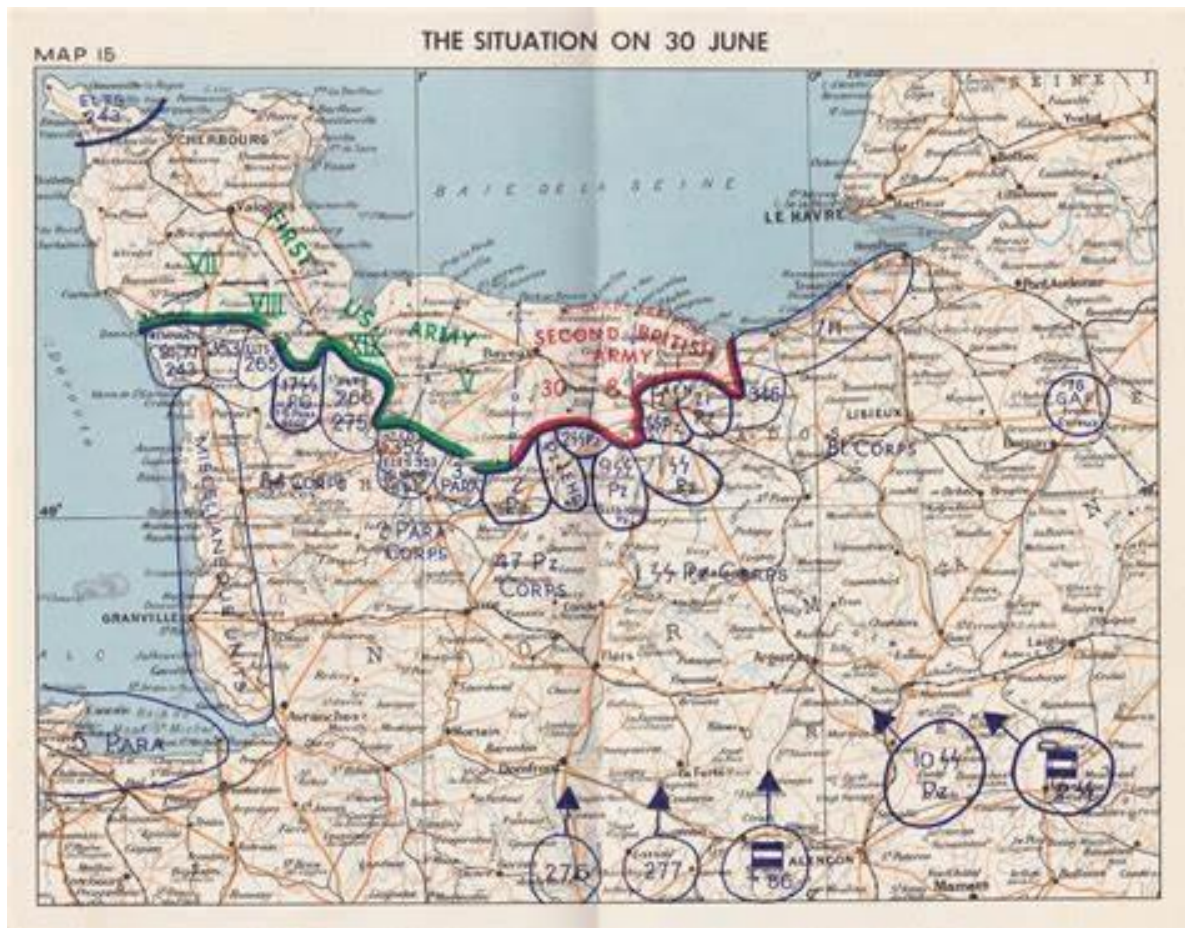


1st BATTALION THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT – JULY 1944

The Battalion had endured their first direct engagement with the enemy and a trying and bloody engagement it had proved to be. They had held a forward bridgehead under determined enemy attack and survived artillery, mortar and infantry counter attacks. Survival had not been without cost, at least 12 men had been killed in action, some had died later as a result of their wounds, and over 100 men had been wounded.

The Battalion, with the Division was exhausted and had been severely tested, but had not been found wanting and were now in a period of recuperation and reconstitution before being thrust forward again.

The beach head was now secure, next must come the breakout which the German forces would resist in the strongest terms and again would prove costly to both sides.



[Hesketh] By 5 Jul the Battalion was craving for sleep. It had been a hard 8 days with little rest and the weather had not been kind. The troops had stood up to the severe enemy shelling and mortaring and had received close attention from moaning minnies. It would have been a severe test for battle experienced troops let alone a Battalion of whom almost 100% were beginners at the game. By the end of it everybody was an old campaigner. Morale was steady but physique limp. Good spirit was nurtured by the very consoling influence of an old friend of the Battalion – the Corps Padre, who

wandered around section positions at all times of the day, chatting with the men, giving them the latest news on other fronts and appearing as if the whole thing was just another exercise.

During this first engagement each sub unit of the Battalion had been subjected to a severe test and they had stood it well. Rifle corps had been on patrol by day and night; changed position and dug in again; stood to 100% for long periods on end, been subjected to heavy shelling and countless rumours. The mortars had fired both HE and smoke and learned that they were also expected to operate in a ground role by night. The carriers had been used in defence and on offensive patrols; during one of the latter they lost their platoon commander, who was the first officer killed – a great loss. The anti tank PI had been used to thicken up the rifle companies as well as in their own role (although they did not get a shoot). The pioneers were used as a rifle platoon and also had to lay some mines. The signallers had the unenviable task of keeping line and wireless open over long distances through woods and valleys. The SBs worked unceasingly to tend the wounded. Battalion HQ had to operate 24 hours a day for 8 days and last but not least the Q Department had to bring up our supplies daily along roads that were often cut by the enemy and were always dark, muddy and crowded. Who could have thought that in a week we should lose our CO (promoted Brigadier), 2 Company Commanders (Wounded) and over a hundred other casualties. How can we carry on? But we were soon to learn, as we so often learned again and again, that no one is indispensable provided the spirit of those that remain is intact.

In the afternoon of the 5 Jul and advance party from 4 Dorsets arrived to take over. By 0200hrs 6 Jul the relief had been completed without interference and the Battalion was on its way back to a rest area at Fresney-le-Crotteur.

WAR DIARY

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

Sheet 2
WAR DIARY
OR
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C 2118
Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry P gade
Commanding Officer _____

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

Month and Year... JULY, 1944.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BLA	5 Jul	(Cont'd)	few minutes no shelling or mortar fire was brought down on the Brigade area. Lt-Col J.B. Churcher took over command of the Brigade from Brigadier J.G. Sandie.	act "O"
	6 Jul	}	The relief was completed by 0500 hrs though the 150 Infantry Brigade took over the full responsibility of the line at 0210 hrs, when the two forward units were relieved by units of their brigade. The rest area was ST GABRIEL and surrounding villages. The time was spent cleaning up, sleeping, make and mend etc, and replacing damaged equipment.	act "C"
	7 Jul			
	8 Jul			
	14 Jul		The Brigade was put at two hours notice, so as to be able to assist in a counter-attack role in the Haut du Bosq area.	
	16 Jul		The Brigade was ordered to concentrate in the area LE BAS DE BANVILLE, East of the ORNE, NE of GAEN. To be in position by daylight on 17 Jul, and to keep under cover all day 17 Jul.	act "F" and "G"
	17 Jul		The move was completed by 0430 hrs, slit trenches were dug and vehicles camouflaged. Orders were given out to units for the forthcoming attack on 18 Jul, the Brigade leading the attack, followed by 29 Armd Bde, Gds Armd Div and 7 Armd Div.	act
	18 Jul		At 0530 hrs, by bombers, Fortresses and Mitchells opened the day with 90 minutes of bombing on enemy positions. The 3 MON moved off to the SL and was reported across at Zero hour, 0745 hrs, with objective CUVERVILLE. At 0830 hrs 3 MON reported going into CUVERVILLE. At the same time, 29 Armd Bde was passing on left flank, our right flank being protected by Sqn of 2-N YEC. At 0858 hrs, 3-MON reported in objective and dealing satisfactorily with enemy. Herefords moved to their SL and reported on objective at 1015 hrs. Many PW captured and many enemy killed. 3 MON then ordered to	act

Cont'd ... /

22295 Wt. 33096/1140 1.000m 12/40-Mec & Co Ltd-51-9212 Form 02118/22

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

Sheet 3
WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Month and Year... JULY, 1944

(Delete heading not required).

Commanding Officer

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BLA	18 Jul	(Cont'd)	continue advance and take DEMOUVILLE. DEMOUVILLE reported clear by 1450 hrs. A bde of the 51 (H) Div took over GOUVERVILLE from 3 MON. The KSLI then moved down to the line of rd and ry SOUTH of DEMOUVILLE. At 1710 hrs the Bde Comd informs the General he is ready to move to any new position he may be required to take. Bde HQ moved fwd to area EAST of GOUVERVILLE. The Bde was ordered to move to a pivot area just NORTH of LE MESINE FREMENTEL. At approx 1945 hrs all units were in new positions with the 29 Arm Bde to the SOUTH and SW and 7 Arm Div to the SE, and the Gds Arm Div to the EAST. Very few casualties were incurred during the day, whilst heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. Approx 500 PW were taken during the day, with various identifications, mostly of the 16 LIR of 16 GAF.	
	19 Jul		The Bde remained in the same location most of day. An attack was arranged with co-operation with our Arm Bde. Objectives - BRAS and HUBERT POLLE; at the same time the 7 Arm and Gds Arm were laying on attacks. At 1700 hrs the MONS on their SL were called forward to clear BRAS. This was done with little incident. The KSLI were ordered to stand by to be called fwd to HUBERT POLLE at 2230 hrs, KSLI ordered forward 2240, 4 KSLI reported having difficulty, being fired on from left flank, at 2300 hrs, 4 KSLI were on their objective, and at 2315 hrs the Arm Regt was withdrawn. 1 HERFORD took up position in reserve behind 3 MON and 4 KSLI.	
	20 Jul		The Bde continued to hold present positions, and were warned that they were going to be relieved by the 7 Cdn Bde, which was done during the day. The 3 MON, the last to be relieved, were engaged in a tank battle on their Western flank, KO to 3 Tigers out of seven. All reported in new reserve area around MESNIL LE FREMENTEL by 2000 hrs. The Bde came	

WL 6724 828 2,000,000 248 W. H. A. S. 61/1872

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Sheet 4
WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118

Unit Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade

Month and Year... JULY, 1944.

(Erase heading not required)

Commanding Officer

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BLA	20 Jul	(Cont'd)	under comd of 7 Arm Bde Div from 1600 hrs whilst our own Arm Bde had a refit in reserve area. The 159 Bde were in counter-attack role on immediate call. General Roberts, GOC, sent all units in the Div "congratulations" on good work carried out during the last two days.	
	21 Jul		The Bde remained in the present location, although under great difficulties through mud, rain and shelling the Bde tried to reorganise, refit, re-equip, etc. The Bde was ordered to concentrate in the BURON area with the rest of the Div on 22 Jul. The 1 GORDONS of 51 (H) Div took over our present position.	
	22 Jul		During the whole day the Bde moved back to new area. The rds were in a dreadful state owing to mud and traffic congestion. The last Bn did NOT arrive in the new area until 0730 hrs 23 Jul.	
	23 - 27 Jul		The Bde concentrated in the BURON area, time spent in cleaning up etc. The Bde was ordered to recon an area in the CHEUX area, for a counter-attack role, with 4 Arm Bde, Bde was at 4 hrs call.	
	28 Jul		The Div was ordered to move to new concentration area SOUTH of BAILLEROY in readiness for an 8 Corps attack in the morning of 30.	
	29 Jul		At 0400 hrs the Bde moved and was in new area at 1000 hrs. Orders were given out during the day. The day was spent lying low. The attack was to consist of a right flank protection to 15(S) Div moving on two routes, RIGHT route 159 Inf Bde Gp less 3 MON, plus 2 FF YED, LEFT route 29 Arm Bde less 2 FF YED plus 3 MON. At 0800 hrs bomber support was to be given.	

(Cont'd)

22293 Wt. 33096/1140 1,000m 12/40-McC & Co Ltd-51-8212 Form C 2118/22

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Sheet 5

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit... Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade.

Month and Year.....

(Erase heading not required).

Commanding Officer

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BLA	30 Jul		<p>0655 hrs - H Hr. The two groups moved off at H Hr, and both colns had difficulty with minefields on SL, some our own, some enemy. The 1 HEREFORD (0730) soon got to the their first objective. Fire reported from Gussy, two sub units were sent off to deal with the opposition, quite by cas were inflicted on 1 HEREFORD by mortar fire. The KSLI were then ordered fwd. The F & F Yeo were making slow progress owing to mines and close country. On LEFT route, the 3 MON and two Armd Regts got into SEPT VENNES, reporting the roads being frightfully narrow and difficult also mined and booby trapped. PWs taken coming from 752 GR of 326 Inf Div. At approx 1345 hrs 1 HEREFORD put in attack on SOUTH side of their objective in preparation for KSLI to be passed through on to second objective in the area BASSELLIERE. The F & F YEO were pushing strongly SOUTH, little opposition; during the afternoon TEMPEST rocket bombers give sp on numerous targets during the afternoon with good results. The Div Comd ordered everyone on as fast as possible on to final objective, - high ground ST MARTIN DES BESSACES to LE COUNAILLE. The Bde Gp and Armd Gp both reported an objective during night - little opposition. 2 N YEO giving right flank protection.</p>	
	31 Jul.		<p>The early morning was passed by KSLI and 1 HEREFORD digging in on their new positions, earling morning the KSLI were asked to help the 29 Armd Bde to clear ST MARTIN DE BESSACES. This action was cancelled twice and plan changed twice before being finally executed owing to our own shelling. By approx 1300 hrs the village was clear. The Bde was warned that it may have to move fwd shortly in SW direction towards LA CANAILLE - PT AINAY. The 15 (S) Div were ordered to take over from our Armd Bde and KSLI. This was duly done after many delays. The KSLI were then returned to their previous location. The 1 HEREFORD were ordered to embus and move in TGVs with F & F YEO along rd to CANAILLE. Slight opposition reported along route was satisfactorily overcome. The GOC ordered the Bde to form fire base, 1 HEREFORD to remain</p>	

WL 41040/1900 500,000 12/41 W.I.I.S.S. 51-4078

Cont'd...

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Sheet 6

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit... Headquarters, 159 Infantry Brigade.

Month and Year.....

(Delete heading not required).

Commanding Officer

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BLA	31 Jul (Cont'd)		<p>present location area LE PITS and 4 KSLI area to the SOUTH. The Armd Bde plus 4 KSLI area LA FERRIERE. During the early evening, the General ordered the xxxxxx 2 pls of 1 HEREFORD and two tps of FF YEO to make recon towards CANAILLE.</p>	

The Battalion WD including annotations from Lt K Crockford.

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WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Sheet -3-

Army Form C. 2116.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year July 44.

(Delete heading not required).

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Tournaville	1	1700	Mortar bomb fell on C coy H.Q. "O" group. 30 3 Ofrs wounded, 1 C.O. killed. In future all H.Q.s will have sufficient trenches to accommodate "O" gns, visitors etc.	
	1/2	2300	Enemy movement heard from ESQUAY. DP tasks fired. Patrols sent out after barrage reported enemy withdrawing in confusion and screaming.	
	3		Coys wiring in posns.	
	3/4		Patrol from C coy patrolled to pt 113 ref 931604. Enemy working parties reported between EVRECOY and ESQUAY, probably mining.	
			Number of corpses seen.	
	4		Mines laid fwd of B?C, and D coys.	
	5	1500	Minefields completed.	
	5	1500	Adv party from 4 DORSETS, 130 Inf Bde, arrived.	
	6	0200	Bn relieved by 4 and withdrawn to rest area FRESNAY le CROTTEUR REF 893785 sheet 7F/1. Route (Bottle) TOURNAVILLE, CHEUX, Le MESNIL PATRY, COULOMBS.	

WL 47724 988 2,000,000 S.40 W. H. & S. 51/6975

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

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Sheet -4-

Army Form C. 2116.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year July 44.

(Delete heading not required).

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

WL 47724 988 2,000,000 S.40 W. H. & S. 51/6975

Op Goodwood

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

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

Sheet 5.

Army Form G. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year July 44.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
RAMVILLE.	18	0611	on high ground E. of CUVERVILLE 112690 to obtain firm base for next phase. Attack successful.	
	18	0830	2nd Phase. Remainder of Bn moved up behind D Coy, A, right C, left, B in reserve, and passed through to capture wooded area E. of DEMOUVILLE. Attack successful and Bn consolidated area 110687. Considerable numbers of prisoners captured by C Coy.	
DEMOUVILLE	18	2020	Bn ordered to occupy high ground taken by armour - GRANTHEVILLE area. Pivot taken up 095657.	
	18	2130	Bn in posn.	
	19		Area subjected to shelling throughout day, evidently all wooded areas, landmarks etc. registered enemy D.F. tasks.	
	19	1615	29 Arm'd Bde attacked and captured BRAS. 061632 and HUBERT-FOLIE 066622, 159 Inf Bde followed up attack to take over from the armour, and mop up. Objectives - 3 Mons, BRAS, KSLI, HUBERT-FOLIE - 1 Hfds, reverse slope at 067632	

WL 47724 908 2,000,000 8-48 W. H. & S. 51/6075

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

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

Sheet -6-

Army Form G. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year July 44.

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

WL 47724 908 2,000,000 8-48 W. H. & S. 51/6075

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P.S. Regs. Vol. 1. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.211B. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required)

Sheet -7-

Army Form G. 211b.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year..... July 44.

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

M M
Pte William Wirmill
(Shetland Boats)

LIEUT COLONEL
Comdg. 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Regiment

W. 11721 002 2,000,000 242 W. 11. 4. 45. 81673

Op Bluecoat

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in P.S. Regs. Vol. 1. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.211B. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Delete heading not required)

Army Form G. 211b.

Unit 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Re...

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. S. M. Turner O.M.

Month and Year..... August 44.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
itot	24-28	July	Bn rested and refitted after taking part in the thrusts East of Caen.	3713 Sheet 7F/1
	29	0300	Bn left Bitot to come W of Caumont for the operation that was to result in the Allied break-out of the Normandy DM.	
	30	0645	Bn arrived in new cone area Ref. 6664 Sheet 6F/2 west of Caumont.	
BLACK SUNDAY	30	0300	Bn left cone area and marched fwd to attack in the area 6059-6056. During the night Bn cleared a lane through a mine-field laid by the allies but it was not done properly, and at the very commencement of the attack a carrier was blown up. The attack was carried out with the co-operation of tks and a way was found round the mine-field. The Bn quickly gained the 1st obj, Orchard, ref 600588 where it had to wait 2 1/2 hrs whilst air bombardment of successive objs. took place. COys took up posns preparatory to advancing to line of rdcaumont 7059 and Torigny 5654. The orchard area was one of the enemies D.F. tasks and was covered by M.G.s. the latter	G.F.C. and ...

M.C.
Pte Jack P. Riddle
Pte Bob Hesketh
Pte Richard Howe (404)

W. 11721 002 2,000,000 242 W. 11. 4. 45. 81673

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. 1, Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. (2)19. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

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

Army Form C. 2115.
 1st. The Herefordshire Rgt.
 Unit.....
 Commanding Officer Lt. Col. G.R. Turner, O.B.E.

Month and Year: August 1944

Place	Date	Hour	cont from page 1. Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
			being eliminated by degreessary cas. were received in these posns both to Cffrs and men probably 100% in all. Enemy mines were encountered on leaving the orchard but by 1500 hrs the rd was gained. The tks adv south of the rd firing into the hedgerows with the inf in close sup for some 1,000 yds, and we then were through the enemy posns. The 4 K.S.L.I. then passed through and first Herefordshires then followed conc n for the night at La Basselière by 2100 hrs. The cas. by the bn in the operation were, Wounded 28 Cffrs, 102 C.R.s Killed 18 Cffrs, 19 C.R.s. Remained figures above: $K 2.7$ $W 106$ $R 133$ Ratio $5:1$	* K 2.7 W 106 R 133
	31 July	0430	bn adv on foot unopposed.	
		0830	Arr. at La Baseliere ^{Fouquierie} . Ref 6653. Sheet 6F/4.	
		1100	bn cont adv on foot and took up posn for the night at X rds 6540. Contact was made with the Americans on our right flank for the first time.	
	1 Aug	0500	bn moved slightly E. in order to marry up with the 2 P&F preparatory to the adv. Liaison by higher fmn with the American forces appears to have	
		0930		

WL4724 888 2,000,000 8.18" W.H.A.S. 51/575



At Rest

[Churcher] The next day [5 Jul] we had orders to withdraw from the position that we had held so strongly for five days. We were going to be relieved by 53 Welsh Division. It so happened that I knew the GSO1 who had been the youngest teacher to me at the Staff college in '39. So we made a very

carefully organised plan. I didn't fire much artillery but just sufficient during the night to keep the Boche away but yet not to arouse his suspicions.

Anyhow the plot worked and we took the whole Brigade out without any trouble whatsoever and concentrated it in the St Gabrielle area. The Div Comd visited me there and confirmed my appointment as Brigade Commander of 159 Infantry Brigade. My whole experience during the battle and subsequently with the Brigadier was an extremely traumatic experience and I hoped that never again would I have to do anything like it and thank goodness! I never did.

We remained fortunately in the area of St. Gabrielle for some five to six days. The troops were thoroughly rested, bathed, cleaned up and everything put in as near apple-pie order as possible before our next move. The only trouble was that we had approximately 600 casualties [*in the Bde*] killed and wounded in this battle and the replacements were not forthcoming in time for the next one although we had left out of battle of number of officers and men so that at least we could fill some of the gaps. We were still able to furnish four platoons to the company. I began to wonder at that time how the reinforcement situation would work after battle. It was all clearly laid down in the Regulations but the Regulations under these sort of conditions do not work very well, so for the future I decided to work on a different system and I used to put in for my reinforcements before the battle took place merely making an inspired guess. I am glad to say that in most cases it was pretty accurate and this new system which no-one tumbled to in the rear areas did work well throughout the rest of the campaign. So ends Operation Epsom and so far as 11 Armd Div is concerned and 159 Bde in particular two German Divisions, one Panzer Grenadier and one Panzer had received such a heavy defeat at the hands of our artillery that they did not appear in the order of battle again for some months to come.

The Battalion was to receive reinforcements but the system as indicated by Brig Churcher was not overly reactive and in an effort to build up numbers, as Commanding Officer he despatched the Quartermaster to the rear area to try and pick up men who had been moved to the rear – particularly lightly wounded men and reinforcements. Lt Ken Crockford picks up this thread

[after landing over the beaches and reporting to the Reinforcement Holding Unit (RHU)] We rejoined the other ranks and fell in by regiments. My group of about 30 Herefords were detailed to join 5 Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry (5DCLI).

We moved from the RHU to a large field and were placed some 300 yards behind a 5.5 inch gun battery which was in action. We had not eaten since the previous day and set about preparing a meal from the 2 x 24hr ration packs we had been issued with before leaving England. We had also been issued with a 'tommy cooker' – 2 strips of metal that formed a cruciform and a block of solidified methylated spirits, matches and self heating cans of cocoa, plus a block of chocolate all covered by the instruction 'only to be consumed on the permission of an officer'.

Later that morning a messenger arrived from 5DCLI informing us that we would not be joining them until the next day. However in the late afternoon a 3 ton vehicle arrived which turned out to be an 11 Armd Div truck surmounted by a sign '1st HEREFORDS'. I asked the driver what was going on and he said 'looking for Herefords'. He told me the Battalion had suffered casualties and requests for reinforcements had been in vain. The Bde Comd [*Brig Churcher*



lately Lt Col, CO of The Herefords] had ordered a search be made of the RHUs, Field Hospitals and Dressing Stations for men to be returned to the Battalion. I told the driver not to move and returned to 'my' group of Herefords and told that I was off to join the Herefords and they could join me – they all picked up their packs and climbed into the vehicle. At Bn HQ they were incredulous and delighted. I was posted to 15 Platoon C Company whose Canloan officer (Kotchapaw) had been wounded.

This was to lead to a later incident (after Op Goodwood) which Ken was always pleased to relate with a healthy degree of humour:

We were told that the Brigadier wished to interview all officers who had joined the Battalion since he had handed over command in June. It was accepted that we could not replace our boots and that the wearing of plimsolls would on this occasion be acceptable. Brig Churcher arrived wearing the Herefordshire cap badge on his beret and brigadier's flashes on his battledress blouse. Being the junior I was the last to be interviewed standing on the extreme left of the line.

It appeared that it was impossible to win. Starting with a major he told him that he had come from a very fine regiment and that he did not want their rejects! Others also came from 'very fine regiments'. Some were judged to come from inferior regiments but whether they came from 'very fine' or 'inferior' regiments they were promised that 'he would be closely watching them'.

On termination of each interview the officers saluted and 'fell-out', until I was the only one left. I noticed Colonel Bob (Lt Col Turner-Cain) had a quiet word with the brigadier who then asked me what regiment I had come from. When I replied the 2nd HEREFORDS he said, 'Thank God for that, keep it up'. (He did not add 'I shall be closely watching you' but he obviously did as in 1947 I was to become his ADC).

As he and Colonel Bob were about to take their leave the Colonel turned and said 'Oh Ken I forgot to tell you, you can draw pay when the mobile cash office arrives'. Puzzled I asked why I should need money. He replied, 'Well it's hoped a mobile officers' shop would be in the area later in the day where I could purchase replacement clothing.' (We had not undressed since leaving Bitot some 26 days earlier!) As I still looked puzzled he added, 'You and the soldiers you brought with you from the 2nd were all posted as deserters by the DCLI and your pay stopped. We've sorted it out with Field Records, you are all legal now'. Sadly some had been killed or evacuated wounded by then.

[Crockford] During the next few days I got to know the platoon sergeant, Sgt Lobb, the three section commanders and as many of the men as possible. From them I learned of their experiences of coming under fire from tanks, artillery (the dreaded 88), spandaus (light machine guns) and the multi-barrelled mortar known as 'moaning minnie'. This I was told was mounted on a vehicle or towed. Three or more salvos of six bombs were fired before they changed positions thereby making it almost impossible for them to be located and our guns and mortars could reply. As each bomb reached its culminating point it 'groaned' giving advance warning that six large bombs were descending. These I was told appeared to kill more by blast than by shrapnel. We also marched for miles seeking phantom bath units which had never been in the locations notified or had previously departed.

On the evening of the 15th, the company second in command Capt Ronnie Cowan, on learning that it was to be my twenty-first birthday on the 16th negotiated a chicken from a local farmer. This was cooked on a number one cooker and enjoyed with the issue biscuits and tea (I at that time being teetotal!). I had never previously tasted camembert cheese and after my first mouthful left the remainder to a grateful Ronnie and company commander Major Jack Phillips. There were no other officers left in the company, all three platoon commanders having been wounded on HILL 112. The other two platoons 13 and 14 were commanded by sergeants.

Other rank reinforcements were also received, including Bob Price, from the Black Country, who had completed his training with 10th Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment.

He served with the Herefords throughout the war and wrote an account of his time – ‘Just A Walk In The Sun’. His account will be quoted from in this account and his book’s title has become the title for the Museum podcast.

Bob relates his journey to the unit, which would have been so typical of most of the reinforcements.



Bob was with his unit in Aldershot and warned for a reinforcement draft; he received a 24 hour pass which enabled him to travel home and say farewells to his parents and girlfriend – a most emotional time given the future uncertainty.

On return to his unit with the draft they moved to the RHU in the Dover area and then forward to the port of embarkation for the sea trip to Normandy. He disembarked over the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches on 21 July and spent a few days in a tented transit camp before being allocated to a unit.

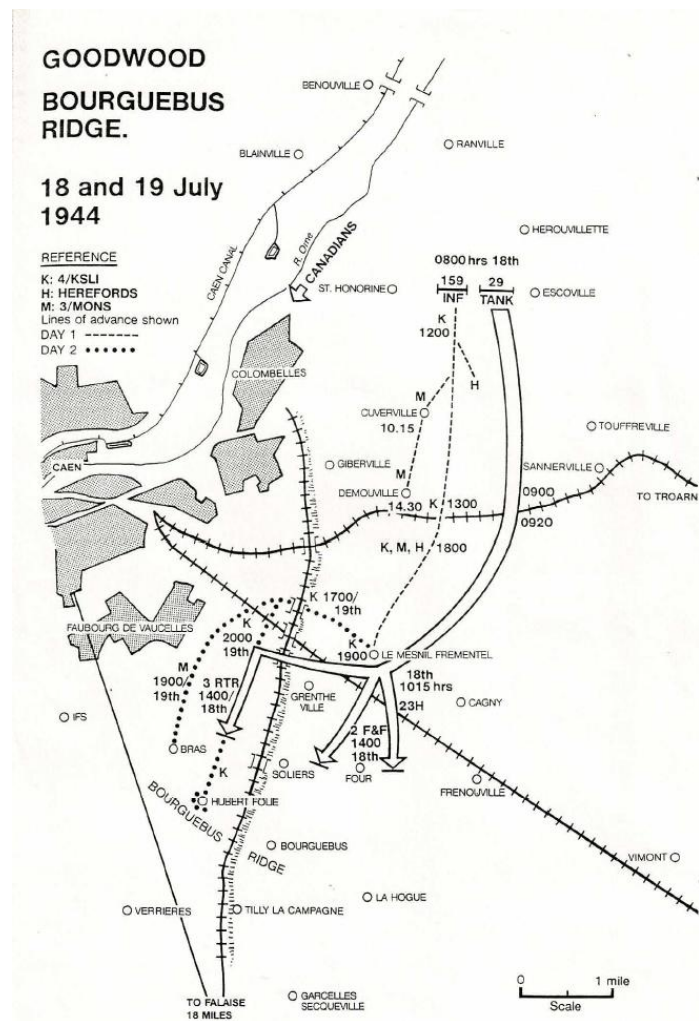
.... about 25 of us travelled by truck up to one of the regiments we didn't know where we were going or what unit we were to join a sentry stopped us and an NCO led us into a field 'dig in along the hedgerow tonight and get some sleep; I'll sort you out tomorrow morning – be as quiet as you can'. My first night in the line was nothing like I expected it to be – quiet, peaceful not a sound. We stood to before First Light; it was getting lighter and we could make out trees and the hedgerow; the grass was wet with dew and there was swirling mist. All around whiffs of smoke were coming out of the [trenches in the] grass and the occupants lit their first cigarette of the day. Men started getting breakfast and somebody brought us a large jug of tea – I didn't know anything could taste so good.

We then found out we were with the 1st Battalion The Herefordshire Regiment – I was quite pleased as this was my sister county. We were then allocated to companies and within the companies to platoons and within the platoons to sections. We made our way forward to our new units on the way passing the detritus of battle including a burnt out truck and the blackened bodies of its crew. As soon as we arrived our location came under mortar fire which was soon countered and silenced (to our loud cheering) by our 25 pounders. For us the war had started for real.

The Next Engagement – OP Goodwood

[Hesketh] One of the objects of the operation which landed the Battalion on the Odon bridgehead had been the attempted breakout of the 2nd Army from the Normandy bridgehead. After that failed it was decided to concentrate a powerful armoured force in the area NE of Caen and force a way out along the rolling ground SE of the town in the direction of Falaise.

This country was well suited for tanks, being much more open than the close bocage and orchard country which was all that had been encountered so far. 11 Guards and 7 Armd Divs had been selected for this role along with 3 British and 3 Canadian Inf Divs. 3 British were giving left flank protection and operating in the closely wooded country on the left while 3 Canadian Div was working on the right flank of the proposed spearhead, clearing the industrial area of Caen on the East side of the Orne. On 16 Jul we moved up to a recced concentration area in Ranville, about 10 Kms north of Caen itself. The move was not without excitement. Two days were allowed for the forces to concentrate. Concealment and security were essential if surprise was to be achieved and our move was therefore made by night. The following day movement in the concentration area was kept to an absolute minimum. Peculiar camouflage experts appeared from somewhere to advise on disappearing tricks and everybody was neatly tucked away. Whether the enemy had observed movement or whether it was just his normal routine there was trouble from the air. On the night the Battalion crossed the 6 Airborne bridge over the Orne he tried to reduce it and dropped heavy bombs all around but caused no damage to the unit. Guard's echelon vehicles in the next potato patch were brewed up.



[Crockford] On the afternoon of the 16th we received orders for a night move by TCV (Troop Carrying Vehicle) to a concentration area at Ranville, East of the River Orne and NE of Caen, in preparation for an attack to break out of the 'bridgehead'. We were instructed that on arrival all haste must be made to 'dig-in' and conceal ourselves. From daylight on the 17th only minimum movement would be permitted.

In the late afternoon we had a meal and prepared to move, later embussing on TCVs. The RASC (Royal Army Service Corps) driver informed me that he was 15 Platoon driver. His name was Spottiswood known as 'Spotty'. (When in mid August I was transferred to 14 Platoon Spotty transferred himself with me!).

After a long bumpy ride over roads and tracks (made or ruined by other vehicles and tanks), and becoming almost hypnotised by staring at the white painted differential gear casing of the vehicle in front *[no vehicle lights were permitted, but a small (dim) convoy light was permitted and this was located on the rear axle differential block under the vehicle and was visible to the following vehicle enabling it to follow]* we arrived at our concentration area. By stand to, an hour before dawn we had dug ourselves in, had breakfast, and received 'haversack rations' (corned beef or cheese and biscuits) for our midday meal.

I was fortunate that my allocated platoon area enabled us to scatter the soil removed from our trenches out of sight under hedges. Toilet requirements (often forgotten during short training sessions) were met by allowing one man per section and platoon HQ to take a shovel, make his way along hedgerows, perform, and cover the result. Not many availed themselves of this facility but at least the air stayed sweet.

During the day we saw a low flying aeroplane which we assumed was one of our own guns 'spotters'. It was one of ours, unfortunately it was a RN aircraft; the 'spotter' mistook us for the enemy. We were soon on the receiving end of twelve and sixteen inch gun salvos fired from HMS Warspite and other warships out at sea. The shells made a tremendous noise as they screamed overhead or landed around us. C Coy sustained no casualties but the craters they left were most impressive.

In the late afternoon I was called to a company 'O' (order) Group where the plan for Op GOODWOOD was outlined and orders given. We were told that the German defences were estimated at two thousand yards deep and that once they were breached the way to Paris was open to us. (We were later to learn that the defences were in fact five thousand yards in depth).

The overall plan outlined to us was that 2000 British and American bombers would pound not only the 2000 yards of defences, but also a further 3000 yards beyond to prevent reinforcements from being brought forward. In order not to crater the ground to our immediate front, making it difficult for our tanks to manoeuvre, only light and anti-personnel bombs would be dropped, the 'heavies' being restricted to our flanks and beyond the two thousand yards. After the bombing from the air, some 36 regiments of field, medium and heavy artillery would open up, and that as we reached the start line (SL) for the attack, field regiments of 25 pounders would bring down a barrage 200 yards to our front. This would be lifted at the rate of 100 yards every two minutes. To reach the forming up position (FUP) preparatory to the attack Royal Engineers (RE) would be working through the night to clear paths through our own and enemy minefields.

Our programme was outlined as - 0400 Stand to; 0430 Breakfast and issue of haversack rations; 0530 aerial bombardment to commence followed by the opening of the gun barrage; 0715 Leave present positions; 0811 D Coy supported by a squadron of tanks from the Northampton Yeomanry (2NY) to move forward and secure the FUP. When secure the remainder of the Bn to pass through and

cross the SL. As we did so the 25 pounders would open up the creeping barrage ahead of us. We were to keep right up behind the barrage in order to deal with the enemy before they had time to recover, pop up from their trenches and fire at us. The order of attack was to be B Coy right, C Coy left. 15 Pl was to be the forward left hand platoon, and as it was not known how far to the left the armoured brigade would be operating I was to regard this as an 'open flank' and be prepared to deal with any interference from it.

C Coy's first objective was a group of trees on rising ground some two thousand yards past the SL. However before reaching this we could expect opposition from a number of farmsteads between us and the objective which were known to contain anti-tank guns and defending infantry. These it was hoped would have been silenced by the bombing and gun fire. Of more concern to 15 Pl was a strip of trees some 500 yards into the advance and about 200 yards to the left. I was warned that should we come under fire from there, under no circumstances was I to make a diversionary attack, but rather to put down a 2 inch mortar smoke screen and continue progress to the objective.

The only information about 'other troops' was that the armoured brigade would be operating somewhere on our left. 2NY, less one squadron on our right. Beyond them the Canadians would be launching an attack to clear to SE corner of Caen where the enemy was still holding out. When we had secured our objective, the Guards Arm'd Div would pass through and sweep into the open country beyond and 7 Arm'd Div would pass on our left. Our immediate task would be complete.

The dealing of casualties was then outlined, much thought had been given to this at Bn and Bde HQs. Apparently shortly after crossing the SL we would be wading through ripening wheat some three and a half to four feet high. The killed and wounded would drop from sight making it impossible for the following stretcher bearers, to locate or more seriously, the following tanks and vehicles to avoid. A 'drill' had therefore been devised. Casualties were to be marked by sticking their rifles (on which bayonets were permanently fixed) into the ground beside them and their steel helmet placed on top. In the event of the casualty being armed with a sten or bren gun, this should be exchanged for a rifle. We were to 'drum it' into the heads of our platoons that the pace of advance must never slacken, we must keep right up behind the creeping barrage. It struck us that as each section would be advancing in 'loose arrowhead', each man ten yards apart it would be difficult to carry out these instructions, but at least some thought had been given to the problem of casualties. The Coy Comd concluded his orders by telling us that it was hoped to get a meal up to us after dark. It all sounded 'a piece of cake' and a long way from the section, platoon and company flanking attacks I had been trained for.

I returned to my platoon in high spirits although it occurred to me that we were to be merely 'pawns' on a huge chess board. I held a platoon O Group where the plan was well received although section commanders were concerned that many were suffering from attacks by mosquitoes. Whilst this in itself was bearable the problem was that some of them were suffering closing eyelids. I could only hope the swellings would subside before we moved off.

We had a meal and prepared to rest until the morning stand to. Sgt Lobb and I, as was the custom, remained awake for half the hours of darkness each. Whilst taking my turn the enormity of my situation hit me. Here was I aged twenty one and one day, who had never seen a dead person, taking nearly forty soldiers, all older than me, all who had recently been under fire and seen death and injury at close quarters into action. Fortunately this was the first and last time such thoughts occurred. Thereafter I always had for too much on my mind for the subject to arise again.

The next morning, the 18th all appeared to be going to plan. I had escaped being bitten by mosquitoes and no soldier was completely blinded. After breakfast and issue of haversack rations we gazed in awe as wave after wave of bombers passed overhead, more like a swarm of insects than aircraft, each

pilot plotting his own course at various heights. Puffs of smoke betrayed exploding shells amongst them. Occasionally an aircraft spiralled to the ground marking its descent by a trail of smoke.

As the last of the cloud of planes departed we heard a low droning overhead. On looking up we saw heavy bombers flying in formations high overhead, their silver silhouettes caught in the early morning sunlight. As they passed on the crump of their exploding bombs could be heard in the distance.

[Hesketh] On the 17th orders for the attack were received and the Battalion moved up to the FUP at 0700hrs on the morning of the 18th. It was a wonderful summer morning with slight dew and it promised to be a hot day. Breakfast was under way when out of the morning haze into glittering sunshine appeared the first wave of British and American bombers. The spectacle struck awe amongst our own people but what it must have done amongst the Germans they alone can say. Fortresses, Liberators and Halifaxes as far as the eye could see cruised apparently lazily from behind us. They were in particular formation but obviously intended to keep the pot boiling. For those who saw it, this armada was a sight never to be forgotten and it went on for over an hour. The bombs were released not more than 3 miles ahead of us and the earth shook. Nor was the operation carried out without loss to our planes; at least 10 were seen hurtling down in a mass of falling flame. Others came limping back with smoke pouring from the engines and fuselage. Some of the crews had been luckier than others and were drifting slowly earthwards, kicking and dangling beneath their parachutes. When we had begun to think that this bombing was to go on for ever the drone died down and the last waves, having dropped their bombs, swung round on their way back to UK. After an interval of about 10 minutes a fresh humming arose and an entirely different air spectacle appeared. This time it was numerous blobs of about 50 medium bombers flying in close formation at a great height.

The planes shone and glittered in the morning sunshine and it was like trying to spot the elusive flight of duck. As each flight released its bombs and swung round, the earth shook with fresh explosions. Morale that morning was extremely high. 1000 heavy and 500 medium bombers had taken part in the attack.

The Herefords were left flanking, taking the orchards and woods between 159 and 29 Bde.

So far as the Battalion was concerned the operation was split into 3 phases. D Coy with one squadron of Northants Yeomanry attacked and captured a feature of high ground east of Couverville, the object being to secure a firm base from which to carry out the next phase. Then with A Coy right, C left and B in reserve, together with MG support from the carriers and smoke and HE from the mortars, the next attack was launched. The objective was a wooded area East of Demouville and once this was captured and the position consolidated it was intended to exploit forward. Helped on by S Coy and artillery support the leading companies eventually fought their way against considerable ground opposition on to their objective. Our own casualties were slight and most of them due to shelling and mortaring. About 80 POWs were taken, most of whom were completely bomb happy and quite incapable of controlling themselves. It was apparent that the morning's aerial bombardment followed by a superimposed artillery barrage had effectively unbalanced them. It soon became evident that all wooded areas and likely forming up places for further attack had been registered by the enemy as DF tasks. All companies were in consequence subjected to intense and accurate mortar and shell fire.

Later that same evening the Battalion was ordered to take over an area of high ground at Grentheville, which had been captured at considerable cost by our armoured brigade during the day. The latter could not contain themselves by night, nor could they replenish their petrol and ammunition while in such close contact with the enemy without a protective screen. That was one of the snags of being infantry

in an armoured division – to fight all day and then either to fight, patrol or guard at night – but never to sleep. There were of course many advantages too, and all members of the Battalion would have been very loathe to exchange our lot for the slower more plodding existence of an infantry division. It was reassuring to have tanks around the battalion area, and tanks thought exactly the same about the infantry.

Sgt Moppett and the carrier PI harboured near Demouville surrounded by friendly tanks and he therefore ordered a 25% stand to assuming the tanks were all manned – however at first light he discovered they had all been knocked out in the previous days fighting!

Throughout the 19th shelling and mortaring continued and casualties increased. From intense heat the weather changed to drenching rain and the battlefield was transformed from a desert of dust to a sea of mud – thick red creamy mud.

The enemy's anti tank defence in the area had checked our armoured thrust. Our Shermans had probed and charged continuously to find a weak spot but without success. Our losses in tanks were more than 66% but the enemy had likewise suffered heavy casualties both to tanks, anti tank guns and personnel. The weather and ground conditions prohibited any further immediate intention of pushing on. The Division was therefore concentrated in a pivot area just North of Grentheville and remained there a further 48 hours still under shell fire.

[Crockford] On the order move we set out for the FUP, The rate of advance had been so well planned that I was totally unaware of having passed through the FUP and reaching the SL until the creeping barrage crashed down 200 yards ahead of us. We now had two minutes to cover the first 100 yards before the guns commenced their programme of lifting 100 yards every two minutes. I had seen nothing of D Coy or the squadron of tanks. My only recollection of the FUP being two dead soldiers with 52 Highland Div flashes on the upper arms of their battle dress blouses. These were the first dead I had ever seen but there was no time or opportunity to dwell on the experience.

Within a couple of minutes I experienced another first. Sounds such as a loud grunting came from above, my batman called out 'Moaning Minnie'. This was confirmed some 5 to 7 seconds later as 6 loud crumps occurred to the right of my Pl. As I was the left hand pl of a four pl, two coy front, the bombs were obviously aimed at the centre of the advance. More were to follow.

Almost immediately we plunged into the ripening wheat, all that was visible of others was their heads and upper bodies. Each section moving in loose arrowhead formation, reserve sects 100 yards behind. The copse to our left was easily recognisable but appeared unoccupied.

After some 5 or 600 yards I heard a loud crack on my right. I turned to that direction and saw the upright body of a tall soldier minus a head. The body appeared to hover for an eternity but could only have been one or two seconds before crumbling down into the wheat. Loud cracks followed and on glancing to my rear I saw an advancing tank, each crack followed by a tongue of flame issuing from the barrel of its 17 pounder gun. There was no way of knowing whether the soldier had been decapitated by solid shot from the enemy or our own tanks and there was no time to dwell on the subject.

Shells now began to fall between me and my reserve section. I assumed some of our own shells were falling short and tried to contact Coy HQ by means of the 38 wireless carried by my runner, not being particularly surprised to receive no response. I therefore sent him back to Coy HQ with the request that our guns raise their sights. He returned with the message that I was advancing too quickly and should slow down. It occurred to me that had I been advancing any slower, I, and the forward sections would have been in the midst of the exploding shells!

As we approached the first of the buildings a few bullets passed harmlessly between us but as we got closer the enemy quickly surrendered. There were no anti-tank guns which we learned later had been withdrawn to higher ground beyond.

I now commenced to make my biggest mistake, never to be repeated after that morning! Disarming the prisoners I sent them to the rear accompanied by some of my riflemen. This I continued to do until arriving on my objective with my Pl HQ and reserve section where about fifty bomb happy shell shocked Germans mostly desperate to surrender rose from their trenches. A few very young ones were not quite so minded. Whilst disarming them a shell (probably from one of our own tanks) exploded in the branches of the trees above. I was hit on the upper left arm by either a piece of blunt shrapnel, or more likely a piece of wood, and sent spinning to the ground. The younger Germans found this highly amusing and started to yell 'Bloody British, Bloody British'. As I got to my feet and recovered my sten gun I saw a furious Sgt Lobb advancing on them. I restrained him and the more elderly Germans restored calm and order. Having disarmed them I sent them to the rear with the riflemen of my reserve section leaving me with Pl HQ and three Bren gun sub-sections.

Whilst awaiting the return of my riflemen a runner came from Coy HQ instructing me to carry on to a further objective some 800 yards ahead. I sent a message back that I had no riflemen. These were quickly restored to me but whilst waiting for them we had a grandstand view from our raised position of masses of prisoners being assembled into columns and marched to the rear. We were then astonished to hear shells from our front whistling overhead and exploding amongst the prisoners and escorts. There could only be one of two explanations. Either the enemy was not aware of how far we had advanced, and was firing on pre-registered targets, or, they still had an observation point and were deliberately firing on their own prisoners a practice which we knew had happened in the past!

My riflemen were quickly returned and not wishing to hover on what was obviously a pre-registered target by enemy guns we made all haste towards our next objective. This was reached with the minimum of interference. The platoon adapted an all round defensive position to await the remainder of the company when a company plan would be made and arcs of fire allocated.

The company arrived and a plan made so we commenced to dig-in. Shortly afterwards we were amazed to see the infantry of the Guards Arm'd Div pass to our left riding in TCVs which we thought presented excellent targets to lurking tanks or concealed anti-tank guns. They were obviously in possession of intelligence denied to us.

We dug-in for two or more hours before thankfully settling our by now weary bodies into our trenches having arranged for one third of the platoon to be alert in the firing positions at all times. It was customary to maintain a one third alert whenever we were stationary apart from the morning and evening Stand To's of one hour each and when an alert had been called for when a 100% Stand To took place. Throughout the hours of darkness either the Pl Comd or Pl Sgt remained on the alert for half the night each.

At about 2045hrs we received orders to move and occupy high ground captured by the Arm'd Bde earlier in the day. We heaved our tired aching bodies out of our trenches and moved forward. Arriving at our new location we started to dig yet again somewhat horrified to note that we were fully exposed on a forward slope with burning tanks around us causing flickering shadows that were easily misinterpreted as enemy patrols advancing on us. The stench was appalling.

The ground was now much harder (which almost certainly saved my life later that night), and being tired our digging was much slower. We were forced to make full use of our pick axes (carried on a ratio of one to each shovel) and dug deep. My batman, Charlie Bowen and I did not stop until we had a good twelve inch clearance above our heads. There was no way in which we could dispose of the spoil from the trenches so we used it to construct weapon rests appreciating that as daylight approached we would be sitting ducks!

The night passed uneventfully apart from distant flashes and the rumble of gunfire. More spectacularly we were treated to firework displays as ammunition from burning tanks exploded sending colourful displays into the air and landing around us.

I took the first watch and when my turn came to relax I slept soundly. I was therefore somewhat surprised on being roused for Stand To to see the 12 inches of earth above my head had been reduced to 5 or 6. Investigation revealed that it was half of a shell crater. I said to Charlie Bowen. 'I don't remember that there when we dug in', he replied dryly 'It wasn't there'. Although suffering a severe headache it was encouraging to appreciate how effective a slit trench could be.

Last night's meal now arrived and was distributed to the trenches between the occasional salvo of shells. It was difficult to raise much interest in the food, the by now tepid tea and water being much more appreciated. The water arrived in four and a half gallon jerry cans and proved difficult to decant into our narrow mouthed water bottles resulting in much wastage!

We kept well below ground until I was summoned to Coy HQ where I was instructed to take my platoon and sweep the area to our front. Down past the still burning tanks to a railway embankment which crossed our front. I should then turn to the right and sweep to a tunnel which, passed under the embankment, pass through the tunnel and sweep to a depth of five hundred yards beyond before returning and reporting my findings.

We carried out the instructions to the letter until approaching the tunnel when the hatch cover of one of the apparently not disabled tanks was raised and the head and shoulders of an obviously irate brigadier appeared and enquired as to 'what the hell was I doing in his bloody area'. I saluted (as junior officers did) and explained my brief. He was not amused and told me to 'Get the hell out of his bloody area and to take my bloody patrol with me'. This I did with some alacrity!

We made our way back up the slope past the burning tanks, but by now we had been spotted by the enemy and were followed by exploding shells. None caught up with us.

I reported to the Coy Comd who told me to report to Ops at Bn HQ. This I did accompanied by my batman (we always moved in pairs). As we left Ops a salvo of shells fell around us. We dived into the nearest slit trenches which appeared only partly occupied, my studded boots landing heavily on to the steel helmet of the occupant. He did not appear to take offence and we sorted ourselves out into the usual positions of knees drawn up facing each other. I apologised but the 'soldier' took it extremely well smilingly asking me what I was doing in the area and how long had I been with the Bn. I told him about the abortive patrol which seemed to amuse him. He then asked a number of questions — including which platoon I was commanding.

After some minutes the shelling eased up so I thanked the 'soldier' for his 'kind hospitality' saying it was time I made my way back to C Coy. He replied the pleasure had been all his and wished me 'God Speed'.

I called my batman from his trench and we set off, me telling him that I was most impressed with the standard of private soldiers in Bn HQ. He replied 'That was no private soldier, that was our new CO (commanding officer) Lt Col Bob Turner-Cain. (Officers were not wearing badges of rank at that time). I hesitated as to whether to go back and apologise but renewed shelling decided me that our trench was the best option. We scuttled to it as fast as our legs would take us. (Colonel Bob never subsequently ever seemed to take offence!).

In the afternoon rain descended and our clothing became saturated. Flashes and rumbles proved to be thunder and lightening and were a welcome alternative to guns and shells.

Later we were ordered to move. This time to a welcome reverse slope position where we were advised to make full use of hedges and clumps of trees to avoid observation from the air. Even this proved to be a mixed blessing as it soon became obvious that German artillery had either previously registered the hedgerows or they were in possession of remarkably accurate large scale maps. Salvos of shells and mortar bombs however were rare and did not much trouble us. We enjoyed meals being brought forward at fairly reasonable intervals and carried out a number of patrols but did not suffer casualties. What was more worrying were the number of reports of mosquito bites and 'pinched feet'.

We remained in this position from late on the 19th until the 22nd July. In the early afternoon we received orders to withdraw from the position commencing at 1530 hrs when Canadian troops would take over. We were to move to a concentration area near Bitot.

Although I personally saw no Canadians we started our withdrawal on time. The rain had ceased but the ground was sticky and the going heavy. We kept well dispersed which proved most fortunate. When my strung out platoon was crossing a field of sugar-beet we heard aircraft overhead. Assuming them to be our own artillery spotters we ignored them until 'plopping' sounds overhead and small explosions around us alerted us to the fact we were in the midst of butterfly anti-personnel bombs, some exploding in the air and some on the ground at various times later. They obviously had timed fuses. We went to ground and I quickly discovered that lying face down and wriggling my toes backwards and forwards I could produce a credible mound of earth behind me. Using my knuckles to the front was painful and not very successful but a good morale booster.

The attack quickly fizzled out, the bombs having proved well dispersed. My platoon suffered no casualties. We continued our progress to our waiting TCVs where the ever faithful Spotty awaited us.

We soon moved off to become involved in the longest journey for the shortest distance of the whole campaign. Through the remaining hours of daylight, the hours of darkness, and into the next day it took 17 hours to travel 21 miles, Spotty was quite magnificent throughout, cursing everyone in sight (and many not in sight) except the infantry for whom he obviously had a very soft spot. Cursing his engine which not surprisingly kept overheating, cursing the world in general but pressing onwards whenever the opportunity presented itself. Sharing his cab with the engine between us I dried out for the first time in days, except for sodden leather boots. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, such as stops caused by engine overheating I got down from the cab to see how the boys in the back were doing. (We always had the sides of the canopy rolled up in case of ambush). They were quiet, looked grey and huddled up but getting some warmth by wearing their gas capes.

We finally arrived at our appointed concentration/rest area, a field near Bitot. The rain had ceased and food and water were provided. Our large packs were made available from which we withdrew dry socks and underwear. (We had no second battledresses). On removing our boots the cause of 'pinched feet' became obvious. Our feet were cold, white and wrinkled. Foot powder was produced which gave welcome relief.

[Hesketh] On 22 Jul the Division was pulled out into a concentration area at Bitot after having been in constant action for a week. The rest was badly needed to reorganise and get ourselves into battle shape again. 29 Armd Bde had suffered severely and more tanks were urgently needed from somewhere. Actually after their recovery experts had been at work it was found that over 50% of the knocked out machines could be repaired and made ready for the road again.

The return journey from the Caen sector to Bitot was about 21 miles and was covered in 17 hours. A miserable journey across bulldozed tracks covered with Sommerfeld tracking. Lloyd carriers were not powerful enough to pull the anti tank guns through the mud. Vehicles slithered into ditches. Eventually the order was given to stand fast and wait for daylight. It was a disreputable looking column which finally crawled into another fresh green orchard the following morning.

It was during this brief rest that the Regimental Band played for the last time as such. The CO had been determined to bring over all instruments but now out of an original 30 players only 14 were left. The SBs had done great work in the field but, like the rest of the Battalion had suffered many casualties. At a later date 159 (Inf) Bde Band was formed incorporating our band and using our instruments but recruiting its personnel from the whole brigade.

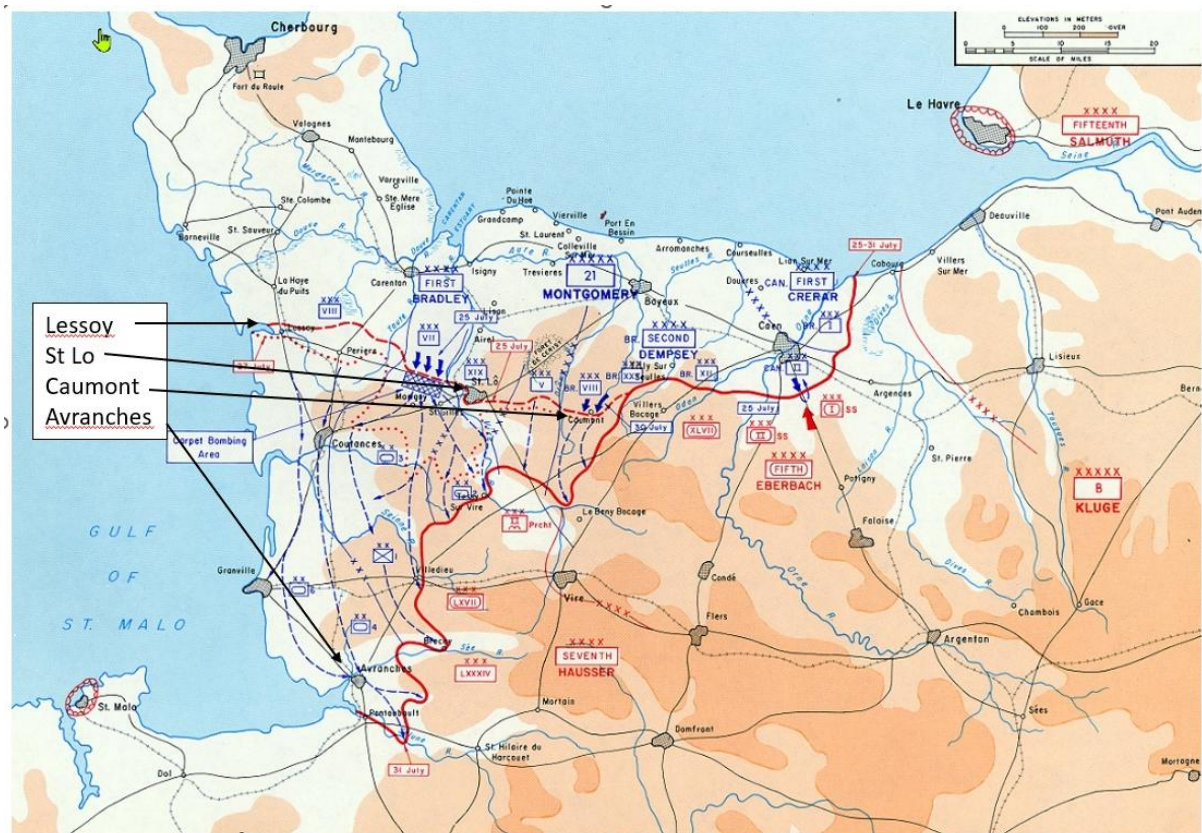
Operation Bluecoat - Caumont

To date it will be seen that the Battalion had participated in 2 attempts to break out of the Normandy bridgehead. The 3rd attempt in which it also took part was successful. It had been part of higher planning for the British 2nd Army to draw on itself what it could of the German armour. By so doing it

was hoped to allow the Americans more liberty of movement and to enable them to make a complete and successful break through. This object was achieved and the German army was contained on the British front.

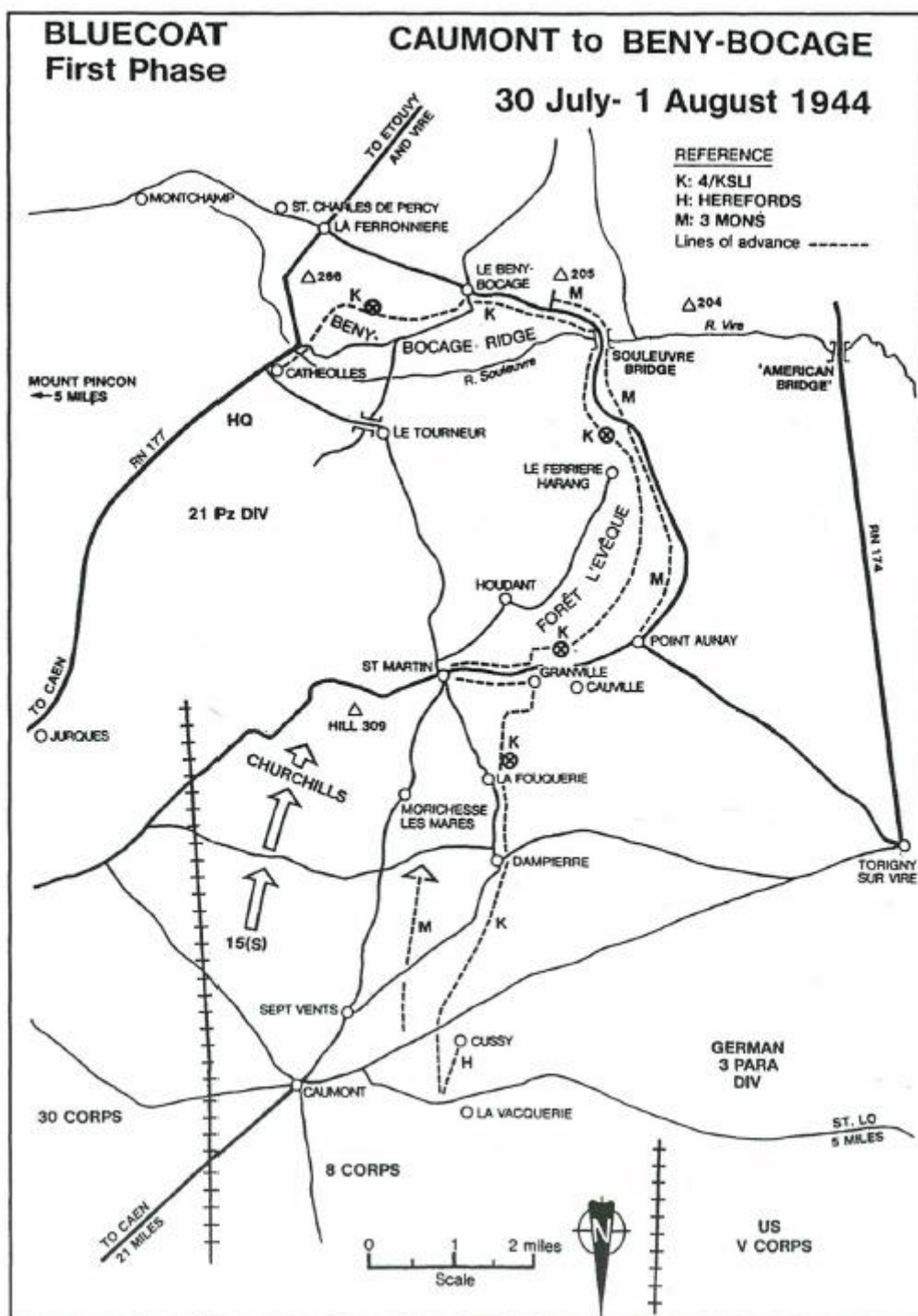
By this time the American break through on the west of the bridgehead around Avranches had succeeded and was being exploited towards Rennes and Nantes. On 29 Jul the 11 Armd Div was switched straight across to the extreme right flank of the British sector and concentrated for action just west of Caumont. We had begun to understand what was meant by the mobility and flexibility of an armoured division – so too had the Germans. There was very little time for recce or preparation. Orders were given out late in the evening of 29 Jul and the Battalion set out for its FUP at 0200hours on the morning of the 30th.

The situation on the 25th July:



Op Bluecoat – Why?:

American forces had established a line from Lessoy to St Lo and launched Op Cobra southwards to liberate Avranches which was in Allied hands by 31st July, in readiness to advance East into central France. In order to assist the Americans the British Op Bluecoat in the Caumont area was undertaken.



30 July – Black Sunday

The Battalion's casualties for this day's fighting were 1 officer and 10 ORs killed and 2 officers and 102 wounded. It was the worst 12 hours solid punishment the Battalion was to endure. The start line was on the forward edge of an American minefield which ran through an orchard. During the night Engineers had been clearing lanes through the mines and the Battalion moved up to deploy itself on the start line. Unfortunately mines, buried somewhat deeper than normal had not reacted to mine detectors and were left in the ground. A wireless carrier moving up blew up on one of them and that started the day's casualties. [Sgt Frank Moppett recalled putting sandbags in the bottom of the carriers

and driving around the fields to check for mines, it was during this act that a carrier was blown up and Pte Geoff Farmer was wounded and died 11 August.] *The tanks were having an equally unpleasant time and suffering casualties. Only several hours later was a way found round the obstruction.*

Once the enemy had observed movement he opened up with guns and mortars. The orchard area was pounded from every direction from the high ground in front which afforded him ideal observation. The Battalion was hemmed in in this area for 2 ½ hours awaiting support by an aerial bombardment which did not in fact materialise owing to cloud.

The ground was hard and digging difficult. When the mortaring began the chaps feverishly made shell scrapes. At first being in the open, they prayed to get below ground level, even if only deep enough to get their heels below ground – for they would lie face downwards and hug the earth. Queer the things one used to think about while thus lying. Waiting for the next bomb or shell and wondering how close it was going to be. Usually one felt that praying was too long winded and it was easier to think about little things. A shiny pebble lying just under one's nose perhaps provided the answer: I wonder how hard it would be to bite - anyway it would be gritty with sand and soil on it. Clean it first then I could suck it. Yes it would be refreshing. A worm cut in 2, looks revolting – crinkled and the cut end ragged like a stubbed cigarette. Thwack there goes another one. If only it would stop and let me dig deeper – I should be safe then. The mind became completely numb, incapable of deeper thought or even prayer. There was nothing else to think about anyway. We could not let the anticipated unknown at Zero Hour banish the discomfort of the present for there was no specified zero to wait for. It was just a question of sitting there and waiting, waiting, waiting.

As Captain Wardman recorded:

Lucky were those who found an abandoned German trench. Most tried to get what shelter they could along a narrow sunken lane. A lot were killed and wounded there. The enemy had us under direct observation. They knew the exact range; they brought everything down on us with extreme accuracy. The sky was filled with the wail of 'moaning minnies' (fired electronically in sticks of five or six, united in a spine-chilling inharmonious high pitched screech). Stretcher cases and walking wounded filtered sadly to the rear, pushing past the KSLI. For hours we waited hugging the ground, watching as comrades were killed or wounded, waiting for the RAF bombing programme delayed by fog. It was midday when the bombers at last arrived. We rose and advanced towards the clouds of billowing smoke and dust and found the area strewn haphazardly with schumines.

The ground was wide open, ribbed by hedgerows disappearing over a gentle crest in front. The cornfields and hedgerows alike were alive with enemy MG posts, well concealed and well manned. By skilful manoeuvring in conjunction with the tanks these posts were eventually liquidated, but the Boche had every advantage. Only by incessant hammering and grim determination was the advantage finally wrested from him.

By 1400hrs the situation was looking grim and casualties were mounting rapidly. It was decided that the Battalion should capture an intermediate objective and that as soon as it had consolidated the KSLI would pass through. Coy Comds were called to an O Group and stock taken of the casualty state. One company could muster 28 men and another 34. Officers and NCOs had been lost and rapid reorganisation was ordered. Casualties amongst signallers and wireless sets had been heavy and intercommunication on the company to Battalion level was practically nil. Ammunition was

replenished and Zero Hour fixed. At 1445hrs what artillery there was in support opened up in a neutralising role and the tanks fired everything they had. They raked the hedgerows with their Besas and fired their shells at anything which looked likely to conceal an enemy post. It was a superb do or die effort made by all concerned and was rewarded with success. The enemy was dislodged and the position captured. That was the crust of the enemy's bridgehead and it had been broken. 4KSLI passed through and the breakout from Normandy had begun.

[Crockford] On the night of 28/29 July we headed for an area West of Caumont. This journey was even more hazardous being mainly on newly bulldozed earth tracks and cutting across other divisions' lines of supply, but we arrived by dawn.

During the morning of the 29th we were informed that due to the close bocage country we would henceforth be operating through it would be necessary to adopt new tactics. Armour and infantry would be working much closer together, a battalion of infantry to a regiment of tanks. This meant that forward troops would be operating on a platoon/troop level, or, one tank to one section of up to ten infantrymen. During the afternoon all Hereford officers visited the 2nd Fife and Yeomanry (2F&F) with whom we would be operating the following day. We had a close look at their Sherman tanks which appeared colossal.

The 30th July, henceforth known as 'Black Sunday' by the Herefords, started badly for C Coy. By the time we left our overnight position breakfast had not arrived. This meant no haversack rations for midday either. Morale was not good. A loud explosion to our left made us aware that the planned secrecy of our presence in the area was lost. We later learned that one of our vehicles had been blown up on an American mine which was thought to have been cleared the previous day.

We linked up with C Sqn F&FY and made good progress. We, crossed open ground to clear possible anti-tank weapons in hedges with covering fire provided by the tanks who then came forward and joined us. We successfully used these tactics until we reached our first objective near a group of farm buildings. We were somewhat surprised that having crossed a large field, the following tanks exploded a large number of anti-personnel mines as their tracks passed over them. We had most fortunately not trodden on one.

Having reached our first objective forward of a group of farm buildings and compounds surrounded by stone walls, we were suddenly halted in full view of the enemy established on the next ridge with a small but fairly steep valley between us. Firstly we came under attack from machine guns, then shells and mortar bombs rained down on us. As each exploded it felt as if our heads were exploding also. Digging in was impossible due to what appeared to be solid rock a few centimetres below the surface. In any case rising to one's feet would have been suicidal! The tanks fired a few bursts from their Bessa machine guns before sensibly withdrawing. They would have been hopelessly outgunned by any 88mm gun on the opposite ridge.

We lay in this position under a hot sun for some two and half hours, the slightest movement bringing new salvos of shells and mortar bombs, thankfully usually beyond our position. We kept as motionless as possible hoping the enemy would think we were dead or badly wounded. The only movement being our stretcher bearers tending to, and collecting the wounded trusting their Red Cross armbands would protect them at least from direct rifle and machine gun fire, which they did.

It was a great relief when the order came for us to go forward. No fire came from the opposite ridge as we plunged down the slope and out of sight of the enemy positions. As we began to climb up the opposite slope I kicked an extended piece of white string. My batman called out for me to be careful as it might be connected to a mine. I replied that it was unlikely as mines were usually connected by wire,

the string was probably just to trip us up. However I lifted my feet over it. His timely advice certainly saved us both from injury and possibly death. The following platoon was not so lucky!

As we reached the top of the slope we expected to be met with withering fire, but all was quiet. The position had been evacuated leaving a large number of bottles of wine and spirits. My sergeant picked up a bottle of brown liquid and drank. Looking at me he said ‘You look as if you would do with a drink, try this’. Thinking it was a cordial I took two or three gulps before nearly exploding. It was Calvados. The only alcohol I had previous drunk were a few sips of wine!

About an hour later we experienced the welcome sight of soldiers of 4KSLI passing through our position. We thought that we would not be required to dig in that night being provided by well prepared comfortable trenches, we were wrong! We were ordered forward to dig-in in another forward position.

By the end of the day 22 had been killed and 107 evacuated wounded. Of these seven were to die in casualty stations established behind the front line.

Casualties

Name	Initial	Rank	Number	Company	Cause	Date	Location
Andrews	E	Pte	5441913	C	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Baker	D	L/Cpl	4036343	A	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Carey	RW	L/Cpl	4105695	HQ	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Chivers	GJ	Pte	5436676	C	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Jones	WJ	Pte	4105451	S	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Millington	TE	L/Cpl	4037012	S	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Morrisey	JH	Pte	4042750	C	KIA	18/07/1944	Ranville
Finney	DL	Pte	4105788	B	KIA	19/07/1944	Demouville
Ritterband	B	Pte	4105875	HQ	KIA	19/07/1944	Demouville
Skinner	B	Pte	4036283	HQ	KIA	19/07/1944	Demouville
Evans	AC	L/Cpl	4105780	HQ	DOW	20/07/1944	Ranville
Carberry	WH	Pte	4041839	A	KIA	21/07/1944	Caen
Jones	AH	Pte	4036979	D	DOW	21/07/1944	Demouville
Ansell	R	Pte	4036863	A	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Boddy	SH	Capt	243033	A	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vaccluerie
Bowen	IT	Pte	4042184	D	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Chapman	G	Pte	4038143	D	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Deleury	DJ	Pte	5256506	A	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Dodd	W	Pte	4105772	HQ	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Ford	JJ	Pte	14585610	A	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Goodman	R	Pte	4104417	HQ	DOW	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Hancock	SC	Pte	4041870	HQ	DOW	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Hill	JE	Pte	4034609	A	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Jones	FA	L/Sgt	4036251	D	DOW	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Lenney	GW	Pte	5442615	C	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Meadows	GB	Pte	14228319	A	DOW	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie

Millward	RN	Sgt	4105859	B	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Oliver	LG	Pte	4042245	A	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Phillips	SC	Pte	4032943	D	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Pouncett	JH	Pte	4038472	D	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Preedy	TH	L/Sgt	4105209	D	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Sage	E	Pte	4105888	HQ	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Snowzell	GC	Pte	4104173	HQ	DOW	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Taylor	H	Pte	4036209	C	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Taylor	T	L/Cpl	4038235	D	KIA	30/07/1944	Caen
Wagg	E	Pte	14585673	B	KIA	30/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Cartwright	SG	Pte	4104930	S	KIA	31/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Harding	J	Cpl	4036821	S	KIA	31/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Owen	HC	Pte	4042375	D	DOW	31/07/1944	La Vacquerie
Poole	B	Pte	4041300	S	KIA	31/07/1944	La Vacquerie

Many of the casualties from 'Black Sunday' were buried in temporary graves near Le Haye and were reinterred in the CWGCs at Bayeaux and St Charles De Percy in 1946.

The original graves of Ptes Cartwright and Harding are shown here together with their permanent resting place in the CWGC cemetery at St Charles de Percy.





GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

WEGRE/CONC/R/9435
Report No.

Salvador 22^e. 631.

The following ~~has~~ ^{have} been concentrated here:—

(Name of Cemetery) BAYEUX British Cemetery

(Full Map Reference) GSGS 2738 1/250,000 SHEET 3a & 8 T.77995 (16m. N.W. CAEN) Nationality:— BRITISH

Bm/966/960.

(1) Serial No.	(2) Regt. or Corps	(3) Army No.	(4) Name & Initials	(5) Rank	(6) Date of Death	(7) K/A, D/W or Died	(8) Plot	(9) Row	(10) Grave	(11) Date of Reburial	Previous location of grave	
											Place & Map Ref.	Report Number
1	2 N. YEO	4036821 4104930	H. LAVENDER	Tpr	31.7.44	K/A	XXIV	A	5	5.11.47	E 15630	
2	1 BN Hereford	4104930	S.G. CARTWRIGHT	Pte	31.7.44	K/A	XXIV	A	6	5.11.47	MANCHE 2-12	BAOR/
3	N. YEO	7906945	F. J. DRIVER	Cpl	31.7.44	K/A	XXIV	A	7	5.11.47	ST MARTIN DES	DDGR/
4	1 Hereford	4036821	J. HARDING	Cpl	31.7.44	K/A	XXIV	A	8	5.11.47	BESACES GSGS 1250	
5	1 HERE FORD	4041300	B. POOLE	Pte	31.7.44	K/A	XXIV	A	9	5.11.47	MANCHE 2-12	10828
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												

Dups locate returned 5/1/48

Date 9 DEC 1947

(Signed) [Signature]
D. D. G. R. S.

Rank & Appointment

PSS. 4241B. 10-44



Capt Boddy

THREE LEOMINSTER BROTHERS

Of the three sons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Goodman, of 26, Caswell Road, Leominster, who joined the Army, the eldest, Pte. Reginald Goodman (top left), of 22, New Street, Leominster, has died of wounds in France. He was serving in an infantry regiment, and the news has been officially conveyed to his wife. One brother, Pte. Wilfred A. Goodman (top right), whose wife lives at 6, Atlay Street, Westfields, Hereford, is serving with the Royal Artillery in France; and the youngest, Pte. John Leslie Goodman (bottom), who is unmarried, is serving with the Eighth Army. The father of the three was killed in the war of 1914-18.

Pte Goodman's death is reported in The Hereford Times



The graves concentration report of 1946 is here:

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

Report No. **10R/Cono** 4351

The following ^{has} been concentrated here:—
 (Name of Cemetery) **ST CHARLES DE PERCY BRITISH CEMETERY**
 (Full Map Reference) **France Sh 3A & B 1/250,000 T.701412.**
 (U.M. S. CAUMONT) NATIONALITY: **BRITISH**

(1) Serial No.	(2) Regt. or Corps	(3) Army No.	(4) Name & Initials	(5) Rank	(6) Date of Death	(7) K/A, D/W or Died	(8) Plot	(9) Row	(10) Grave	(11) Date of Reburial	Previous location of grave	
											Place & Map Ref.	Report Number
1	HEREFORD	5442615	LENNY ^(Alv 2-1628) G.W.	Pte	30.7.44	K/A	III	B	13	16.5.46	CAUMONT France Sh 6R/4 1/50,000 682596	1904
2	"	4036209	TAYLOR ^(Alv 2-1626) H.	"	"	"	III	B	9	"	"	E. 15266
3	"	243033	BODDY ^(Alv 2-3374) S.H.	Pte	"	"	III	B	3	"	Nr LA HAYE France Sh 6R/4 1/50,000 674592	4561
4	"	4034609	HILL ^(Alv 2-3374) J.H.	Pte	"	"	III	B	6	"	"	SYW/6042
5	"	4105772	DODD ^(Alv 2-3374) H.	"	"	"	III	B	10	"	"	E. 6140
6	"	5256506	DELEURY ^(Alv 2-3233) D.J.	"	"	"	III	B	7	"	667587	4419 F. 1374
7	"	4458567	WAGG ^(Alv 2-3225) E.	"	"	"	III	B	2	"	"	4421
8	"	4105859	MILLWARD ^(Alv 2-3225) R.	Sjt	"	"	III	B	5	"	"	"
9	CAMERONIANS	UNK	UNKNOWN BRITISH	Rfn	BURIED 25.9.44	"	III	B	8	"	"	4419
10	"	"	"	"	"	"	III	B	1	"	"	20161
11												
12												

Date **6 Jul 46**
 (Signed) **D. D. G. R. E.**
 Rank & Appointment **D. D. G. R. E.**

Few reports of the wounded are recorded, there were 'casualty returns' but they do not appear to be complete:

1. Supplementary Forces (Contd.)
 (a) North West Division (Contd.)
 Regiment (Contd.)
 1st Bn. Herefordshire Regiment (Contd.)

Serial No.	Name	Rank	Regt.	Date	Remarks
410522	IRSON	WOpl.	411	2.8.44	
4037030	THILLIE	Pte.	705	2.8.44	
4037169	ICHELL	Pte.	704	2.8.44	
4035370	ICHELL	Pte.	703	2.8.44	
4104467	IVE	WOpl.	712	2.8.44	
4104348	REYNOLDS	Opl.	716	2.8.44	
4040762	REYNOLDS	Pte.	719	2.8.44	
4040640	REYNOLDS	Pte.	715	2.8.44	
4041099	REYNOLDS	Pte.	709	2.8.44	
4042259	ROBERTS	Pte.	717	2.8.44	
4040072	ROBERTS	Pte.	720	2.8.44	
4040794	ROBERTS	Pte.	708	2.8.44	
4035915	ROBERTS	Pte.	710	2.8.44	
4035410	ROBERTS	Pte.	708	2.8.44	
4035054	ROBERTS	Pte.	711	2.8.44	
4035345	ROBERTS	Pte.	715	2.8.44	
4035057	TAYLOR	Pte.	707	2.8.44	
4035067	TAYLOR	Pte.	704	2.8.44	
4042207	TAYLOR	Pte.	713	2.8.44	
4035021	TOBE	Pte.	712	2.8.44	
4035011	VAUGHAN	Pte.	710	2.8.44	
4035002	VAUGHAN	Pte.	718	2.8.44	
4035760	VAUGHAN	Pte.	707	2.8.44	
4035477	WARD	Pte.	707	2.8.44	
4035906	WILLIAMS	WOpl.	715	2.8.44	
4035002	WILLIAMS	Pte.	708	2.8.44	
4035056	WILLIAMS	Pte.	710	2.8.44	
4035537	WILLIAMS	WOpl.	711	2.8.44	

A partial list showing some of the Battalion's wounded for July 1944

SECOND TIME WOUNDED IN EUROPE

News that her son has been wounded a second time in the fighting in Europe, has been received by Mrs. F. C. Green, of 39, Humber-road, Cheltenham.

Her son, Pte. Edgar Charles Green, of the Herefordshire Regiment, was previously wounded in the leg on July 30 last, and is now in a military hospital suffering from gunshot wounds in the abdomen. He is 20 years of age.

Educated at Winchester School, Church of England.

Pte. E. C. Green School and at All Saints' School, Cheltenham. Pte. Green, before his call-up in 1941, was employed by A. H. Taylor's Ltd, hide merchants, of Albion-street, Cheltenham.

Mr. F. C. Green, his father, is also in the Army, being a member of the Pioneer Corps in Holland. He joined up at the outbreak of the war.

An account from the Hereford Times indicated that Pte Green was one of the wounded from 30 July.

Honours & Awards

Name	Rank	Number	Award	For Action On	LG
Hesketh RB	Capt	226608	MC		24/01/1946
Phillips AJW	Maj	92394	MC	30/07/1944	21/12/1944
Evans AF	WO2	4031694	DCM	30/07/1944	21/12/1944
Howe, R	Pte	14210404	MM	30/07/1944	21/12/1944
Winmill, WL	Pte	4104586	MM	20/07/1944	21/12/1944

Apologies for quality of citations – they were typed on very thin paper!

(1299) Wt.10520/1885 240,000 5/44 FFD Lp38/10. Army Form W.3121 ⁴⁰ 53

159th Brigade 11 Armd Division 8th Corps

Schedule No. (To be left blank) Unit 1st Battalion The Herefordshire Regiment.

Rank and Army or Personal No. ^{v/Lieut.} T/Captain 226608

Name HESKETH - ROBERT BALL KSLI

(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)
<p>Captain Hesketh landed with the Battalion on June 13th 1944, and served continuously throughout the whole campaign. Initially he was RSO and did invaluable work ensuring that the communications upon which the life of the Battalion depend, kept going even under the most difficult conditions. He received facial injuries on the 30 Jul 44 at CAUMONT, but insisted in not being evacuated beyond the RAP, and after a minimum period forced his way up to the Battalion. He was appointed Adjutant in August 1944., since when he has carried out his duties with the utmost keenness and efficiency. He has always been at Tac Bn HQ, and, therefore, frequently under intensive artillery and mortar fire. However unpleasant the situation, and however tired through lack of sleep, he has always displayed a coolness which inspired the confidence of the Company Commanders, to whom he was responsible for giving the CO's orders. At times during the battle he was the only</p>	<p><i>W. Peter Crofts</i> Major (Periodical) Comd 1st HEREFORD (WA Peter Crofts) Brig. Comd. 159 Inf Bde (JB CHURCHER DSO)</p>	<p>MC Mention 9-8-45 3NWE</p>	
	<p><i>W. Peter Crofts</i> Lt Genl Comd 8 Corps.</p> <p><i>W. Peter Crofts</i> Lt Genl Comd 8 Corps.</p> <p>24 JAN 1946</p> <p>46 22</p>	<p><i>W. Peter Crofts</i> Lt Genl Comd 8 Corps.</p> <p>12/1/45</p> <p>P.T.O.</p>	

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 28 Corps
 Schedule No. 11111111 Unit Herefordshire Regt. Brigade 25 Aug 44
 Rank and Army or Personal No. 92394. Division 27A Armd Corps 9 Sep 44
 Name PHILLIPS, Arthur John WILFRED (K.S.K.R.) Army 13 SEP 1944 4 OCT 44
 (Christian names must be stated)

Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)

In the area of LA LANDE SUR DROME Sheet 1" to 1 mile 6 F/4 (TORIGNI-SUR-VIRE) map ref 665573 on 30 Jul 44. On capture of first objective the unit came under considerable and accurate enemy DF fire and any advance fwd was met by MG fire from the next ridge. Tk support was not for the moment available owing to minefields and the awkward nature of the ground. Owing to our own air bombing programme it was not immediately possible to push on to capture the next feature from which fire was coming, so the men had to sit under mortar fire for approx 90 mins. Major Phillips was given the task of clearing the enemy post to the front and capturing the ridge and road in area 665573 to enable the res bn to be pushed through.

Recommended by: J.B. CHURCHER, Maj-Gen, 11 Armd Div
 Honour or Reward: MC
 (To be left blank)

FIELD MARSHAL
 COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
 21 ARMY GROUP

Although considerably shaken by intense mortar fire, Major Phillips gathered his coy together and after dealing individually with a dug-in MG post, 200 yds to his front led his men on to the objective, capturing or killing the majority of the enemy en route. On the way up the coy had to pass through an unsuspected AF minefield. This obstacle was overcome by Major Phillips' leadership and personal example was not permitted to interfere with the advance.

Recommended by: G.R. Turner, Col, 1st Bn Herefordshire Regiment
 Honour or Reward: Lt. Col. (G.R. Turner, Col)

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

If a casualty as under, fill in date.

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

M.C. For Former Country Territorial Officer

The Military Cross has been awarded to Major Arthur John Wilfred (Jack) Phillips, of the Herefordshire Regiment (attached to the K.S.L.I.), of Hillside, Tenbury, son of Mr. E. W. Phillips (Manager of the Leominster Branch of the Midland Bank) and Mrs. Phillips, of Crescent House, Etnam Street, Leominster.

Major Phillips was born at Knighton, and after leaving Ellesmere College, joined the staff of the Midland Bank, and was serving with the Bromyard Branch when he joined the Herefordshire Territorials. He was mobilised with his regiment, landed in Normandy soon after "D" Day, and last August was severely wounded on the Western Front. He has been in England convalescing for the past two or three months. He married Miss Audrey Mary Phillips, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Phillips, of Tenbury Wells, and a niece of Mr. and Mrs. Greville H. Phillips, of Hereford. Mrs. Jack Phillips recently presented her husband with a daughter.



Major A. J. W. Phillips.

The citation states: "In the area of La Land Sur Drome on 30th July, 1944, on capture of the first objective, the unit came under considerable and accurate enemy fire, and any advance forward was met by machine-gun fire from the next ridge. Tank support was not for the moment available owing to minefields and the awkward nature of the ground.

"Owing to our own air bombing programme, it was not immediately possible to push on to capture the next feature from which fire was coming, so the men had to sit under mortar fire for approximately 90 minutes. Major Phillips was given the task of clearing the enemy position to the front and capturing the ridge and road in the area to enable the reserve battalion to be pushed through. Although considerably shaken by intense mortar fire, Major Phillips gathered his company together, and, after dealing individually with a dug-in machine-gun post 200 yards to his front, led his men on to the objective, capturing or killing the majority of the enemy on route. On the way up the company had to pass through an unsuspected anti-personnel minefield. This obstacle, by Major Phillips's leadership and personal example, was not permitted to interfere with the advance."



From The Hereford Times

Capt Phillips – Aldershot June 1944

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 28 Corps
1st Bn

Schedule No. (To be left blank) Unit Herefordshire Regt.

Army No. and Rank 14210404. Private

Name HOWE, Richard. (Christian names must be stated)

Date recommendation passed forward

Received	Passed
Brigade 25 Aug 44	26 Aug 44
Division 9 Sep 44	13 Sep 44
Corps 13 SEP 1944	4 OCT 1944
Army	

Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be left blank)
<p>In area LA LANDE SUR DROME, Map Sheet 1" to 1 mile 6/R4, map ref 660575, on 30 Jul 44. The coy had reached its objective when it came under heavy MG and mortar fire. All coy stretcher bearers became casualties with the exception of one. Many men of the coy were injured and although the enemy's fire did not abate Pte. Howe went amongst the wounded, administering First Aid where he could, regardless to any danger to himself. Later Pte. Howe helped to evacuate the wounded, which entailed carrying them a distance of 400 yds through heavy mortar fire. Pte. Howe's cheerfulness and disregard of personal danger was a tremendous tonic to the remainder of the coy.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>G.R. Turner</i> Lt. Col. Comd: 1st Bn Herefordshire Regiment. (G.R. Turner Cain).</p> <p>B.L.A. 25 Aug 44. /AP.</p>	<p>Coy Comd.</p> <p><i>J.B. Churcher</i> Brig Comd 159 Inf Bde (J.B. CHURCHER)</p> <p><i>G.R. Turner</i> Maj-Gen Comd 11th Armd Div</p> <p><i>G.R. Turner</i> Lt-Gen Comd 28 Corps</p> <p><i>G.R. Turner</i> Lt-Gen Comd Second Army</p>	<p>M.M.</p> <p>N.M.</p> <p>21.12.44</p> <p><i>G.R. Turner</i> .. LIEUT-GENERA COMMANDER, SECOND ARM</p> <p>24908</p>	

Immediate

Date recommendation passed forward

159 Inf Brigade 11 Armd Division 8 Corps
 Schedule No. Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regiment
 Rank and Army or Personal No. Private 4104856
 Name **W I N M I L L** William Lance
 (Christian names must be stated)

Received Passed
 Brigade 15 Aug 44 17 Aug 44
 Division 18 Aug 44 23 Sep 44
 Corps 9 Sep 44 13 Sep 44
 Army 13 SEP 1944 - 4 OCT 1944

Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be left blank)
<p>On the morning of 20 Jul 44 our posn at <i>near 7F2 098653</i> was being heavily shelled by the enemy. Several hits were scored and there were many cries of men who had been wounded. Pte Wirmill, a Regtl SB att to this Coy, left his slit trench to give assistance, and, despite the fact that shells were falling all around him, he rendered first aid and was instrumental in evacuating the wounded back to RAP.</p> <p>In the late afternoon a Br 800x fwd of our posn was being heavily shelled and mortared, and a wounded man was reported as being in that vicinity. Pte Wirmill, in complete disregard for himself, took a Jeep, driving it himself, and fetched the wounded man in.</p> <p>In the evening, during our attack on an enemy posn, Pte Wirmill rendered first aid under fire in several cases, including personnel of other units.</p>	<p><i>MM</i> <i>Immediate</i> G. R. TURNER GAIN Comd., 1 HEREFORD (see overleaf)</p> <p><i>Brig.,</i> Comd. 159 Inf Bde. (J.B. CHURCHER)</p> <p><i>Maj-Gen.</i> Comd. 11 Armd Div.</p> <p><i>Comd.</i> 8 Corps.</p> <p><i>Lt-Gen.</i> COMMANDER, SECOND ARMY, 2nd Army.</p>	<p><i>MM</i> 21.12.44</p> <p><i>25016</i></p> <p><i>LIEUT-GENERAL</i></p> <p><i>P.T.O.</i></p>	

B. h. R. Ramsey

FIELD MARSHAL
 COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
 21 ARMY GROUP

This man distinguished himself very well, and his tireless energy and devotion to duty was amazing, and a splendid example to all.

Rank and Army or Personal No. Private 4104856
 Name **W I N M I L L** William Lance
 (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)
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15 Aug 44.
 G. R. TURNER GAIN
 Comd., 1 HEREFORD
 (see overleaf)

Brig.,
 Comd.
 159 Inf Bde.
 (J.B. CHURCHER)

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

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

<i>Date</i>	<i>WO1</i>	<i>WO2</i>	<i>CSjt</i>	<i>Sjt</i>	<i>Cpl</i>	<i>Pte</i>	<i>Bglr</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<i>Establishment</i>	1	7	6	38	72	689		813	
13/06/1944								913	Rail Party 384; sea party 529
30/06/1944	1	7	7	39	72	673	6	805	
29/07/1944	1	7	8	38	74	594	6	728	