. No activity reported. Trg continues.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; transform: rotate(-15deg); display: inline-block;"> 13 MAR 1945 G.H.Q. 2nd ECHELON </div>
	2 Feb		The Recce parties from BELGIUM returned to their units.	
	3 Feb		Trg continues.	
	4 Feb		" "	
	5 Feb		Lt-col Turner-Cain DSO acting Brigadier left for a three-day conference at BARNARD CASTLE at the School of Inf, representing 8 Corps. Lt-col Max Robinson DSO took over the cmd of the Bde. It was officially announced that Lt-col Robinson had won the DSO.	
	6 Feb		The RM gave the opening address to the Div Battle School.	
	7 Feb		The Bde Comd returned from leave. No change.	
	8 Feb		1 HEREFORD had to leave WEERT Bks to make room for other tps, billets being found in houses in and around WEERT. 2 Indep MG Coy moved to IPPEWORTH.	
	9 Feb		Warning Order was received that the Bde may have to take over the line from the 131 Bde of 7 Arm Div, in the area of the R ROER, SOUTH-EAST of ROERMOND.	
	10 Feb		Rececs were made in the new area. Reports say the rds are extremely bad owing to mud. Reports that the River had risen over two ft. Mines were reported everywhere.	
	11 Feb		Owing to the state of the rds and the bridges the move into the new area was postponed. The Bde continued trg.	
	12 Feb		No movement.	
	13 Feb		Orders received for the Div to be at 24 hrs notice to move under cmd 1st Canadian Army.	
	14 Feb		Remaining at 24 hrs notice.	
	15 Feb		Rece parties called for to go to recee accommodation in the area of TURNHOUT leaving at 1400 hrs - The Corps Comd, Lt-General E.H. Barker, CB, CBE, DSO, MC called at this HQ.	
	16 Feb		Rece parties left for TURNHOUT. The Div to come under cmd 1 Can Army.	

Sheet 2

In lieu of AF C2118

Unit : HEADQUARTERS 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE (incorporating
159 Inf Bde Def Pl and L.A.D. att)

Month and Year : Feb 45

Cmd :J. B. CHURCHER, DSO..... Brig

WAR DIARY

Place	Date	Time	Incident	Ref to Appendices
B.L.A.	17 Feb		The Bde moved to new locations at TURNHOUT. Bde Hq, 1 HEREFORD and 3 MON in the town, 4 KSLII VOSSELAAR just WEST of the town. Offrs were billeted out and the ORs in the St Victor's School.	
	18 Feb		Remained at 24 hrs notice at TURNHOUT.	
	19 Feb		Changed to 48 hrs notice at TURNHOUT.	
	20 Feb		Remained at 48 hrs notice at TURNHOUT.	
	21 Feb		Message received from Div that Bde is at 24 hrs notice from 0800 hrs 22 Feb; likely to join 2 Cdn Corps.	
	22 Feb		Orders given out that the Div would move on the next day to the area of the REICHSWALD.	
	23 Feb		The Div moved, taking up a conc area at the East end of the REICHSWALD; the first time the Bde had taken up positions in GERMANY. All Bns reported by 0600 hrs on the 24 Feb.	
	24 Feb		Remained in conc area.	
	25 Feb		Remained in conc area.	
	26 Feb		4 KSLII passed to cmd 4 Armd Bde. 3/4 CILY and 15/19 H came under cmd this Bde. In evening 4 Armd Bde Cp incl 4 KSLII moved off and reached railway line to SOUTH WEST of UDEM, taking about 20 PW.	
	27 Feb		1 HEREFORD and 3/4 CILY moved off about 11 a.m. to pass through UDEM with objective high ground two miles SOUTH EAST of UDEM. After considerable CL trouble the Cp managed to get through the town after Sappers had put in some hard work in clearing routes through the rubble. About 1600 hrs 3 MON and 15/19 H Cp moved off with object to pass through 1 HEREFORD and 3/4 CILY Cp and objective high ground in HOCKWALD FOREST. In actual fact they reached the same high ground as 1 HEREFORD and 3/4 CILY Cp. This area was subjected to heavy arty and SF fire. Going exceedingly bad and numerous tks bogged.	

(b)

Sheet 3

In lieu of AF C2118

Unit : HEADQUARTERS 159 INFANTRY BRIGADE (incorporating
159 Inf Bde Def Pl and L.A.D. att)

Month and Year : Feb 45

Cmd :J.B. CHURCHER, DSO.....Brig

WAR DIARY

Place	Date	Time	Incident	Ref to Appendices
B.L.A.	28 Feb		3 MON and 3/4 CILY gp spent the morning in attempting to push out to the East. All crossings over a small stream running NORTH - SOUTH were found blown. Fascine crossing was made by AVRS and two cpls 3 MON and one sgt 3/4 CILY were able to cross, reaching a small wood immediately over the stream. They were unable to get further owing to SA, mortar and arty fire, the latter two being exceedingly heavy. With arty as bridge-head was widened at 1345 hrs but could not be deepened. At 1900 hrs 1 HEREFORD and 15/19 H began crossing stream and passing through 3 MON gp. The adv was sp by arty fire and made rapid progress against light opposition. By 2300 hrs the gp had adv about 2,000 yds along rd to East but were here held up by SF and SA fire from a prepared def belt running NORTH - SOUTH. Several tks were knocked out. Work on Bailey Br over stream was commenced about midnight and the dispositions of 3 MON gp were adjusted to cover the open South flank of the bridge-head area.	

The Battalion War Diary

ORIGINAL

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

Army Form G. 2118.
1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE Regt;
Unit.....
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. E. R. BARNON, C.M.
D.S.O.

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. G. 2118. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.
Month and Year FEB 1945

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HEBL	1		Day and night quiet. No incidents reported by patrols during the night.	
HEBL and WEERT	2	0930	Unit handed over area to the 46 Marine Cdo. Change over completed by mid-day without incident, with the exception of LOOK FORCE, who were relieved at last light. Unit moved to WEERT Hqs; for a period of training. LOOK FORCE was relieved by 0130 hours 3 Feb; One deserter (Paratrooper) came over from the Island and was handed over to the Cdo;	
WEERT	3		Maintenance, baths, and entertainment.	
WEERT	4	1000	Bn Church Parade in the Barracks. Innoculations and baths.	
WEERT	5		Training commenced by Coys including firing on the 30x range by 'A' and 'HQ' Coys. Entertainments.	
WEERT	6/7		Companies training.	
WEERT	8		Bn moved out of the Barracks to make room for the 6 AB Div; and billeted in the town over a wide area. This presented	

WAR DIARIES SECTION
No. 6 MAY 1945
G. H. G. 2nd Echelon

WL 4724 258 2,000,000 2.18 W. H. & S. 51/0975

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

Army Form G. 2118.
1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE Regt
Unit.....
Commanding Officer Lt. Col. E. R. TURNER, C.M.
D.S.O.

SHEET 2
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Month and Year FEB 1945

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
WEERT	8	(cont)difficulties of xxxx administration and in training space.	
WEERT	9		Bn settled in. Concentrated on administration.	
WEERT	10		Morning spent on training. Football match arranged in the afternoon with the K.S.L.I., which the Bn won 2 - 0.	
WEERT	11		Day of rest. Church service in the morning.	
WEERT	12		Serious training commenced again. Representative of the Hereford Times staying with the Bn for seven days to collect material for articles on the Bn's achievements so far.	
WEERT	13/16		Normal training, administration and entertainment.	
WEERT and TURNHOUT	17	0800	Bn leaves Weert for Turnhout.	
		1300	Bn arrives in Turnhout and is billeted in the Station area.	
			Normal training continues for its future commitment in the battle for the Rhine.	
TURNHOUT	18/20		Normal training including inf / tank co-operation on a coy basis.	
TURNHOUT	21		The Commanding officer resumes command of the Bn.	

WL 4724 258 2,000,000 2.18 W. H. & S. 51/0975

The Battalion football team that beat the KSLI 2 - 0



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 Month and Year.....

Sheet 3.
WAR DIARY
 or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
 (Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2118.
 1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE REGT.
 Unit.....
 Commanding Officer..... Lt Col G.R. Turner Gain, DSO

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
TURNHOUT	22		Company training continues.	
" "	23		Bn leaves Turnhout for area SE of CLEVE 9051, to take part in operation "Blockbuster"	
SE of CLEVE	24	0200	Bn in position in concentration area.	
		2100	Division intention to break through the HOCHWALD line as Fourth phase of operation "Blockbuster" and to capture the high ground north of SONSBECK 0635. Operation to commence on the 26th, 4th Armd Bde (Scots Greys, 3/4 CLY and 44 RTR) u/c 11th Armd Div in place of 29th Armd Bde who are still refitting.	
SE of CLEVE	25		Bn remains in concentration area.	
SE of CLEVE	26		Bn remains in concentration area.	
SE of CLEVE	27	0430	Bn ready to move.	
		0800	Bn moves to forming up area 9744, preparatory to going through UDEM, (captured by Cōns last night) One 15cwt truck blown up on mines, one OR wounded.	
		1100	Fresh orders, as opposition is stronger than expected. The Bn (cont on next page.)	

WL 47734 688 2,000,000 248 W. H. & S. 81,676

SHEET 4
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WAR DIARY
 or
 INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
 (Delete heading not required).

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

Month and Year FEB 1945

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
SE OF CLEVE	27 (cont)	 with 3/4 CLY u/c will capture GOCHFORT feature 000400.	
		1100	Leading tanks encountered difficulty in crossing A/Tk ditch 982414 owing to gap in road, but at 1300 hrs the advance continued. 4th Armd Bde moved across from 977412 to 988403 clearing south of this CL whilst we advanced to GOCHFORT feature. Very difficult going with many vehicles bogged, and combined with heavy enemy opposition, shellfire and mortar fire made the going ^{advance} slow.	
		1900	GOCHFORT feature captured with 'A' Coy at 998402, 'B' 988397, 'C' 995400, 'D' 996397, Bn HQ 993400. Very heavy enemy shelling during the night in the Bn area. PW's taken during the day:- One officer and 58 OR's from 84 Div, 2 and 8 Para Divs. (NB Several more PW's possibly had passed through other PW cages)	
SE OF UDEM	28	0001	3 Mns with 15/19th Hussars u/c pass through to capture BRIDGE XXXXX at 004393 and form bridgehead.	

SHEET 5
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Army Form G. 2118.
 Unit 1st Bn The HEREFORDSHIRE Regt
 Commanding Officer Lt Col G.R. Turner Gain
 D.S.O.

Month and Year FEB 1945

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
SE OF UDEM	28 (cont)	0400 hrs., 'B' and 'A' Coys relieved by two Coys of the R Winnipeg Rifles	
		0430	Bn prepared to move forward through the 3 Mns. The latter, however are held up and eventually we received orders for a night attack to commence at 1955 hrs.	
		1955	Bn now with 15/19th Hussars u/c in place of 3/4 CLY advanced through Mns bridgehead and reached 02 Easting. SP's and 88mm's plus heavy small arms fire including panzerfausts prevented any further advance towards the enemy dug defences. Bn consolidated 'D' 017387, 'C' 019384, 'A' 018382, 'B' 014380, Mor and MMG Pl 011383, Bn HQ 013387. 15/19th Hussars lose 6 tanks. Tracked was vehicles only could pass over bridge as only fascines had been laid. The CO commanded from a tank, and only a Mts carrier accompanied him, forming tactical cmd post forward. Remainder of cmd Post remained in old location, for collection of PW's.	

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WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

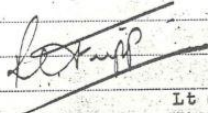
Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt

Month and Year Feb 1945

(Delete heading not required).

Commanding Officer Lt Col G.R. Turner: Cain
D.S.O.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
SE of UDEM	28	(cont)	.. Cas; to the unit for the two days (27th and 28th) were as follows:-	
			Feb; 27th. Killed; Offrs NIL OR's 11	
			Wounded " 4 " 40	
			Feb; 28th. Killed " NIL " NIL	
			Wounded " NIL " 12	
				
			Lt Col;	
			Cmd 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt;	

Between Two Rivers/The Battle For The Rhineland

The first part of the month was spent 'out of the line' in training and administration. Pte Bob Price tells his story of this time in his book 'Just A Walk In The Sun'; although his personal story, there are similarities with others right the way across the Battalion.

In the first week of February we pulled out of the line and returned to the barracks at Weert again so that we could get baths and a change of underclothes. It was while I was here that two of us out of the company had to report to the hospital in the town and go on a chiropody course. While we were on this course we were billeted with a Dutch family not very far from the hospital gate. We slept in a downstairs room and had our meals in the hospital canteen. It was supposed to be a two-week course but it had to be condensed into seven days. We sat the examination on the Saturday morning and returned to our unit in the afternoon. It was hard work but I enjoyed it.

We didn't have far to go and keeping away from the platoon at this time had been a bonus; they'd had a rough week. Jack Carrol [John 'Jack' Carrol was obviously one of the Platoon/Company/Regimental characters - see comments in account for October and the piano incident; and Bob's account for the latter part of the month. Later in the month he was to be awarded the Military Medal - see later citation] was held in detention for refusing to go on parade; he'd told the platoon commander [was this the same Pl Comd who had previously alienated the platoon? - see January entry] that he'd come over here to fight the Germans not prance up and down on the square. He was charged with refusing to obey an order and detained for seven days, some of the other lads received various punishments, but the least said about that the better. The company had moved out of the barracks into a large brick building in the town. We'd got a stove, and straw to sleep on, although it wasn't so comfortable as the barracks. The following days our hard training continued with plenty of weapon training on the ranges built by the Germans not far out of town. It was there that

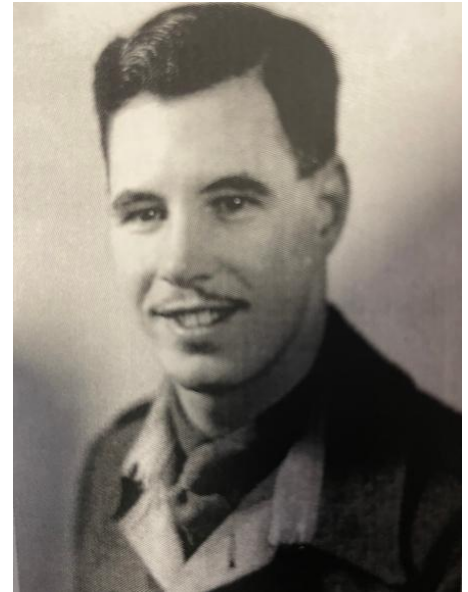
I fired my new rifle for the first time since rejoining the Battalion. It was my third rifle of the campaign so far. The butt on my first rifle was smashed by a shell in France. It was a good job I wasn't holding it at the time. The second one I picked up, the same day from a runner who had been wounded. The bolt and breach on that one was damaged by the mortar bomb that got me. Of all the types of training we did the one I really enjoyed most of all was firing small arms weapons such as the Bren gun, the infantry man's light machine gun, the NCOs' weapon the Sten gun, and my favourite the 303 rifle.

Over the next week it had got much warmer, the snow had turned to rain, which had turned the landscape into mud, not very good conditions for training exercises. Then surprisingly on 17 & 18 February the whole Division moved over the border in northern Belgium while they decided our next role. We would either join the northern sector with 1st Canadian Army or south with 9th US Army. At the moment we were billeted with civilians in the town of Turnhout. The whole company was in the same street, a street comprising of terraced houses running on each side of the road. It could have been in any large town in England. In our house there were five of us sleeping in the front bedroom, but the accommodation varied according to how many each house could sleep. The Belgian people were marvellous and treated us like their own sons; they soon made us feel at home.

The next morning I had another unexpected surprise, we fell in on the road outside our billet and the company sergeant major read out a list of names, about ten in all, and mine was amongst them. We were told to fall out. The rest of the company marched off on a training session. It was noticeable that all those picked were those that had been with the Battalion a long time. Now since the beginning of the year people that had landed in France in June 1944 had been having home leave, but owing to a lot of sailing being cancelled because of the severe weather a lot of those due this month had been put back, including mine. As you can imagine we began to speculate, especially those lads who came over in June.

We didn't have to wait long. The sergeant major called us together, told us to get changed into our best uniforms. We'd all got 48 hours leave in Brussels; transport would pick us up at 0900 hrs. Some were a bit disappointed of course, but this was the next best thing. It was only about a two-hour journey to Brussels. Our accommodation was in one of the largest hotels in the city. There were three of us in our room; we had single beds with deep soft mattresses, and white sheets and our own luxurious bathroom. After our meal we went sightseeing, it's a lovely old city with beautiful architecture. I think what surprised me more than anything were the shops and arcades, they were full of things we hadn't seen in England for five years. The clothes, toys, luxury goods, even chocolates and confectionery on display in the shop windows. The only trouble most of the goods were much too expensive for our pocket, although I did buy a few items, including a silk headscarf for my girlfriend. The two days I was there I spent £10.00, over five weeks pay! After a good meal in the NAAFI we spent the evening in the cinema before returning to our hotel rather tired after our busy day. Before retiring I had a good soak in the lovely bath while I'd got the opportunity. The bed was sheer luxury — I slept like a baby. I could have stopped there all day but my two mates had other ideas.

We had a good breakfast in the dining room downstairs, then before going out on the town we went into the photographic studio in the foyer and had our photographs taken. We spent the rest of the day continuing our sight seeing; there were numerous clubs and canteens we could visit for our meals. The Montgomery Club was something special, you entered the dining hall up a vast marble staircase into one of the largest rooms I've ever seen. There was a stage at each end of the room with a band playing on both at the same time; I've never experienced anything like it before. If you walked the length of the hall you started with one melody slowly changing to whatever the other band was playing as you passed the halfway mark. The room was filled with small square tables with four chairs to each table, hundreds of them, I couldn't get over the size of the place. The room was quite full when we went for our lunch, but I remember the three-course meal was excellent.



Is this the photo he had taken?

We spent the afternoon in the cinema and the evening watching a variety show in the Garrison Theatre, and so ended another full and entertaining day. After a nightcap in the hotel bar we didn't need rocking to sleep that night. We had a lie in the following morning and a late breakfast I collected my photograph, and also bought a silk handkerchief from the shop in the hotel foyer. The transport to take us back to the battalion was due after lunch at 1400hrs, so I decided to have a quiet relaxing morning in the hotel lounge and write a long letter to Margaret my girlfriend. I found a quiet corner and wrote my letter — my thoughts with my loved ones. I put the photograph and the small handkerchief in the envelope, sealed it and put it in the post box in the hotel foyer; it was Tuesday 20th February 1945.

It appears that 13105612 Pte Joe Major was a 'lucky' one and got UK leave, sending his folks a telegram to say when he would be home.



Our transport duly arrived to take us back to the company at Turnhout. By 1600hrs I was reunited with my mates and the Belgium family. We exchanged news but they still didn't know anymore about our next move. While I'd been away they'd been training hard each day with route marches, cross country runs and weapon training. Stan collected the mail. I had quite a lot including a parcel from my mother; in it amongst other things was a large piece of home cured bacon from Mum's brother. This would have been luxury back home at that time and I really appreciated the thought. The woman of the house cooked it for our supper that night, all the family joined in; they provided the eggs.

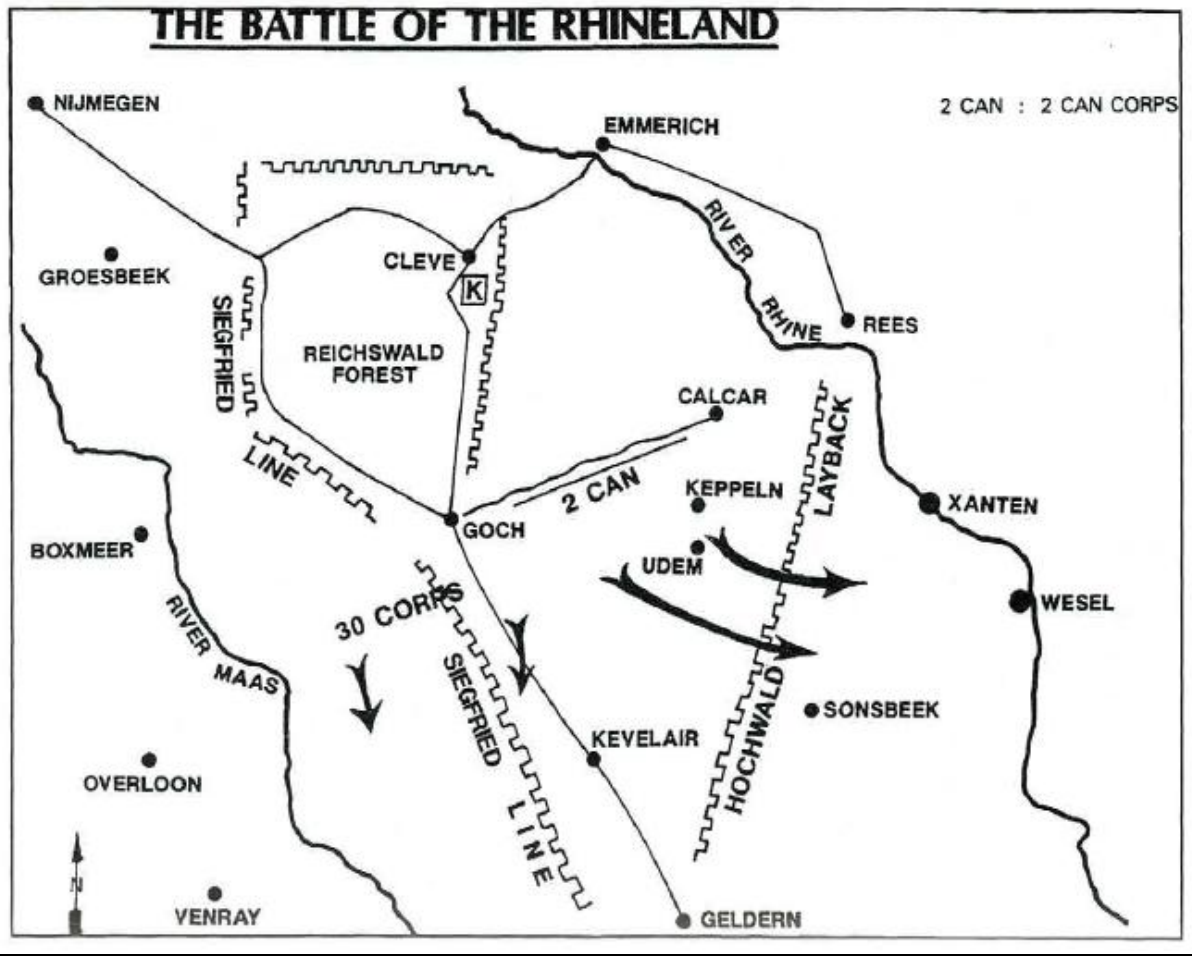
Over the next few days I began to know and like this Belgium family. There was the old mother, father and daughter, who would be in her early forties. She worked nights at the local laundry, which was very convenient for us because we only had to leave our dirty washing at the bottom of the stairs each night when we went to bed, and the next morning it appeared like magic washed and ironed just where we'd left it! These people were marvellous, and couldn't do enough for us. It wasn't until I went to the toilet in the night, which was at the bottom of the garden, that I found this old couple asleep in chairs in the kitchen. They'd given up their beds for us. Before we could do anything about this situation we received our marching orders. The Division was put under the command of the 1st Canadian Army in the northern sector. Orders to move to the battle zone were issued to the Division for the following morning. That afternoon the whole street became a hive of activity, trucks were loaded with equipment, and ammunition was issued. We had permission to test fire the Bren guns. It was like world war three had started as all the company Bren guns opened fire in the back gardens. They fired into the ground to avoid any accidents, then every gun had to be stripped and cleaned. While Simo looked after the Bren, we loaded all the magazines and cleaned our own rifles. We spent our last evening with the Belgian family in the kitchen at the rear of the house, we ate our supper together. No wisecracks or jokes tonight.

After a rather unsettled night we had an early breakfast, and formed up in the street outside our billet ready move off to rendezvous with our TCVs. The whole street turned out to see us off, our family hugged and kissed us in turn. They became very emotional, the tears running down their faces, and it wasn't only the civilians that shed a tear that morning. The time finally came for us to leave these beautiful people, nowhere, not even in England would we get a better send off than they gave us, we felt very proud.

On 23 Feb the Battalion left turn out to take part in Operation Blockbuster and the Div came under command of the Canadian Army. The object of the operation was to clear the enemy between the rivers Maas and Rhine. The Canadians operated from Nijmegen and Cleeve and swept southwards whilst the Americans, with British elements, advanced northwards from the Roermond area. At this time 29 Armd Bde was refitting with Comet tanks and 4 Armd Bde consisting of Scots Greys, 3/4 City of London Yeomanry and 44 RTR came under command of 11 Armd Div.

The operation had already been in progress for a week before the Div was called in to take part in the fourth phase; to break through the Hochwald (Schlieffen) Line and capture a feature of high ground north of Sonsbeck. Moving up through Tilburg, S'Hertogenbosch and Nijmegen the Battalion concentrated in an area southeast of Cleeve. Most of the move was carried out by darkness and the journey through the Reichwald Forest provoked many a healthy swear word. The engineers had developed a white taped track through the trees and everywhere there was evidence of a crashing barrages put down to assist 53 Div in their earlier wood clearing operations. After 3 days in the concentration area the Div was committed to battle and the Battalion moved to its FUP. The area was infested with mines and OC HQ Coy's 15 cwt truck was blown up when getting off the road. The

countryside was strewn with paper, including the notes of three different currencies and the OC took advantage of the inevitable court of enquiry to balance all his accounts - never his strong point!



At 1100 hours a fresh appreciation was made and it was decided to pass the Battalion with the 3 /4 CLY through Udem to capture the Goshfortz feature, a ridge of high ground about four miles West of the Schlieffen line. The whole area beyond this feature was overlooked by the Hochwald forest which 3 Can Div was dealing with from the north. Udem had been captured the previous night by a Canadian brigade and the whole village was just a mass of rubble. Odd pockets of enemy were still holding out on the exits from the town and the operation was further hampered by an anti tank ditch which ringed it. The bridges across the ditch were reported blown and further movement forward was held up while the fascines or some other form of bridging could be brought up to allow the tanks to get across. In the meantime B Coy dealt with isolated enemy posts to the South of the town and after carried out platoon operations rounding up about 20 POWs.

The enemy realised that an attack was about to debouch from the town and brought down heavy mortar and shellfire. A Coy moving up through the streets suffered several casualties not only from the falling shells and shrapnel but also from collapsing buildings and flying masonry. The streets were alive with bullets and bursting HE. It was essential to get the company through to start the attack on time. At the time the company was composed of about 50% reinforcements seeing their first action and was in danger of going to ground. By exemplary work on the part of the CSM, unmindful of personal danger, all unwounded men were encouraged, persuaded and forced to go forward and finally reached their allotted FUP before Zero Hour. CSM Hartnett was to be awarded the Military

Medal for his actions during this engagement – see later citation. Thus the companies were manoeuvred into position ready to carry on the advance across open country with tank support. The going was difficult for tanks and the enemy had ideal observation both from the Gochfortz feature itself and from the Hochwald beyond. In consequence the whole operation was severely impeded by well coordinated and heavy artillery fire. Practically all intermediate farms between the objective and the start line were held in considerable force and had to be cleared by platoon and company attacks.

By a series of such operations, in which many infantry became casualties and several tanks were brewed up or bogged, the objectives are finally cleared and consolidated against grim and determined opposition. By this time it was dark and administration which went on throughout the night was made doubly difficult. Vehicles moving up behind across open country bogged axle deep and several more casualties were suffered from shelling. The night's hot meal arrived at some unearthly hour in the morning and few people had much heart left to eat it. Enemy patrols were active and shelling persisted throughout the night. At last the dawn came to find everybody bedraggled and down at the mouth, but the battalion's objective had been achieved.

Later in the morning 3 Mons passed through with the 15/19H in an attempt to capture a bridge over a minor stream, constituting an anti tank obstacle, and to establish a bridgehead. As soon as they showed themselves over the crest down came intensive and sustained artillery fire and their assault was checked before it started. Severe shelling and mortaring persisted throughout the day and there was only limited success in capturing and holding two wooded positions across the stream. The enemy's artillery and anti tank defence was flexible and well controlled; any move by daylight was hotly countered. It was therefore decided to lodge an armoured night attack and to try and force a way through the defences of the Schlieffen Line. The defences consisted of a continuous and well dug trench system, wired in and covered by mines. The strength of the enemy holding the trenches was not known but it was certain that they would be well supported by defensive artillery and anti tank fire.

The attack was to be put in by the Herefords and the 15/19H supported by artillery fire on previously registered targets. It was to be a case of blasting away through the night and the enemy. The operation was as distasteful to the tanks as it was to the infantry. They were restricted to one ribbon of a road leading straight up to the defence line and because of the very soft going on either side could not deploy. To add to their distress it was not certain whether the bridge across the stream improvised by the engineers would stand up to their weight. Just after darkness the tanks moved up to the Battalion area and the companies attacked A Coy leading. CP consisting of the CO and adjutant, was mounted in a tank loaned by the 15/19, as it was unlikely that any other vehicle would make the bad going. At 1955 hrs the leading squadron/company moved up to the bridge followed by command posts and the remaining companies. As soon as the leading tanks nosed their way over the bridge mortar bombs started crashing down. Woods, thought to be held by friends, were in fact infested by enemy who opened up with automatic fire at close range. The tanks bounded forward blazing away with their guns and Besas at every copse and building. The leading companies detached and started dealing with the situation.

D Coy took part in an encounter typical of the nights fighting. A small wood, thought to be held by friends, was found to contain about 20 Germans well supplied with automatics. The leading section all became casualties in the first burst of fire, and although the remainder of the platoon charged the position they were beaten off with heavy casualties. At the time there was only one other platoon of that company available and the company commander, having organised the tanks to support him and reinforced by a platoon from C Coy, started to attack and clear the woods. All enemy met were killed and despite delay in reorganising afterwards, the force was on the move again within 20 minutes

from the time of the first encounter. A farmhouse and orchard close to the route was next found to be held by bazooka and MG teams. The Coy Comd personally leading one of the platoons cleared the area and captured one of the bazooka teams.

500 yards west of the Schlieffen line our tanks came under heavy and extremely accurate anti tank fire and could advance no farther as it was still impossible for them to get off the road. The first five were brewed up and others, trying to pass, became bogged. In the meantime the bridge over the stream had given way and the column was becoming very split up. It was therefore decided by the two COs to reorganise and take up a battalion/regiment position in the area of the leading companies. By first light all 4 companies were in position and once the bridge had been repaired the track vehicles with anti tank guns and mortar followed on. The area was studded with a series of small woods and farms many of which concealed SP guns. These gave the tanks a very worrying time and it was not till several hours later when they had ferreted out the offenders that the group settled down to breakfast consisting of the hot meal cooked the night before. Heavy NBW fire and shelling kept everyone to their trenches for the rest of the day and several casualties were suffered. The Battalion casualties for these two days fighting were 11 ORs killed and two officers and 52 ORs wounded.

A typical soldier's story is told by Bob Price:

With the weather over the last week getting drier and brighter we felt that perhaps this long winter was finally over and that spring was just around the corner.

Our journey north to the battle zone from Turnhout was uneventful. We crossed the river Maas, and the whole division concentrated south of Cleve. In the forward areas the congestion was even worse than in the Normandy bridgehead in the early days. Since October we had for the most part been living in buildings, sometimes barracks and convents, sometimes houses in Dutch villages, which we shared with the inhabitants. But here in Germany, apart from a few isolated farms, there were no buildings left, and so great was the number of troops on the ground that there seemed to be hardly room even to pitch a tent. Second Canadian Corps — under whose command we had now passed — were sympathetic, but until some more suitable area could be cleared they said we should just have to perch in the treetops!

I think at this point I should give you a wider picture of the operation we were about to embark on. The main objective in the coming weeks was to secure a bridgehead over the river Rhine, but first we had to clear the strip of land that runs between the river Maas and the Rhine. In the south it was fifty miles wide, there the Americans were pushing northward over the flooded waters of the Roer. In the north the Canadians were advancing south and east. This was the most difficult sector, it contained the northern end of the Siegfried line, and behind that were the secondary Hochwald and Schlieffen defences, also the great Reichswald Forest. The first stage of the operation had gone well. After heavy and destructive fighting Canadian and British troops had captured the towns of Cleve, and then Goch. The next stage of the operation was a series of thrusts. For this the first Canadian Army intended to use the maximum concentration of force at its disposal. All the available divisions were therefore, to be deployed, each operating on a narrow front. 11 Armoured Division found itself operating on the southern flank, and for the first time we were without our own tanks, 29 Armoured Brigade.

Secondly, when we had previously moved in mixed brigade groups, the idea had always been that the infantry were there to support the tanks. Here in the Hochwald, however, we were to press on along crumbling roads, through country where the Germans would surely

maintain a series of successive and connected positions and at least one actual line of fortifications, and this sort of thing can be done by infantry.

Thirdly we were destined to operate by night and day. We'd never set out to operate all round the clock before. We were to do so now! Finally, the battlefield was more systematically laid to waste than any over which we'd fought before. Destruction was familiar enough, but the devastated land between the Maas and the Rhine bore a different stamp. It reminded me of a battlefield in the First World War. Destruction here was continuous, thorough and universal.

The next morning we found ourselves slowly moving down a dirt track into enemy territory. It was a cold frosty February morning. Our first night sleeping in the open again had been cold and miserable. The warmth from the sun rising above the trees in front of us was very pleasant, except that it made visibility difficult with it shining in our faces. Everyone was a little jumpy and apprehensive, which was to be expected under the circumstances. Very few had been in action before and for those that had, it had been a long time since we'd been on the offensive. It would be impossible to describe my feelings walking down that track on this lovely winter morning. I'd been in this situation many times before, but you never get used to it. The dryness in the throat, the sweat on your brow as the tension slowly increases. You know full well that something is going to happen, but you don't know when or what. You know it will be deadly, vicious and sudden when the action starts. Our section was in the lead today, which didn't improve our survival prospects. The other sections in the platoon were behind us, not on the track but in the fields on either side of us. The remainder of the company were following down the track some way back. We came to a bend in the track and slowed down, everything looked alright so we proceeded round the bend. On the right was a derelict farm and out buildings and a burnt out vehicle in the ditch. We hadn't got to it when there was an explosion slightly behind us over the hedgerow. A shiver went down my spine, I knew what it was, I'd heard that sound before. We were in a minefield. I looked through a gap in the hedgerow and my worst fears were realised. One of the lads had stepped on a 'Shoe-Mine'; it had blown his foot off. There was no blood just a blackened stump neatly severed just above the ankle. He was one of the older members of the platoon; I'd known him a long time. We sat him up and gave him a cigarette.

'Stretcher bearers' the cry rang out as the message was passed back up the track. His war was over; he'd sleep in a warm bed tonight. The platoon sergeant was soon on the scene, he called our section leader over and gave him orders to take his section and check the farm buildings and make sure they were empty before we moved on. 'Mind where you put your feet' he said, 'Walk in single file and keep your eyes open'.

We followed Jim down the track towards the entrance to the farm. But first we had to negotiate a way round the burnt out vehicle. The ground sloped and was very muddy. I was last in the line and was carefully putting my feet in Tom's footprints when I slipped. I grabbed the side of the truck that saved me from falling down. It was then that I noticed the mine sticking out of the mud, half of it still under my boot. Lady luck was with me today! It was another Shoe-Mine, whether it had got a faulty detonator we shall never know. This antipersonnel mine was rather unique in that it was made of wood, like a small cigar-box with an overlapping lid. This made it difficult to detect. The standard metal detector was useless against this mine. We picked our way into the farmyard using all the hard surfaces we could walk on. If you looked carefully you could see small areas of disturbed ground. These mines had been laid in the last 24 hours. Alongside the path to the farmhouse was a small orchard,

Stan noticed the mines first — you could just make out the three prongs sticking up in the grass. We found several alongside the path. We kept well away. These were, 'S' mines, a nasty piece of work. If you trod on one of these, nothing happened until you lifted your foot off, then there was a short pause before it shot into the air and exploded about head height. Around the explosive charge was packed over 300 ball bearings. I'll leave the rest to your imagination.

I followed Tom into the farmhouse; the rest of the section checked the barns. There was only the one room on the ground floor undamaged, the roof and upper floor was almost completely destroyed. The whole farm appeared to be deserted. There was a large table and a few chairs, but no other furniture in the room. On the wall above the fireplace was a large picture hanging all aslant on a single nail. On the table was a German stick grenade. Before I could stop him Tom picked it up, I noticed a small wisp of smoke coming out of the handle, grabbed it off him and threw it through the window. Two seconds later it exploded! 'That was close', Tom remarked. 'That was bloody stupid,' I replied, 'Don't touch that picture either, that could be booby trapped as well'.

The explosion brought the rest of the section into the farmhouse, all they'd found were two pigs with legs missing after stepping on mines. They were in a terrible state; we put them out of their misery. We were leaving the farm when I heard a noise behind one of the outhouses; there I discovered a little goat on a chain. The circle of ground around which the goat could reach was completely barren, not a blade of grass left. I'd got a quick decision to make, leave him to starve to death, shoot him, or let him off the chain. I set him free to take his chance with the mines. We joined the rest of the platoon and continued our way down the track for a couple of miles, no sign of the enemy. Hopefully we'd left the mines behind.

Suddenly the landscape changed from the small fields, orchards and woodland we had been walking through to more open country with large ploughed fields and areas of heathland. In front of us the ground began to rise. On the horizon about half a mile away was a village, you could see the church spire and the tops of the houses were just visible above the trees. We dug in alongside a hedgerow facing the village. We passed the cigarettes around and wondered how much longer we'd got to wait before the cook's wagon arrived. We were getting very hungry, breakfast seemed a week away! Then in the distance the unmistakable rumble of tanks. 'I hope they're ours', someone anxiously remarked.

Sure enough a short time later a squadron of tanks from one of the Canadian Armoured Brigades appeared and lined themselves up behind us facing up the hill. Also the rest of the Battalion arrived. It was becoming obvious that we'd got another job to do before we were going to eat. The whole battalion lined up in two staggered lines, each man ten paces apart, and the two lines thirty paces apart. They call it 'Orderly Disorder', unusual, but aptly named. Why I'm describing this formation now is because we had never operated in this way before. This was the only time I can remember when the whole battalion lined up together to launch an attack across open ground against an enemy defensive position. We lay on the ground waiting for the signal to start the attack.

First we heard the rumble of our 25 pounders as they opened fire. We counted the seconds before the whistle of the incoming shells passed overhead. Their accuracy always amazed me. Then the tanks behind us opened fire, their first target was the church steeple, a possible German observation post, in a few seconds it was completely destroyed. During this barrage we had a very lucky escape. A shell from the tank behind us prematurely exploded right above us as it left the muzzle brake at the end of the gun barrel. The turret on the tank spun round

like a top, and although shrapnel from the shell hit the ground all around us, no one was hurt. The tank commander stuck his head out of the turret fearing the worst. The concern on his face turned to relief when he saw we were all OK 'Sorry', he called although there wasn't anything he could have done about it anyway. Then finally the order came, 'Fix bayonets, move out'.

The whole Battalion moved forward as one. The tanks crashed through the hedgerow behind us raking all the vegetation on our flanks with machine gun fire. Still no response from the enemy! Ten minutes later we were only about 300 yards from the village. I was beginning to sweat, the adrenaline was flowing. I thought if anything was going to happen, now was the time. The thought hadn't left my head when the first mortar bombs dropped right in front of us. The line held firm, no one hit the ground. It just continued to move forward, completely disregarding the mortar bombs. I shall never forget the courage those young men showed that day. Our platoon was right on the left of the line, so we weren't in the worst position, the centre section was sustaining the most casualties, but still the line held. As one fell to the ground another from the second row took his place, and so the drama continued. The intervention of our 25 pounders finally stopped the mortars, and the charge went in. The tanks smashed through the wire followed by the infantry. We didn't go into the village but went down the left flank to give protection from that side if required.

The enemy had withdrawn, the village was completely deserted, the trenches and defensive positions empty. That suited us fine, our job was done. What buildings were left standing the tanks proceeded to flatten. We dug in on the left flank just beyond the village, the rest of the company to our right. After dark our meal arrived (I've never known a meal taste so good), also trucks carrying petrol and tank ammunition. We hadn't fired a shot! Once we'd consolidated our position, one of our other infantry battalions with tank support passed through us to continue the advance through the night. We called it leap—frogging, a successful tactic we'd used all across France. Although it wasn't late it was obvious it was going to be another cold night The sky had cleared and the stars were shining brightly, in different circumstances a lovely evening.

We all decided we'd got to find some straw if possible to put in the bottom of our slit trenches; otherwise we would have another miserable cold night. The search began, not an easy task in the dark. After 15 minutes we had a stroke of luck, we met someone from another platoon with his arms full of hay. He directed us to a haystack at the far end of the next field. Sure enough we found it alright, and the two of us carried as much as we could back to our position, and shared it amongst the section. It was decided we could do with some more. Tom stopped to sort out what we had bought, so Stan volunteered to come back with me. It didn't take us long now I knew which way to go, we were soon there gathering up two more bundles. We were just about ready to start back when we heard voices coming from the other side of the haystack. We stopped and listened — they were speaking in German. It was then we realised they were German soldiers doing exactly the same as we were, gathering hay! We picked up our bundles of hay and quietly slipped away into the shadows. Back with the section I don't think they believed us when we told them what had happened.

We'd all had a tiring day, both mentally and physically, so after Jim had sorted the roster out for guard duty we disappeared below ground onto our soft hay beds. We hadn't got our greatcoats now so the only thing we'd got to put over us was our gas-capes. This was one of the most underrated pieces of equipment we carried. Designed as protection against a gas

attack, (thankfully it was never needed for that purpose). Its main use was as a waterproof, it had got a built in bulge at the back so that you could wear it over your pack. It was made of camouflaged oilskin with press-studs down the front and completely waterproof. Why I've described it so fully is because I found another use for it right at the beginning of the winter, which I found indispensable when sleeping out in the open. In the sitting position I pulled it over my head, back to front, and my breath warmed the air inside my own personal little tent while I slept. Condensation was a problem, but that was better than the cold. In spite of another cold night we all had a better night's sleep, the insulation given by the straw from the ground was well worth all the effort last night. An hour before dawn we were woken by Jack Carroll, to stand to, under his arm was a one-gallon stone jar, which contained the platoon's rum ration. He went round each trench every morning when the weather was cold armed with a tablespoon and this thick dark brown liquid. He was like a mother hen feeding her young, head's used to pop up out of the ground, eye's shut, mouth's open waiting for him to administer this beautiful brown nectar. I can still taste it now after all these years, as you swallowed, it was like a fire burning deep inside, you could feel the glow running right down to your toes. There wasn't anything else that had quite the same effect on a cold morning. When dawn broke we stood down, the most vulnerable time for attack had passed. Every morning someone always asked the same question, 'Where are we going today sergeant' the answer varied, sometimes he would say, 'Swanning', what that meant I never really found out. If he was in a more benevolent mood he'd say, 'Oh, just a walk in the sun'. [This is where the title of the Museum's podcast is taken from].

It was becoming obvious from yesterday's action that we were about to embark on a completely different way of fighting, engagements more like an infantry division than an armoured one. We only gained a few miles yesterday, but action from now on was going to be more like 'World War 1' battles where every hundred yards was important to the men who gained them. The Americans once over the flooded area of the Roer were relentlessly pushing northward. The Reichswald Forest had now been cleared and during these operations, the Siegfried line had been turned at its northern end. Where the line ends near Cleve, the Canadians had put up a notice to mark the spot, close by they hung out a line of washing, also duly signposted. Thus were the ambitions of Flanagan and Allen's song in 1939 fulfilled in 1945.

By mid-morning we were on the move again heading for the town of Udem. These plans however were soon altered. The progress of 3 Canadian Division towards Udem was delayed by heavy opposition at Keppeln and it was not until late afternoon before the Udem defences could be engaged. Upon the situation at Udem our own time of start depended. It was 1800 hrs before our division was unleashed. Consequently they had hardly started when they were overtaken by darkness. The Greys and 4 KSLI crossed the start line and soon made their first objective. From then on opposition increased. The attack was continued with the aid of natural and artificial moonlight, and by morning after a hard night's fighting, the railway line, southwest of Udem was reached, with 350 prisoners, 4 self-propelled guns and 2 tanks destroyed. We entered the town of Udem itself on the same morning, I've never seen such utter devastation, every buildings had been hit by bombs, rockets, or shells, and as we picked our way through the rubble we were subjected to a heavy German mortar attack, just to complete the destruction of this small German town! Also for the first time since crossing the Maas he began using his large multi-barrelled mortar against us, nicknamed by the Allies as, 'Moaning Minnie'. It was used extensively in the early days in France but we hadn't heard many throughout the winter. I think a little explanation at this point would be helpful

for you to understand this fearsome weapon. It was a very mobile multi—barrelled mortar; the bombs were over twice the diameter of the standard mortar and weighing over 70 pounds each. The eight bombs were rocket propelled and fired one after the other in quick succession, but what distinguished this weapon from anything else was the noise it made as it travelled through the air to its target. On the fins of each bomb was a siren which created a high pitched wail, the nearer they got the louder the scream became, eight together were terrifying, and finally the devastating effect of eight large bombs falling in close proximity to one another. We treated this mortar with great respect!

Today the whole platoon took cover in a large bomb crater by the side of the church. While we were there a Canadian war correspondent rolled up in his jeep and filmed us with a cine-camera. [To date it has not been possible to locate this film] He made a few notes, then asked, 'How long does it take them to load the Moaning Minnie?' The sergeant answered, 'About ten minutes'. He looked at his watch and soon drove off, not wanting to be around when the next salvo was fired. Who can blame him? A short time afterwards we continued down the road till we came to our waiting tanks. We climbed aboard, one section on the back of each tank. We sat there some time awaiting orders to move out. There was still spasmodic mortar fire and one fell on the roof of the house nearest to us, it sent the roof tiles flying in all directions. Unfortunately one of them hit Stan on the knee. We all jumped off the tank, Tom gave me a hand to get Stan down — we pushed him under the back of the tank, and took cover ourselves. The next bomb fell on the back of the tank, right where we'd been sitting. It didn't do any harm to the tank, except set fire to the camouflage netting we'd been sitting on. One minute earlier and our platoon would have been short of eight men! Every day in action there are incidents like this and you wonder if your luck will hold out tomorrow. They decided we should probably get to our start line quicker on foot. First we had to get over the railway crossing on the outskirts of town. The trouble was the enemy had got a machine-gun giving spasmodic bursts of fire right down the track. When we got there you could hear the gun and see tracers coming right down the lines. I'd never had to run the gauntlet before but today the whole company had to. You waited for the burst of fire to stop, then dashed across the gap as fast as you could. Fortunately we all got across safely, although one of the lads gas-caps came loose and tripped him up just as he was crossing the lines, he did the last bit on his hands and knees to the cheers of the rest of the platoon. It was now 1400 hrs; we'd wasted a lot of time getting over that crossing. We hadn't gone far along the road out of Udem when we came under shellfire from the high ground to our left; we took cover in the ditch at the side of the road. By now our tanks were beginning to arrive, somehow their presence always boosted our moral. We had now reached our start line and were all wondering what job they'd got lined up for us to do this afternoon. We didn't have to wait too long to find out!

With Udem now under Canadian control the main enemy resistance seemed to be from the Gochfortzberg high ground to the northeast. As we walked along the road out of Udem, we could see the ridge to our left. It was open country, some grassland but mainly ploughed fields. Right from the road it began to rise, getting progressively steeper, until the crest of the ridge was reached about a mile away. The whole company lined up along the ditch and waited, the platoon sergeant told us 'A' Company had got the job of attacking the ridge and holding it for at least the next 24 hours so that the main assault along the valley could go ahead early tomorrow morning. 'What are we waiting for sergeant?' someone enquired. He didn't answer, he didn't need to, the answer came from five miles away. 'Everyone move out' he called as the first 25-pounder shells hit the ground about 200 yards in front of us. Climbing out of the comparative safety of that ditch, up the bank into the open fields, not knowing what

was waiting for you wasn't the best way to spend a sunny afternoon. With the possibility of bazooka-parties concealed in the scattered hawthorn bushes the tanks raked all the suspect places with machine-gun fire, the tracers were ricocheting off the ground in all directions.

The assault on the Gochfortzberg had begun! We advanced behind a creeping barrage, the 25 pounders dictating how fast we moved. A quarter of a mile up the hill we reached the first German defences, there were bunkers dug into the hillside each holding about a platoon of infantry. All the centre section of each bunker had been covered with logs and soil as protection against our artillery. The trouble with this system was that only a small section of trench at each end could be used to defend the position, it was also very conspicuous. When we came under fire we quickly moved behind the tanks using them as cover. A shell from the tanks 75mm gun into the bunker soon demolished it; they didn't stand a chance, logs and soil shot in the air in all directions. We then moved in to finish the job. Invariably the survivors crawled out of the rubble and surrendered. Those that didn't were quickly eliminated. We then gathered them together, and after disarming them, pointed them down the hill carrying their white flags for someone else to look after. This process was repeated several times as we approached the crest of the hill, also there were fewer soldiers in the last bunkers, leading us to believe they'd been slipping away before we'd arrived. At this point we'd taken 120 prisoners with very few casualties ourselves. In front of us lay the crest of the hill, we moved slowly forward, but it was one of those hills where you reach what you think is the top, and it still rises again. We'd got a light reconnaissance tank with us, which moved forward to have a look over the top of the hill. We all stood and watched its progress as it slowly reached the crest of the hill. It stopped rather suddenly and the crew jumped out. They'd hardly touched the ground when a 88mm armour-piercing shell hit the front of the turret; it then burst through the back and whistled over our heads, the red tracer glowing brightly. On the other side of the valley was a solitary white farmhouse, the 88mm shell hit it smack in the middle and set it on fire. We looked at one another in disbelief at the sheer velocity of this weapon! Why the crew bailed out when they did, we never found out, they retreated down the field as fast as they could. The crippled tank started to smoke and was soon a blazing hunk of metal, its part in the war over. It was at this point that one of those incidents happened that altered the fate of our platoon — I suppose you could simply call it luck. On the right of our position was a gully, like a deep cut into this flat field, it ran to the edge of this large ploughed field and was full of hawthorn bushes and brambles. I didn't know then what an important part that gully was going to play in the survival of our platoon over the next 24 hours.

As we continued past the gully, just by sheer chance I happened to look back and noticed some movement amongst the hawthorn bushes. I stopped and looked again, sure enough it appeared again. Only for a second, but it was definitely a German soldier. I called out, 'Germans in the gully'. Everyone hit the ground and faced the new threat. There was a quick exchange of orders from the Company Commander and nine platoon was given the task of clearing the gully. Eight platoon took our place and continued advancing slowly up the hill. I was the first to reach the bushes and climbed down the bank into the gully, it was much deeper than I thought! At the bottom was a small clearing. As I stepped out into the open a German soldier came through the bushes opposite, he was more surprised than I was. We were only about ten feet apart. Our eyes met and for a split second we both froze. I was the first to react, with a scream I lunged forward thrusting my bayonet towards his middle. He dropped his weapon, neatly side stepping as my bayonet brushed against his belt, then

grabbed the end of the rifle barrel as it went past his body and held on tightly with both hands. By now the rest of the section arrived. What did they do? They sat in a row on the top of the bank and cheered, or made a few sarcastic remarks until one of the section leaders arrived. He levelled his Sten gun at the German and shouted, 'Bob move out of the bloody way'. At that point this very young terrified soldier let go the rifle and dropped on his knees putting his hands on top of his head. Someone picked up his weapon. I got him to his feet; the tears were running down his cheeks. I thought it was fear at the time but I soon found out the reason. He led me down the gully where we found another German soldier. He was lying on the ground mortally wounded, but still conscious. It was then that we found out it was his father, the rest of the unit had escaped down the gully. I had to admire this young lad; he chose to stop with his father at the risk of losing his own life even though he knew his father was dying. The old soldier died in his son's arms a few minutes later.

The platoon dug in along the top edge of the gully. Attempts to move eastward over the top by seven and eight platoons brought down heavy fire from the enemy, who was still holding positions on the reverse slope. Now they knew where we were the mortar fire became more intense. Eight platoons were caught in the open and sustained heavy casualties. Only a handful made it back. We got below ground as quickly as possible. Someone gave the young German soldier a shovel and he set to with enthusiasm, and dug all the trenches for platoon HQ. That done, he buried his father where he'd died under a tree in the bottom of the gully.

For me, the next 24 hours were the most terrifying I'd ever experienced since the morning I was wounded. I'd been under bombardment many times before, but this was something different, this was persistent and continuous, hour after hour. With seven platoons dug in over to our left, and us in the gully, eight platoons gone; we were now down to about 70 men to defend this ridge. The Germans knew exactly where we were and concentrated their bombardment of mortars and 88 mm shells into an area about the size of a very large football field. Many times throughout the night and the next day I kneeled and prayed in the bottom of that trench, and I wasn't the only one. With all the many hundreds of bombs falling all around us it seemed that it was only a matter of time before the fatal one dropped in our trench. They hit the parapet on both sides in the night — covering us with soil — we dug deeper! Hour after hour the attack continued, the only breaks we had was when they ran out of mortar bombs, then there would be a pause, and it would start all over again. In one of those breaks, I had to go forward and find our two snipers who were dug in about fifty yards in front of the gully. They'd got the unenviable task of giving us early warning of possible attack. As I crept forward I felt very vulnerable in the open after the comparative safety of our trench. It wasn't a dark night, I could see quite well. The ground was completely covered with bomb craters. There wasn't a square yard of original ground left. I moved slowly forward, quietly calling their names. There was no answer! Then I had the fright of my life when a rifle barrel was thrust in my face. I'd found my two mates, and thankfully they were both alright. 'Return to the gully at first light' I said, passing on the platoon sergeant's message. I didn't waste any time in making my way back to the section.

An hour before dawn the platoon commander came round and warned us to be prepared for a possible German counter attack. 'I don't want anyone falling asleep, I know you are all very tired,' he said. That was an understatement I thought! Dawn broke, my two mates had returned to the gully, and to everyone's relief no counter attack materialised.

Daylight didn't bring any relief — the bombardment continued throughout the morning more ferocious than ever, we kept well below ground as the shrapnel whistled overhead. In one of the breaks we watched our main assault go in along the valley behind a creeping barrage from our 25 pounders. From our vantage point we had a grandstand view, it gave the company the encouragement to hang on. In the afternoon suddenly everything went quiet, after an hour or so and no more bombs the lads started to get out of their trenches, stretch their legs, there were a few cheers. We'd survived!

In the early evening we were relieved by infantry of 1 Canadian Division. This was one place I was glad to leave; even so I fully believed that gully saved our lives. We brought the German soldier back with us, where he joined other prisoners in Udem.

We only had a short period to rearm, get something to eat; it had been 36 hours since our last meal. I also realised I'd smoked five packets of cigarettes (100) in 24 hours, that's something I'd never done before or since! Stan's knee was swollen where the roof tile had hit him, he'd have a nice bruise there in a few days time. All the survivors of the last 24 hrs were a bit 'Bomb Happy', some worse than others, for me it was a bit like being drunk, I'd never felt so exhausted. While we were on the ridge, another of our infantry battalions, 3 Monmouthshire Regiment with tanks from 15/19th Hussars had moved round the southern slopes of the Gochfortzberg, that's why they'd withdrawn off the ridge, they were being outflanked and would have soon been cut off. It was now our turn to pass through the Mons and engage the Schlieffen defences a few miles farther up the road.

We set out on foot in the dark, with four tanks from the Hussars. It didn't take us long to pass through the forward positions of the Mons the road soon turned into a waterlogged dirt track, just about firm enough to support the tanks. Progress was slow, obstructions had to be cleared off the track, we seemed to be waiting about most of the time. This was a fatal situation, we hadn't moved more than a mile up the track before we'd lost half the company. They'd fallen asleep one by one along the side of the road. The sergeant major had to go back and round them all up. I remember falling asleep standing up leaning against the back of one of our tanks. How long I was like that I don't know, but I had the shock of my life when it moved off and I found myself flat on my back in the mud.

Finally we got all the problems solved, the track cleared and we were on the move again. We took the lead, that's nine platoon, the rest of the company, what was left of it followed, with the four tanks in the rear. Like last night it was cold clear stary night, visibility was good. We passed a farmhouse on our right surrounded by a hedgerow enclosing an orchard. Beyond that it was open country on either side of the track. The road began to rise from that point, and we could see some more buildings silhouetted on the horizon some distance away. We had to negotiate some fallen telegraph poles, although the tangle of wires was a greater problem in the darkness. A little further up the road I could see the features of this fairly large building in front of us more clearly. It had got a tall chimney and out buildings stretching out to the right. On the left hand side between the house and the track was another dark shape, which I couldn't identify. We were now only about 150 yards away, and although it was a cold night I began to sweat, instinctively I sensed we were walking into trouble. I turned round and called to Tom, Stan and the rest of the section who were following behind, 'Get off the track'.

As we moved to the right, there was a blinding flash and a ball of flame from the side of the house, then a rush of air like a train going through a station, as the 88mm armour piercing

shell passed only a few feet above our heads. It hit the first of our tanks coming up the track, which immediately set fire and burst into flames. We dived into the shallow ditch at the side of the track, just in time as two machine-guns opened fire on us from either side of the track. Our other two sections weren't so lucky, and got caught in the crossfire from the machine-guns. That shape I saw at the side of the house was the turret of a Tiger tank. What fooled me was that it was dug in with only the turret above ground, what was known as 'hull down', a very formidable defensive position! It fired three times in quick succession and the first three of our tanks went up in flames, the fourth one was lucky, he was able to reverse out of sight behind the farmhouse we had passed earlier.

What I've just described took less than sixty seconds, we soon realised we were in a desperate situation. With our tanks knocked out, the Tiger turned his attention to us. Once again lady luck, or whatever you'd like to call it, came to our rescue. He tried to bring fire down on us with his turret machine—gun, but a few yards in front of our position the ground rose forming a slight ridge between the tank and us. If he fired too low it hit the ground in front of us and the rounds ricocheted into the air. If he then elevated enough to miss the ground, the rounds went six inches above our packs, frightening but safe, if we lay flat on the ground and kept still. In the end he gave up. The next thing they tried was lobbing bazookas at us, he had more success with them, and we took more casualties. Although we had only been pinned down a short time really, we were beginning to think we'd soon have to make a run for it; the bazookas were slowly taking their toll. Then like many times in the past our 25 pounders came to the rescue. They blasted the enemy positions with hundreds of shells, dead on target. We were up like a shot and carried our wounded back down the track into the orchard we'd passed earlier. I helped Stan carry one of our lads; we put him across our rifles turning them into a makeshift stretcher. He'd been hit 18 times, luckily all in his legs. He survived alright, and eventually made a full recovery, others weren't so lucky. The wounded were treated by our stretcher-bearers and ferried down the track as soon as it was practical. We dug in as fast as we could in the orchard, there was a good thick hedge between us and the open country we'd just vacated, that helped us feel a little less vulnerable.

We were looking for the Schlieffen defences; well we'd found them alright! Tonight we'd been very lucky, I wasn't looking forward to going up that track against such formidable opposition tomorrow night, but I knew someone would have to do it! We settled down and tried to get some sleep, one of us awake in each trench, I did the first watch. The first hour was uneventful, then I noticed a shadowy figure moving about the orchard. It turned out to be Jack Carrol; he was going round each trench dishing out tea from a big enamel jug. Where he'd found the facilities to boil water or the ingredients to make tea was a mystery. When I asked him, he just grinned and tapped his nose with his finger and said, 'Drink it up while it's hot'.

Dawn finally came, grey and cold. We felt better after a hot meal and some sleep. The day dragged on and with spasmodic mortar fire throughout the day we didn't move very far from our positions. When darkness came our artillery started to pound the enemy defences, then those dreaded words, 'Get dressed, prepare to move out'. Once again we slowly moved up the track, and once again those machine-guns opened fire on us. We took cover in the ditch exactly as before, and the nightmare began all over again. Tonight I got completely tangled up in telegraph wires, I couldn't move, Tom helped me get my equipment off, that's the only way I could untangle myself. I'd just sorted myself out when a bomb fired from a bazooka landed straight in front of me. I caught the full blast in my face, everything went black and my eyes began to smart as if they'd had pepper thrown in them. It took a few moments

to come to my senses, but when I opened my eyes, I couldn't see a thing! I think that was the most frightening moment in my life. I called out in shock and pain. Stan and one of the other lads came to my rescue and led me down the field out of danger. They took me to a Canadian medical team in an old barn, where someone examined my eyes. They said my eyes didn't look damaged and my sight would probably come back after a few hours. That reassurance made me feel a lot better, also in the barn was a hurricane lamp and I was able to distinguish between light and dark for the first time.

Eventually we made our way back to the orchard, my eyes much to my relief were improving all the time. After another failed attempt the company, what was left of it, were all back in their dugouts. I lost another old friend tonight; he'd been with the platoon since Normandy and had only just returned from home leave, he came from Wolverhampton. The following morning my sight had returned and for the first time I was able to look at myself through a mirror. My cheeks and eyes were red and swollen, and quite painful, but I could see alright. It would be impossible to describe the feeling of relief to be able to see again, the pain and discomfort would pass with time. The next night found us up that track again making our third attempt to breach the Schlieffen defences. We reached the wire tonight, but at great cost, and finally had to call our 25 pounders to get us out once again. Stan got hit tonight with shrapnel from a bazooka, so it was my turn to help him down the track tonight. Luckily it was only a flesh wound in his thigh. A lot of our mates died on that field tonight. We said our goodbyes to Stan and the rest of the lads as they were taken down the track under cover of darkness to the nearest field-dressing station. The strain was now beginning to show as each morning more trenches in the orchard were empty. I began to wonder if ours would be one of the empty ones tomorrow!

One hour before dawn I awoke to the platoon sergeant's voice calling everyone to stand to, like he did most mornings. Although an attack in these circumstances was very unlikely, their position now was purely defensive. All they had to do was hold us up as long as possible so that their comrades could escape across the Rhine, and that's exactly what they were doing. The sergeant was in a foul mood, Jack Carrol had gone missing again, he was nowhere to be found anywhere in the orchard. He'd done this before, but he'd always turned up in the end. Today was no exception, just before it got light one of the anti-tank gunners in the hedgerow noticed a figure walking towards him; it was Jack returning from his walkabout. Before the sergeant could utter a word, Jack called out, 'The tanks gone, I've been up to the wire, and the position looks deserted'.

This was great news, it certainly took the wind out of the sergeant's sails. He dragged Jack off to see the company commander. Sure enough when it got light, a patrol from D Company confirmed that the whole area in front of us was clear. We found out later that on our right flank 4 KSLI had found a way over the ant-tank ditch using a scissor-bridge, and with a squadron of Hussars had attacked the German positions from behind. This put the enemy on our front in danger of being cut off, so that's why they'd quietly withdrawn under cover of darkness last night. By mid-morning, with mixed emotions, we walked up that track for the fourth time, glad that the battle was over, but sad for the mates we had lost. It looked very different in daylight; we could see now the extent of the defences we'd been up against. Our dead were scattered on either side of the track where they had fallen. Now at last we could bury them. We dug in around the house and outbuildings the Germans had occupied, our part in this offensive was over.

On the high ground to our left the Canadians and 43 Division were swiftly approaching Xanten. On our right 30 Corps was pushing steadily up the main road towards Wesel, while farther over still the Americans had come up in great style from Munchen-Gladbach. Our forward units had reached Sonsbeck but that was as far as we went. The Canadians took over from us there, and the whole division came to a halt. The trouble was too many units trying to operate in an ever-decreasing space!

For the next two days the battles raged forward of our position and on our flanks, we also came under some mortar fire, but after that the action moved on leaving us alone in this desolate place. The farm buildings had been virtually destroyed by our 25 pounders. In one of the outbuildings the winter's supply of anthracite had caught fire. We soon took advantage of this wonderful source of heat to cook our meals, and keep warm, especially after nightfall. I shall never forget the bitter cold nights and frosty mornings, Jack Carrol coming round each trench at first light with our rum ration, and the utter boredom of sitting in that trench, feet froze, hour after hour day after day. After the first week everyone was getting a bit tense, arguments were breaking out, then suddenly late one afternoon the order came through for us to pull out. It was with a feeling of some relief, walking back down that track for the last time, past the three burnt out tanks with the cremated remains of their crews still inside. I would never forget the many friends I lost here.

After walking about three miles we dug in for the night in a large field. The whole area around us became a hive of activity. Artillery pieces of all sizes began lining up as far as we could see. In the next field our own 25 pounders of the Ayrshire Yeomanry lined up their twenty-four guns. These were the gunners who had come to our rescue many times in the past. It soon became obvious that we were about to witness something very special. Before it got dark around us were 48 regiments of artillery, that's over a thousand guns lined up to open fire on the last bridge over the Rhine in the town of Wesel. All German units this side of the river were now in full retreat, and heading for this last bridge.

The barrage that followed was second only to El Alamein, and lasted all through the night. To try and describe the noise and smell is impossible, the whole area disappeared under a blue haze. The cordite made your eyes smart and your throat sore, and nobody, not even the gunners had ear—muffs in those days! Then the impossible happened, I curled up in the bottom of that hole in the ground and fell fast asleep completely oblivious to everything around me.

The next morning we awoke to the good news that the division was moving back out of Germany to a rest area in the region of Diest and Louvain in Belgium. This was something few had dared to hope for and certainly not expected. The whole atmosphere in the company changed in a few minutes. The date was the 9th March 1945.

Without doubt the last fortnight had been the toughest two weeks, both physically and mentally, of the whole campaign so far. I can now appreciate in a small way what the First World War soldiers had to endure in trench warfare.

With the German army now eliminated west of the Rhine, we could now reflect on the general background of this allied victory, and console ourselves upon what has been for us a slow, miserable and costly operation. We had been fighting our way through country where no armoured division could have been expected to fulfil its natural role. We had been confronted by impenetrable forests, impassable bogs, roadblocks, mines and every form of demolition. Except as morale-boosters for the infantry, the tanks had been practically useless. The infantry as usual bore the brunt

of the fighting, and the fact that we advanced at infantry pace meant we were continually on our feet. We'd never experienced such exhaustion before; at times we were out on our feet. Nor was our progress made any easier by the activities of our own troops. Operating now for the first time on German soil they set about the work of destroying towns and villages with undisguised enthusiasm, and the resulting debris frequently delayed traffic for many hours until it could be cleared. We had won this battle but now that the German army was defending the fatherland we could expect even harder battles once we crossed the Rhine.

Casualties

Eleven casualty was recorded in January, it is not certain how many of these would have been 'old hands', certainly Sgt King was or a new reinforcement arrived in December and January.

Name	Initial	Rank	Number	Company	Cause	Date	Location
Aherne	P	Pte	5617583	A	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Cooper	WA	Pte	14736896	A	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Fantham	W	Pte	1693276	C	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Fowles	WG	Pte	14744697	A	KIA	28/02/1945	Udem
Glossop	F	Pte	14736935	A	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
King	WF	Sgt	4105204	S	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Leader	MT	Cpl	4033789	B	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Walters	DA	Pte	3907790	A	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Whalley	AR	L/Cpl	4031097	B	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Wise	WJJ	L/Cpl	4036308	S	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem
Wright	CAJ	Pte	14734569	A	KIA	27/02/1945	Udem

Over 1.7 million Medal Index Cards (MIC) for the Second World War have just been released. They are for the Army only and for soldiers that had been discharged. They cover the Home Guard as well as 'regular' soldiers. They give information about the person claiming the medals and the medal entitlement. Where they exist for Herefordshire casualties they are reproduced below.

The Herefordshire Regiment were administered by the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry and in many cases the Regiment is shown on MICs as KSLI.

The addresses show men from all over the UK which indicates that men were drafted to The Herefordshire Regiment from other units with no geographic affiliation. Additionally in 1942 a revised numbering system was introduced where all soldiers were 'numbered' on the General Service Corps number – 8 digits starting with a 1 – and again indicates that many men serving with the Herefords had started their army service after 1942 – at the end of training they would be allocated to units again with no geographic affiliation.

Photographs are from the project being conducted by Bob Curtis to acquire photographs of all 11 Armd Div casualties. Bob's uncle was killed in action with The Herefords in July 1944. [[6 - Casualties / Herefordshire Light Infantry Museum](#)]

The MIC for Pte Aherne has information redacted – the reason for this is not known. The card shows that he had previously served in the Far East and had qualified for the Burma Star Medal.

(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) LATE

Number 5617583.	Christian or First names PATRICK	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary AHERNE
Class of Release or Discharge and Date KIA 27/2/45	Age and Service Group No. 29 years	Rank PTE
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) HEREFORD REGIMENT SHROPSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY		

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

(Name) **S/14**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number — if appropriate)

STARS/CLASPS

5/14

26 FEB 1948

MEDALS: ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS	
1939-45 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PACIFIC <input type="checkbox"/>
ATLANTIC <input type="checkbox"/>	BURMA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AIR CREW <input type="checkbox"/>	ITALY <input type="checkbox"/>
EUROPE <input type="checkbox"/>	FRANCE & GERMANY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AFRICA <input type="checkbox"/>	
MEDALS	
DEFENCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WAR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 50

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



1st Battalion Herefordshire Regiment
William Arnold Cooper
14736896 KIA 27/2/45 (18)

(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 14736896	Christian or First names WILLIAM ARNOLD	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary COOPER
Class of Release or Discharge and Date —	Age and Service Group No. —	Rank PTE
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) K S L I		

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

(Name) **MR. & MRS. COOPER.**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number — if appropriate)
**8 VERNON AVENUE
BEESTON
NOTTS.**

STARS/CLASPS

5/1

26 FEB 1950

MEDALS: ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS	
1939-45 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PACIFIC <input type="checkbox"/>
ATLANTIC <input type="checkbox"/>	BURMA <input type="checkbox"/>
AIR CREW <input type="checkbox"/>	ITALY <input type="checkbox"/>
EUROPE <input type="checkbox"/>	FRANCE & GERMANY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AFRICA <input type="checkbox"/>	
MEDALS	
DEFENCE <input type="checkbox"/>	WAR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3-0

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

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Signature of Applicant: _____

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



1st Battalion Herefordshire Regiment
Walter Fantham
1693276 KIA 27/2/45 (25)

(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 1693276	Christian or First names WALTER	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary FANTHAM
Class of Release or Discharge and Date —	Age and Service Group No. —	Rank PTE
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) K S L I		

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

(Name) **MR. A. FANTHAM.**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number — if appropriate)
**THE MEADOWS
HOLTSPUR LANE
WOODBURN GREEN
BUCKS.**

STARS/CLASPS

5/1

26 FEB 1950

MEDALS: ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS	
1939-45 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PACIFIC <input type="checkbox"/>
ATLANTIC <input type="checkbox"/>	BURMA <input type="checkbox"/>
AIR CREW <input type="checkbox"/>	ITALY <input type="checkbox"/>
EUROPE <input type="checkbox"/>	FRANCE & GERMANY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AFRICA <input type="checkbox"/>	
MEDALS	
DEFENCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WAR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4-0

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

(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 14 744 697	Christian or First names WILLIAM GEORGE	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary FOWLES.
Class of Release or Discharge and Date —	Age and Service Group No. —	Rank PLT
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)		K S L I

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

(Name) **MR. S. J. FOWLES.**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number —if appropriate)
**8 LANDSEER HOUSE
FRAMPTON ST.
LONDON N.W. 8.**

This Box for War Office Use Only

S STARS/ CLASPS
51 26 FEB 1950
MEDALS ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1939-45	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PACIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ATLANTIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURMA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AIR CREW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ITALY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EUROPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FRANCE & GERMANY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AFRICA	

MEDALS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEFENCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WAR 3-0
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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.....



(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 14 736 935	Christian or First names FREDERICK	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary GLOSSOP.
Class of Release or Discharge and Date —	Age and Service Group No. —	Rank PLT
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)		K S L I

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

(Name) **MR. F. GLOSSOP**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number —if appropriate)
**1 COUNCIL HOUSES
ELTON
MATLOCK, DERBY.**

This Box for War Office Use Only

S STARS/ CLASPS
52 5 MAR 1950
MEDALS ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1939-45	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PACIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ATLANTIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURMA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AIR CREW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ITALY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EUROPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FRANCE & GERMANY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AFRICA	

MEDALS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEFENCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WAR 3-0
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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.....

Sgt W F King

HEREFORD SERGEANT KILLED IN ACTION

One of the most popular N.C.O.'s in the Herefordshire Battalion now serving on the Western Front has been killed in action—Sgt. W. F. King, son of Mrs. C. King, of 9, Boycott Road, Hereford, whose home was at 32, Bryngwyn Terrace, Hereford.

His widow, who with his little daughter, is now staying with her parents-in-law, has received a letter from the Brigadier, in which he said: "Your husband was my mortar platoon sergeant when I commanded the Battalion, and he continued doing excellent work afterwards. The success of his platoon was to a very large degree due to his personality and leadership, and his loss is greatly felt. I assure you that we who are left will see to it that his sacrifice shall not be in vain."

Sgt. King was one of the three N.C.O.'s who were photographed while talking to our representative during his recent visit to the Battalion. He also appeared in last week's group of men from the city and county of Hereford serving in "S" Company, and was one of the original members of the Battalion when they landed in France shortly after D-Day, he having been with them since the Territorial camp shortly before the outbreak of war. His cheerfulness in all circumstances will, in addition to his efficient leadership, be missed by his comrades. He was home on leave in the middle of January.

Since the age of 14, Sgt. King had been employed until the beginning of the war for 14 years in the chilling section of Messrs. H. P. Bulmer and Co.'s cider factory, and, in this connection also, was very popular with all the staff. A skilful boxer, he took part in a number of tournaments at the Drill Hall. He joined the Herefordshire Regiment as a Territorial in April, 1939.

Mrs. King had three other sons serving in the Forces. One of them, Signalman Ronald T. King, R.N., was killed at sea last November. He was employed at the Westfields Cold Storage Depot before joining the Navy at the age of 17, in June, 1943.

Of the other two sons, Wireless Operator Albert E. King, R.A.F., has been a prisoner-of-war in Germany since August, 1941. Before joining the R.A.F. in January, 1940, he was employed at Messrs. Curry's, High Town. His wife is serving in the A.T.S.

The fourth son, Cpl. Harold H. King, R.A.F., joined the R.A.F. as an electrician in December, 1939. He returned to England, where he is now serving, after 4½ years' service in the Middle East, during which, in June, 1942, he was wounded. He was employed by the S.W. and S. Electric Power Company before the war.

The late Mr. W. King served with the 1st Herefordshire Battalion throughout the last war. He died on 1st February, 1935.



With War Correspondent Mr Wedlake

Handwritten notes from the Regiment Enlistment Register:

4405204 KING 33 Bryngwyn Terrace, Hereford, H.P. Bulmer & Co. 1/4/39
 William King
 11 Wells Ave
 Hereford
 3/1/39

102 Gunn 3rd Mortar
 St. (W.S. 8.10.41)

Extract from the Regiment Enlistment Register

APPLICATION FOR ISSUE OF CAMPAIGN STARS AND MEDALS, Ex-Army Personnel (C.S. 20)

WRITE IN INK IN BLOCK CAPITALS

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

Number: **4105204** Christian or First names: **WILLIAM** Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary: **KING**

Class of Release or Discharge and Date: / / Age and Service Group No. / Rank: **SQT** 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): **K S L I**

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

(Name) **MRS. D. KING**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County or Postal District and Number—if appropriate) **32 BRYNGWYN TERRACE, HEREFORD.**

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

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS

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

MEDALS

DEFENCE WAR 4-0

Box for War Office Use Only

STARS CLASPS

535 MAR 1950

MEDALS ISSUED

SHIFNAL

KILLED IN ACTION. — Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Leader, 7, Orchard Road, have received notification that their second son, Corporal M. I. Leader (Mick), was killed in action in Western Europe in February. Aged 24, he had been in the Army 5½ years. The parents have three more sons serving, Frank (Western Europe), Jim (Italy), and Dennis (Burma).



(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: 4023789 Christian or First names: MICHAEL TOM Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary: LEADER

Class of Release or Discharge and Date: 4023789 Age and Service Group No.: BPL Rank: 1st 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): 1st HEREFORD REGT. T.A.

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

(Name) _____
(Full Address Post T. County Postal and —if app) _____

NOTE—YOUR STARS or MEDALS may not be issued for SEVERAL MONTHS receiving them, send a postcard at once to War Office marked "Medals: New Address" and showing (1) the new address and fill No. name and last Regiment or Corps.

Signature Applicant: _____ claiming as legate next-of-kin, stab relationship to deceased

STARS/CLASPS
20 17 JAN 1949
MEDALS ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1939-45	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PACIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ATLANTIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURMA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AIR CREW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ITALY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EUROPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FRANCE & GERMANY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AFRICA	

MEDALS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEFENCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WAR 4-0
---	---

No MIC exists for Pte Walters, but he had seen previous service with The South Wales Borderers and had qualified for the India General Service Medal with clasp 'North West Frontier 1936/37'.

FIRST BATTALION, THE SOUTH WALES BORDERERS. Corps or Department.

D. D. (Medal) No. 79, 38 55

Medal roll of individuals entitled to the India General Service Medal, 1936 and Clasps (or clasps only) under Army Instruction (India) 254 of 1938

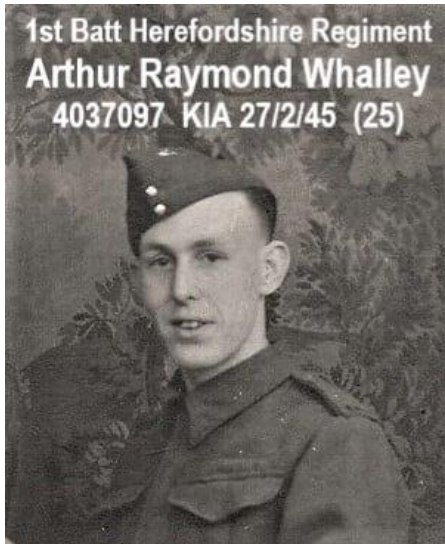
AT THE TIME THE DECORATION WAS EARNED.			Corps or department in which the decoration was earned.	If already in receipt of I. G. S. Medal (Yes or No).	STATE CLASPS ENTITLED TO UNDER ABOVE-QUOTED ARMY INSTRUCTION (INDIA).		If forfeited, state cause.	Remarks
Regimental or departmental number.	Rank.	NAME			6	7		
✓ 3906065 441	Sergeant	WADE T. W.	1st Bn. The South Wales Borderers.	No	North West Frontier, 1936/37.			
✓ 3907875 442	Private	WALL E. G.	-do-	No	-do-			
3907790	Private	WALTERS D. A.	-do-	No	-do-	11B 2102 June/39 AS/145/1980		Now T.A.R.
✓ 3908640 443	Private	WALTERS E. H.	-do-	No	-do-			
3908130	Private	WALTON M.	-do-	No	-do-	11B 2510 June/39 AS/165/2213		Now 2. Bn. S.W.B.
✓ 3908424 444	Private	WARD E.	-do-	No	-do-			
✓ 3903416 445	Sergeant	WARD W. M.	-do-	No	-do-			
3907661	Private	WARDLEY W. L.	-do-	No	-do-	11B 2291 June/39 AS/165/2171		Now T.A.R.
4075283	Private	WARE G. H.	-do-	No	-do-	11B 2101 June/39 AS/165/1979		Now T.A.R.
✓ 3908294 446	Private	WAREHAM R. H.	-do-	No	-do-			
✓ 3908586 447	Private	WARNER J.	-do-	No	-do-			
✓ 3908354 448	Private	WATERS D. G.	-do-	No	-do-			
✓ 3908965 449	Private	WATERS W. J.	-do-	No	-do-			
3907842	Private	WATKINS G.	-do-	No	-do-			
✓ 4076547 450	Private	WATKINS E. J.	-do-	No	-do-	11B 1500 June/39 AS/165/1978		Now T.A.R.

I certify that the individuals named in this roll were actually present on the occasion for which the decoration is claimed.

Place: **LANDIKOTAL**
Date: **10 NOV. 1938**

LIEUT. COLONEL.
COMMANDANT, 1ST BN. THE SOUTH WALES BORDERERS
Signature and rank of officer personally cognizant of the services of the individuals.

11B/2561
30/6/39



No MIC is located for Pte Whalley.



(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 4036308	Christian or First names WILLIAM JESSE JOHN	Surname of Officer, soldier or auxiliary WISE
Class of Release or Discharge and Date	Age and Service Group No.	Rank HEPL
		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) K.S.L.I.

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

(Name) **MRS. G. WISE**

(Full Postal Address, with Post Town and County — or Postal District and Number -if appropriate)
**CONGLETON RD.
MOW COP.
3-0-T**

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.....

This Box for War Office Use Only

STARS: ASPS

9 MAR 1950

36 MEDALS: ISSUED

Strike out items which were NOT awarded

STARS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1939-45	<input type="checkbox"/> PACIFIC
<input type="checkbox"/> ATLANTIC	<input type="checkbox"/> BURMA
<input type="checkbox"/> AIR CREW	<input type="checkbox"/> ITALY
<input type="checkbox"/> EUROPE	<input type="checkbox"/> FRANCE & GERMANY
<input type="checkbox"/> AFRICA	

MEDALS

DEFENCE WAR 4-0

Wounded

There are no known reports of woundings in February, but given the engagement at Udem many were been wounded as indicated in the War Diary and the reduction in OR strength is reflected in the OR strength return for the 3 March.

Feb; 27th.	Killed; Offrs	NIL	OR's	11
	wounded	" 4	"	40
Feb; 28th.	Killed	" NIL	"	NIL
	wounded	" NIL	"	12

Honours & Awards

The following awards were presented in February.

Name	Rank	Number	Award	For Action On
Hartnett, HJ	WO2	6009650	MM	27/02/1945
Carroll, J	Pte	4460383	MM	27/02/1945

(1289) Wt.10520/1885 240,000 5/44 FHD Gp33/10 Army Form W.3121

Date recommendation passed forward
 Received 10 MAR 45
 Passed 26 MAR 45

159 Inf Brigade 1 Armd Division 2 Canadian Corps
 Schedule No. Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt
 Rank and Army or Personal No. W/C.S.M. 8009650
 Name HARTNETT, Harry John
 (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)
At UDEM on the 27 February 1945 (MR 9841 Sheet 4303) the battalion was passing through to form up on the SOUTH side to attack and capture the GOCHFORTZ further to the EAST. Although reported clear, the exits to UDEM were covered by every kind of SA, HE and AP fire. Several tanks were "set on fire", and the streets were alive with bullets and bursting HE. It was essential to get "A" Coy through to commence the attack on time. This Coy composed of 50% reinforcements, who had not yet been in action, was in danger of "going to ground", when GSM Hartnett appeared. By his magnificent example and complete disregard for his own safety, this Warrant Officer personally so inspired these young inexperienced soldiers that they reformed and moved forward notwithstanding the concentration of fire. GSM Hartnett then proceeded to search the houses into which some of the Coy had moved for cover, and recovered the stragglers. It was entirely due to this gallant Warrant Officer's actions that the Coy did in fact arrive on the Start Line in time for zero hour. These actions for a man who could have sat in the Coy Carrier bringing up amm, bear the stamp of a true and fearless leader, with the highest state of devotion to duty.	<i>[Signature]</i> Lt Col Comd 1 HEREFORD (GR Turner Cain)	MM (Immediate)	M.M 7.6.46

(1299) Wt.10520/1885 240,000 5/44 FHD Gp38/10 Army Form W.3121

Date recommendation passed forward 27 Jun 4
 Received 28.6.45
 Passed 5.7.45

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 8th Corps
 Schedule No. Unit The Herefordshire Regt
 Rank and Army or Personal No. Private 4460383
 Name CARROLL, John
 (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)
Pte Carroll landed with the Bn in Jun 44, and has served in a Rifle Coy throughout the whole campaign. He has carried out various duties within the Coy. As a rifleman, Bren Gunner, 2 inch Mortarman, and Coy Runner, he has always displayed the greatest keenness and devotion to duty. On the DORTMUND EMS CANAL on 1 Apr 45, his Coy were seriously counter attacked in a wood. One platoon was virtually over-run, and there was a danger of the Coy being surrounded. Pte CARROLL worked his Bren Gun to the flank of the enemy, and engaged them with such good effect that his Coy Comd was given time to stabilise the position. At UDEM (MR 9943 Sheets 2A&3 1/250,000) on 27 Feb 45, he volunteered to take amm and rations to the forward elements of his Coy locality. Although the area was under constant small arms and mortar fire, he went from trench to trench giving out ammunition and a cheery word to all. /.... On these 24 JAN 1946	(W.A.P. Croft) <i>[Signature]</i> Maj Comd 1 HEREFORD <i>[Signature]</i> Brig Comd 159 Inf Bde (JB CHURCHER DSE) <i>[Signature]</i> Maj Genl Comd 11 Armd Div <i>[Signature]</i> Lieut Genl. Comd 8 Corps.	M M (Periodical)	P.A.H. MS 30.10.45 P.T.O. ===

On these and many other occasions, Pte CARROLL's personal courage and willingness to carry out the most unpleasant tasks by day or night, have been an inspiration to his comrades.

He was wounded in the last action of the campaign.

(Faint, mostly illegible text, possibly a transcription of a letter or report, including names like 'Private' and 'Company')'

If a casualty as under, fill in date.

Nature of Casualty	Date
Killed in action	
Died of Wounds	
Died	
Missing	
Prisoner of War	

Officers' Plot

See Separate post

ORs' Strength Return

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
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	
27/01/1945	1	8	8	36	69	751		873	
03/03/1945	1	7	7	34	58	626		733	

Reinforcements continued to arrive; these included 3 lads from the black Country – Ray Griffiths, Tom Freeman and Cedric Holdnall. Cedric was to be killed in action and after retiring in 2000 Ray Griffiths

began researching the history of the Herefordshire Regiment during his time with it and the circumstances of Cedric's death. He published his research and it is quoted from in this history.

Ray's story began on his 18th birthday, in August 1944 when his call up papers arrived in the post.

He reported to Norton Barracks in Worcester for initial training where he first met Tom and Cedric. He recalled being met at Worcester Foregate Street Station by a Sergeant Major who called for 'the gentlemen for Norton Barracks'; the only time in his military service when he was called a gentleman!

Twelve weeks basic training was followed by 6 weeks intensive infantry training at Crickhowell, and the trio left for France on 17th February 1945.

They joined the Herefords in March and their story will be picked up then.

