

1st BATTALION THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT – OCTOBER 1944 - Part 2

Towards The Maas – Peel Country

When the plan to force a surprise crossing of the Rhine at Arnhem failed to come off there was a general let up in the momentum of the campaign. With winter approaching, less hours of daylight for fighting, and more difficult going for armour, it became apparent that the war would not be over in Germany before the following spring at the earliest. Therefore a policy of tidying up the battle fronts and establishing behind suitable defence for the winter months was started. In the case of the British 2nd Army the defence line was to be the River Maas, whilst still maintaining the bridgehead over it at Nijmegen. Thus for the next month the Battalion was actively engaged in operations designed to clear up the enemy still operating west of the river.

During this month the Battalion fought 2 major battles and was in contact the rest of the time. After leaving Zomeron and Asten the route led to Helmond, which the Battalion entered from the east only to find that the elements of 50 Div had just liberated it from the west after dealing with minor opposition; and to St Antonis. From here a company was detached to Beugen to observe enemy activity east of the Maas. This was the first the Battalion saw of the river. On 30 Sep regrouping took place and the unit moved to Handel where it trained and reorganised for a week.

Every possible opportunity was taken to bring the Battalion up to that same standard of efficiency as when it left England. Reinforcements arrived sometimes with inadequate training, having been transferred from other arms or come straight from Primary Training centres in England. Miniature ranges were built on which weapons could be tested and the skill of the individual improved. Minor tactical exercises were arranged so that the new members of the team could be practised in their new surroundings and wherever possible, Infantry/Tank exercises were carried out. These brief and infrequent periods out of the line were sometimes called 'rest periods' but they were often busier than when in contact with the enemy. In addition to the training mentioned above there were a host of administrative matters to attend to – the cleaning of weapons and ammunition, the checking of kits and making up deficiencies, baths for all, checking of casualty kits, writing and censoring of mail, issue of BIS (Bulk Issue (NAAFI) Stores), supply and studying of maps and a thorough preparation of the new battles to come.

C Coy was billeted in a lunatic asylum(!) but most companies and detachments spread themselves in billets around a café and the break was well received by all.

By this time the enemy west of the Maas had been driven into a semi-circle centred on Venlo and from his reactions he appeared determined to maintain this bridgehead across the river, possibly with a view to a future breakout. A cordon of British troops was drawn around him and in order to fill a gap in the cordon on 6 October A Coy was despatched to Meijel with a troop of tanks and a few guns. It was impossible to have troops standing shoulder to shoulder around the enemy and A Coy spent an unpleasant 2 days coping with attempted infiltration.

Then began the task of breaking up and elimination this bridgehead. Its existence meant a heavy drain on British troops to contain it and it was essential to clear the west bank of the river entirely in order that the front could be held with a minimum number of men during the winter months. The Battalion got fed up looking at the river before it had finished but it was a good thing to have it between the enemy and ourselves. On 7 Oct the Div relieved 7th US Armd Div and took over an area in the forests north of Overloon. Here we were subjected to severe shelling and mortaring, and Moaning Minnie

was far too active. Extensive patrolling was carried out to locate the enemy and secure information. It was a tiring time for everybody but it had to be done. Higher formation was anxious to obtain enemy identifications. A number of deserters had come through our lines but could give little information of value. Various ruses were tried which it was hoped would produce talkative prisoners and for the first time we witnessed a Psychological Warfare Team in action. Their equipment was an armoured loud hailer. After a concentrated artillery barrage on known enemy positions the operator warned the enemy that the shelling was only a small dose of what was to come and furthermore that tanks were massed in the woods in front of them ready to crush them in their slit trenches. In fact their future was very grim 'alles was kaput', and the only sensible thing for them to do was to come forward and give themselves up, safe custody, a room at the palace and the food they were not getting having also been promised.

Despite another shower of shells and further haranguing the psychological attack was unproductive. Possibly they could not hear the loudspeaker as there was a slight cross wind, or possibly they were not the type of enemy to fall for that sort of thing. It was apparent that if we wanted prisoners we would have to get them the hard way. Therefore in the afternoon of 9 Oct, a raid was planned and carried out by D Coy.

The raid started at 1530 hrs on located enemy positions in the tip of 'Boot Wood'. Medium artillery was laid about 300 yards in the wood to seal off the enemy positions and prevent movement either backwards or forwards. 25 pounders brought concentrated fire down on to the positions and working with the support of a squadron of tanks the company shot its way forward into the wood. There, with grenade and bayonet, the leading platoon got in amongst the enemy and cleared up the posts in double quick time. The outcome was 17 PoWs of Battle Group Paul, and a similar number of dead were left behind. Then under the cover of smoke put down by the tanks the company withdrew. Speed in execution of the raid, combined with the application of fire and movement, were responsible for the success. The slowness of the enemy's reaction was interesting. Although the distance between Boot Wood and our trenches was the best part of 1,000 yards our troops were back in their slit trenches before enemy shelling started. When it did start however it went on for the rest of the evening.

Under constant threat and stress lighter moments also existed as Bob Price recalled:

With an improvement in the weather it was time for us to be on the move again. We were therefore to hand over sector to another formation, which rather surprisingly turned out to be the 7th US Armoured Division. On the 30th September they assumed control and prepared for an immediate push towards Venlo. Our part in this operation was limited to giving artillery support and garrisoning the little town of Meijel, this meant watching the Deurne Canal, which ran along the eastern side of the town.

Our company arrived in the afternoon and took over from the American garrison. Our force was much smaller than theirs so we had to close in around the centre of the town at night, otherwise we would have been too widely spread and therefore more vulnerable in the dark. Things didn't start very well for us; we hadn't been there very long when we lost the company commander. He was hit by shrapnel from spasmodic shelling, which continued throughout the day. We dug our trench in the grass verge against a low garden wall at the end of a driveway to a detached house. This gave us a good field of fire up and down the road. The house stood about ten yards from the road and looked undamaged from the front, we used the front downstairs room to sleep in. The rear of the house came as a bit of a shock, it was devastated, all the rear wall and part of the roof had collapsed into a pile of

rubble, yet standing there in the middle of this once lovely room was a 'Baby Grand' piano. It was covered with plaster and debris but otherwise undamaged. We had a good musician in the platoon, his eyes lit up when he saw the piano, but the sergeant soon realised what he was thinking,

'Forget it' he said 'Don't touch that bloody piano'

By nightfall the sky cleared and the moon came up, it went very quiet. It was our turn on the Bren gun; we sat on the side of the trench with backs against the wall cupping our hands around the lighted cigarettes. It was getting quite cold now. This little town was an eerie place, the moonlight cast long dark shadows all around us, it was so quiet, not a sound anywhere. We found ourselves talking in whispers, we'd been told the enemy were inquisitively inclined, and nightly incursions could be expected across the canal.

Suddenly the silence was broken, it made us both jump, but not in the way we'd ever imagined. From behind the house the opening chords of the Warsaw Concerto blasted out from that baby grand piano.

'Jack Carrol' we both shouted, jumping out of the trench and racing round to the back of the house. There sitting on the stool was Jack, his hands pounding up and down the keys as if he was on stage performing in front of an audience. The moon shone down on him like a spotlight, it was exactly the same setting as in the film 'Dangerous Moonlight', where this piece of music came from, except this was Holland, not Warsaw. I don't suppose he was playing much more than a minute, but it certainly stirred things up a bit; the platoon sergeant was furious and immediately put him on 'Open Arrest', the punishment deferred to a later date. Give Jack plenty to do and there wasn't a problem, but he soon got bored with all the hanging about. He was a one off, a maverick; he just couldn't cope with army discipline. In action he was a brilliant soldier, he seemed to thrive on danger, and was always the one out in front. In fact he was awarded the Military Medal for bravery [27 Feb 1945] before the campaign was over.

All the excitement over we went back on guard to finish our two-hour duty, everyone else went back in the house and soon everything was quiet and peaceful again. The next hour seemed to drag, we were both feeling pretty tired by now, when suddenly from out of the house came a loud bang followed by a muffled scream. Then total silence!

'What was that?' Taff whispered.

'Go and have a look' I replied.

'No way am I going in there on my own, I'll fetch the sergeant'

I put the Bren gun on the wall pointing towards the house, while Taff went down the road to look for the sergeant. He seemed to be away for ages, then I could see them both returning up the centre of the road in the moonlight. Still not a sound from the house! I stopped with the gun; Taff and the sergeant disappeared into the house. I could see a light through the window as someone struck a match. A few minutes later, Taff came out of the front door and walked towards me, he was laughing quietly to himself.

'Well' I said, 'What happened?'

'One of the lads went to sleep on top of a wardrobe and fell off' he replied.

'Anybody hurt?' I inquired

'No but he fell on the table and smashed it to pieces'

What a night! We didn't get much sleep. I was glad when dawn broke and Sparky brought us a mug of tea, it was quite a cold start to the day.

In our old sector the Americans had started with high hopes of breaking through the strong enemy positions situated amongst the large belts of trees that guard the town of Overloon. After five days of endeavour and heavy casualties, a new plan was revealed. After a week in Meijel, the idea of employing 11 Armd Div further north had now been abandoned, instead, we would relieve our old friends 7 Armoured Division between Deurne and the river, they in turn would hold a section on our right from Deurne to Meijel.

On 12 Oct, 3 (Br) Div passed through the Battalion and captured Overloon. This made the Battalion area very unpleasant throughout the day, for the enemy appreciated it as the forming up place for the attack and harassed it continuously. Even so The Herefords were glad to give the Red Triangles (*Tactical Recognition sign of 3 (Br) Div*) a cheering word as they passed through and thankful that it was not us going in to the attack.

The last offensive act by the Battalion from this base was a sweep carried out towards Vierlingsbeek. It was a hateful little operation, just about on a par with the weather which was as filthy as bad weather can be. A few casualties were suffered passing through a known minefield area and the commencement of the operation delayed while sappers checked and cleared the route. The flail tanks which were to operate along the road got themselves into a tangle and broke down and finally, in despair, the Battalion advanced without them with 2 squadrons of the 15/19th. Eventually contact was made with the enemy and clearing commenced. The enemy retaliated with heavy mortar and SA fire but after a short sharp encounter about 20 enemy were killed and a similar number of prisoners taken. By that time darkness was approaching and the companies were called in and splashed their way back to the waterlogged slit trenches they had left. A successful operation, well deserving the double rum issue which followed.

The following day the Battalion pulled back south west to Deurne ready to continue operations eastwards over more canals and depressingly flat country. The same American Division which we had relieved north of Overloon had that night forced a small bridgehead over an unnamed canal and a bridge was being put across (shades of Zomeron!). It was completed by 0800 hrs and the Battalion moved up from the harbour area ready to pass through the Americans, whose bridgehead was reported to be 500 yards deep. As A and D Coys came into the open so the shelling started. Every farm across the canal seemed to be a mortar position and it appeared they were all firing simultaneously on to the bridge. Any movement drew small arms fire and for a while movement in any direction was impossible. Severe casualties were inflicted on the lead 2 companies even before the operation started. The Mortar Pl and supporting artillery put down counter battery fire but still the shelling continued.

[Price] We dug in alongside a large wood; the weather was terrible with almost continuous rain. The main offensive was postponed until the 12th October because of the rain, then the 3rd Infantry Division passed through our positions to operate towards Overloon and Venray as the Americans had done before. In spite of this terrible weather 159 Brigade were quite active and put in several local attacks against the enemy positions along our left flank. these were highly successful and yielded a number of prisoners. Sergeant GH Eardley of 4 KSLI distinguished himself and gained the award of the Victoria Cross for single-handedly, with a Sten gun and a few grenades, destroying 3 successive machine-gun posts manned by the redoubtable paratroops, a performance which not merely staggered all who saw it, but also ensured the success of his battalion in its task.

By the 16th October 29 Brigade had crossed the Deurne Canal and were making steady progress towards Meerselo. In the meantime the American operation to establish a bridgehead over the canal on the Deurne-Venray road had met with stiff resistance, and although a bridge was constructed during the night the division was not in a position to continue the advance. A decision was therefore taken to shift 159 Brigade right round into the Deurne area and move them through the American bridgehead the next morning. So on the morning of the 17th October we found ourselves sitting on our tanks in the middle of Deurne waiting for orders to start our advance up the road to Venray. It was while we were there that I saw my very first jet aircraft, a German Me262 fighter. The roar from its engines made us jump, we'd never heard anything like it before, everyone looked up as it streaked across the sky. By 0900 hrs we began our advance, I was on the back of the second troop of tanks and with the canal only three miles away it didn't take us long to reach the first American troops dug in on either side of the road. We moved cautiously up the road towards the bridge, it was a typical Dutch road raised above the surrounding fields with an avenue of trees on either side. The silence was broken by the first mortar bombs falling, about two hundred yards further up the road. We dismounted and continued our advance on foot. Some of the tanks moved down onto the fields but immediately got bogged down. We then came under a ferocious mortar bomb attack; we took cover in the ditch that ran on either side of the road. In a few minutes it was chaos, I pressed myself into the soft earth as hard as I could. All around there were cries from the wounded as the shrapnel from the bombs found their targets.

It was at this point that Bob was wounded – his story continues in the ‘wounded’ section later in this month’s account.

Eventually by using every fold in the ground and by well controlled fire and movement the leading companies worked their way forward. By now it was appreciated that the enemy was holding positions directly in front of the bridge on either side of the road and the bridgehead, instead of being 500 yards was only 200 yards deep. Also most of the opposition was coming from the right, the direction of Ijsselsteijn (pronounced Ishelstein = cesspool!) which was considered to be held in strength. A Coy on the left of the road managed to filter forward. D Coy on the right were by now in direct contact with the enemy and set about dealing with their positions. Our own artillery and mortars kept on harassing suspected positions and pressure was maintained by all. To add to the hammering already being brought to bear, rocket firing Typhoons came in on call and ‘lime juiced’ the village. By this time the fire fight had been won and the Germans began to sicken. D Coy manoeuvred itself into position and attacked a farm which was causing them a lot of trouble. A gallant assault was put in and 60 prisoners taken at the point of the bayonet.

A Coy in the meantime had collected a few more prisoners from the road area. Then under an artillery smoke screen B and C Coys moved round the left flank, and with tank support put in an attack on Ijsselsteijn from the north. It was already on the verge of dark and every farm for miles around was blazing away in a strong wind. The situation was delicate, but the enemy had ‘had it’. Only slight opposition was encountered and the 2 companies quickly consolidated their positions. A and D Coys were brought up and the Battalion curled itself into a tight ball to spend the night. By the light of the blazing buildings and to the crackling and collapsing of their blackened timbers all important reorganisation was carried out. A and D Coys had a big job to do. They had had a gruelling day but could not sit back and say they had finished. A Coy Comd had been wounded and both companies had suffered heavy casualties; the CO decided they should amalgamate and operate as one company of 4 platoons. This meant a hasty reorganisation which was to last for about a month until enough reinforcements arrived. Trenches dug, patrols out, sentries posted, ammunition replenished,

casualties checked and reported, O Gp for following day's operation etc. That is war. To add to it all, or perhaps in keeping with it, it rained 'cats and dogs'!

As Ken Crockford recalls:

On 16 October the 1 Herefords were ordered to leave Deurne, pass through the American 7th Armoured Division and advance on Ijsselsteijn. We understood that it would be necessary to cross a stream using a bridge which the Americans were holding to a depth of 500 yards beyond. The 15/19th Hussars would pass through us and lead the advance to Ijsselsteijn, which was reported to be held by the enemy in some strength.

Early in the morning of the 17th, a 'recce party' moved forward and reported that the bridge was intact. A and D Coys supported by the 15/19 Hussars were ordered to cross the bridge, pass through the Americans and advance on Ijsselsteijn. C Coy was to move up close behind them.

At that time C Coy had only 2 officers out of an establishment of 5. Captain Teddy Mills, acting Coy Comd, and myself. He ordered me to get as close to the bridge as possible and await further orders. Advancing towards the bridge we became aware of what appeared to be a battle raging ahead. Nearing the bridge we saw A Coy Comd Major Charles Mason walking down the road towards us. On enquiring as to what was going on ahead, he replied that although the bridge appeared intact, he did not think there were any Americans left on the other side. Both A and D Coys were pinned down by heavy small arms fire. He had gone forward to urge his forward platoons to cross the bridge only to be wounded. He opened his battle dress blouse and lifted his shirt to reveal a bullet hole in his stomach. The bullet must have passed through him and out of his back; how he was still able to walk completely mystified me. He continued his walk to the rear and briefed C Coy Comd and later the CO before being evacuated to a RAMC field dressing station (FDS).

I was ordered to pass through A and D Coys, cross the bridge, advance 500 yards, wheel right, advance a further 500 yards, take up a defensive position and await the arrival of the remainder of the Coy.

14 Platoon moved forward, crossed the bridge unhindered, moved forward, turned right and took up an 'all round' defensive position. As we approached the bridge some Americans lying in a ditch had called 'You are not going over that bridge are you?' I just replied 'Yes'. They gallantly replied 'We sure take our hats off to you Limeys' which was good for our morale!

D Coy now crossed the bridge and attacked a farm taking about 60 prisoners. B and C Coys were then ordered to move on with the 15/19th Hussars and capture Ijsselsteijn. A smoke screen was laid to cover our advance and protect us from enemy fire coming from nearby woods. This we did. but not without the loss of some tanks. On arrival we were ordered to take up a defensive position, dig in and be prepared to hold it for some time. (There was no need to tell us to 'dig in', it became almost automatic each time we halted!). All around us were burning tanks, some with dead bodies draped over the turrets having been shot whilst trying to escape their disabled tanks.

As darkness fell, the flames from the burning tanks caused flickering shadows giving the impression that enemy patrols were advancing on us from many directions. The stench of burning rubber and bodies was one that we had not experienced since leaving Normandy. As we watched the tanks many of us saw the unnerving sight of the spine of one of our crew

member becoming severed at the neck and springing into an upright position which had an unnerving experience on all who witnessed it. As 14 Platoon was usually in the lead for much of the time being the only 'officer led' platoon in the Coy, and being forbidden to stop to aid the injured and dying for fear of bringing the advance to a halt, we were unaccustomed to seeing the results of injuries. We had to harden ourselves to trusting the following stretcher bearers to deal with the situations as they occurred.

The Herefords casualties for that day had been 3 officers and 67 soldiers evacuated wounded, and five soldiers killed.

One officer, 1 RSM, 1 CSM and 94 ORs were sent to PoW cage and 30 or 40 others captured by us had been disposed of by the Americans.

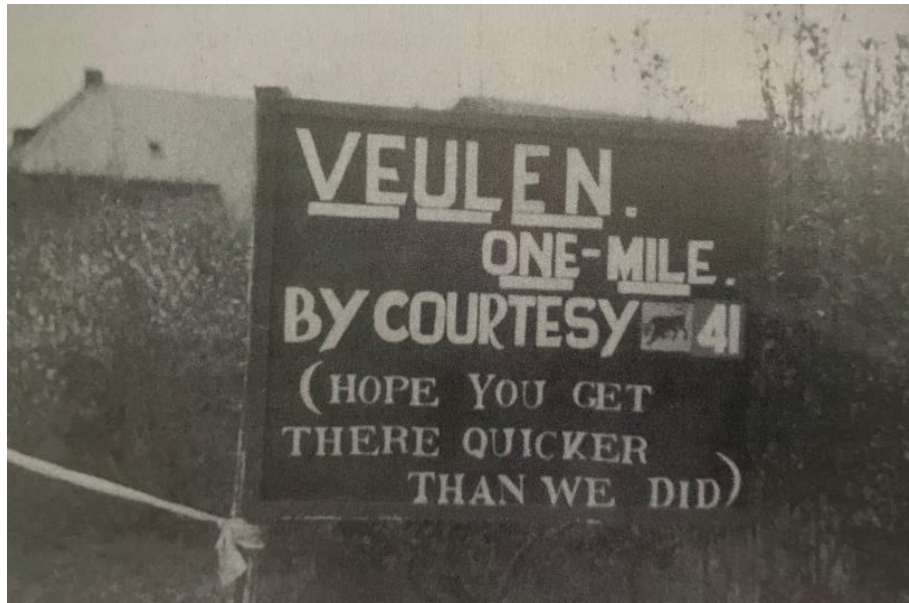
Reg Worton remembered one aspect of his time in Ijsselsteijn: *I was asked by a farmer to end the suffering of four cows and a horse wounded by shrapnel - I shall never forget the way they looked at me as I shot them. Then the farmer cut their throats. Near Gruberost on the Maas, we (Reg's Platoon) lived off chicken, turkey, eggs and pork, all cooked on a Jerry petrol blowlamp; and we had bottled pears and plums for 'afters'.*

At first light the following morning B and C Coys were ordered to clear forward up to a given line to allow the 4KSLI who were to pass through, a good start. Heavy mortar fire came down with a sickening accuracy as soon as the sweep started but the companies edged their way forward. With the tanks in support and the gunner having a hay day with his '75s' in preference to calling down artillery, the operation was soon completed. It yielded 2 officers and 60 OR PoWs which, for an early morning canter was a very satisfactory start.

C Coy Comd complained bitterly over the air about the size of the task given him and the strength of the opposition and he was allowed to halt 300 yards short of the crossroads originally given him as his objective. It subsequently transpired that owing to an error of map reading he had mistaken the crossroads and actually gone 500 yards further than was anticipated. Hence the satisfactory bag mentioned above.

The same afternoon was not so funny. It was planned to move the Battalion up to the 4 KSLI who had established themselves in Veulen. A recce party with reps from all the companies went forward under the 2ic. As soon as they arrived in the new area they drew aimed shell fire and half the party was either killed or wounded. It was an unpleasant jolt but the results would have been more disastrous had the Battalion, which was already on the move forward, not been warned of the tragedy and halted.

The weather was bad – almost constant rain and the going was difficult, the ground soft and roads damaged. 612 Fd Sqn RE had built a 1.5 mile long road in Veulen under constant observation and fire. One problem was getting hardcore and many houses were bulldozed to provide. A Canadian forestry team cut down 10,000 trees to build a log road.



The battlegroup of Herefords and 15/19th Hussars had started on the 14th at St Anthonis, then moved south to the outskirts of Overloon. There they stayed till the 15th when 159 Infantry Brigade, which included Herefords/15/19th Hussars and 2nd Fife and Forfarshire/4 KSLI, were switched to the west flank near Deurne to launch an attack to link up with 3 British Division. It was a wooded area with sandy ground and occasional sand dunes, and during the KSLI/Fife attack from Schaartven, 1 mile east of Overloon, in confused fighting the KSLI had thirty-five casualties.

The constant threat to life and the loss of friends required the adoption of a stoic philosophical approach as Bob Price commented:

I thought I recognised someone who walked across the field behind us, he stopped and talked to one of the lads in 7 Platoon. To satisfy my curiosity I walked over to them, and sure enough it as a lad who lived in the same street as me. Although he was older and I hadn't seen him for a few years he recognised me right away. It was nice to talk to someone from your own home town again, the people we both knew and what they were doing now. I said cheerio and started to walk back to our trench. I hadn't quite got there when a mortar bomb dropped behind me. I looked back in time to see them both fall to the ground; the bomb had exploded right at their feet. I hit the ground and stayed there for a few minutes, nothing else happened so I jumped up and ran back. They were both dead. I slowly walked back to Taff and Sparky and sat on the side of the trench, I was shaking in complete shock and Taff put his hand on my shoulder,

'That was bloody close'

A few minutes earlier, I thought and it would have been me lying there in the mud. It took me a long time to get over that incident, seeing someone you've known all your life die that way. If there's one thing I learned from this experience, call it luck if you like, but if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, you're dead, so it wasn't worth worrying about it, take the usual precautions and keep your head down when you could.

Not all could manage this:

[Crockford] Later during the night Sgt Shotton reported that a soldier in my left forward section had become 'bomb happy'. He was a recently joined reinforcement from England and this was his first battle experience. He was huddled in the bottom of his trench, crying and

saying he was only 17 years old and had lied about his age when he had joined the army. He was a volunteer. His section commander wanted him to be taken to the rear. I reported this to Captain Mills who after consultation with Battalion HQ, sent me a message that as we were so short of men, the soldier was to remain where he was with his section until the morning. On receipt of this decision, the soldier shot himself in the left foot necessitating his removal by stretcher bearers.

Later, the same section commander sent me a message that he was certain an enemy patrol was advancing on his position. I went to join him and sure enough we could distinguish bodies, some on the ground, some in a crouched position, but only one figure appeared to be moving. We kept watch for a few more minutes and as the patrol did not appear to be coming any closer, I ordered the section commander to cover me whilst I went forward to investigate. Also to send one of his soldiers to let Sgt Shotton know what I was doing.

I inched slowly towards the patrol but as I got closer I recognised one of my own men, Lance Corporal Dicks working his way along a line of dead bodies. There were no apparent injury all appeared to have been killed by blast, a not uncommon occurrence. Lance Corporal Dicks was searching for Luger pistols, very superior to our revolvers! Towards midday. I was informed that our tanks had arrived at Veulen and that I was to join the 'recce' party to prepare for the Herefords to take over from the tanks. Tea and biscuits arrived and whilst I was enjoying these, Captain Mills came from our wireless carrier to say the CO was not prepared to leave the Coy with only one officer. I was to remain and send Sergeant Shotton in whom he had complete confidence and who had performed this role in Normandy before I took over 14 Platoon. I protested that Sgt Shotton had not yet had his tea and biscuits. I was overruled. Sgt Shotton had a quick drink and departed with a pack of biscuits. We were never to see him again.

At about 1400 hrs, we were ordered to move forward to the Veulen area. On arrival at our new location there was no Sgt Shotton to meet us. On enquiring why? I was told that the 'recce' party had come under attack and that our new location had been altered. Sgt Shotton would join us later.

The CO had arranged with the Bde Comd for the Battalion to take up a different position to that originally ordered – this illustrating again the flexibility possible in the planning and carrying out of operations within an armoured division. We were seldomly rigidly tied down to hard and fast boundaries as is often the case with an infantry division. Orders issued by the Bde Comd to his COs and COs to Coy Comds were frequently made from a map and a better alternative might reveal itself to a junior commander on the spot. He was able to suggest this alternative to his superiors and such was the confidence of commanders in each other that it was frequently adopted. By this means unnecessary casualties were avoided.

Captain Mills allocated platoon positions and we dug in experiencing a rather uncomfortable night yet again.

The next morning we were told the truth. The recce party had come under fire. The Battalion Second in Command had been wounded and two including Sgt Shotton had been killed. Sgt Reg Worton of Support Coy takes up the story:

As a member of the 'recce' party I had escaped injury and was ordered to collect and take the body of Sgt Shotton to the area of the RAP (Regimental Aid Post). I obtained the use of a bren carrier driven by Private Penn. We took a door from a building, laid it across the carrier, laid the body of Sgt Shotton on the door and took him to the RAP.

Sgt Worton who had known Sgt Shotton for some years stated that there was not a mark on him and that Sgt Shotton was away from the main party when killed presumably from the blast of a shell or mortar bomb. Private Penn was killed later that day.

The loss of Sgt Shotton had a severe effect on the Platoon, not the least on me who felt guilty as to the circumstances under which he had lost his life. I'm afraid I 'blasted' Captain Mills who reported me to HQ to where I was ordered to report to the Battalion Second in Command, Major Rex Fripp. He gave me a severe dressing down telling me my responsibilities were to the living not the dead. I should get back to my Platoon, command it and if necessary the Coy. This I did to the best of my ability, always suspecting that the Platoon who had the highest regard for Sgt Shotton secretly blamed me for his death.

The period from that day (20 Oct) until 27 Nov might be called 'Deurne Revisited' with possibly 'Amerika' as a sub heading. It is a monotonous period in the Battalion's story of the campaign; yet it could be made into an interesting and exciting story. It is a period of Reserve Battalion, patrols, bog trotting, mine laying and pig killing, punctuated by the odd 48 hours leave in Brussels – if lucky. No cryptic 'Q' clerk maintained a record of this period as he did to cover the Battalion's history before the campaign. If he had done it would have read something like this:

20 Oct	Ijsselsteijn	Wet and sticky – mortaring and shelling
21 Oct	Veulen	No better than the last place
25 Oct	Deurne	RIP – accommodation somewhat motheaten but RIP
27 Oct	Griendtsveen	Again relieved by 7 US Armd Div. Understand 2 nd Army HQ surprisingly well forward at Helmond have pulled back to Antwerp. Enemy breakout of the bridgehead and threaten Meijel.

Reg Worton recalled: *the Americans came in with a full Battalion, stacks of artillery, ice-cream cart, cinema and Jerry took it all off them in 2 days!*

Alec Wardman remembered this period - *A great deal of the winter was spent in clearing Germans from the area to the west of the river Maas, an area which was very wet and boggy, with canals for drainage everywhere. You dug a slit trench, for protection, but could only dig about 2 feet deep and then the trench filled with water. So you banked the soil up round the trench and hoped that you did not have to get in it too many times, because you were soaked through every time you did.*

Bob Price recalled: *It was about this time that the weather deteriorated, up till now it hadn't been too bad, now every day we had rain. Movement became difficult, especially for the tanks. We found ourselves remaining in the same place for days at a time, it became very muddy everywhere, we just had to wait for a break in the weather. It gave us a chance to build a really elaborate trench with our own dry sleeping quarters lined with straw, the roofs built with logs covered with soil and finally finished with a layer of turf. We were having to live in holes in the ground like animals, so why not imitate them! I know it raised a few eyebrows amongst the rest of the platoon when it was finished. Having a miner as a mate was a compensation when it came to digging trenches. With the longer nights we were also able to get a few more hours sleep. Over the last two months we'd been awake twenty hours a day!*

Casualties

<i>Name</i>	<i>Initial</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>
Merchant	RN	Pte	14642716	D	DOW	10/10/1944	Overloon
Farmer	JW	Pte	4036329	C	KIA	11/10/1944	Overloon
Jones	WC	Pte	4103988	B	KIA	12/10/1944	Overloon
Lightfoot	S	Cpl	4915792	B	DOW	12/10/1944	Overloon
Gee	FE	Pte	5116683	C	DOW	13/10/1944	Overloon
Sparkes	WG	Pte	4105362	B	DOW	13/10/1944	Overloon
<i>Bevan</i>	<i>EC</i>	<i>Cpl</i>	<i>4104934</i>	<i>2KSLI</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>14/10/1944</i>	<i>NWE</i>
Herbert	TW	Pte	4104366		KIA	17/10/1944	Belgium
Stopforth	R	Pte	3663831		KIA	17/10/1944	Belgium
Castree	RG	Pte	3911826	A	DOW	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Hill	AE	Pte	4104983	A	DOW	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Lord	TP	Sgt	3597899	D	DOW	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Nicholls	AW	Sgt	5112024	D	DOW	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Saunders	RC	Pte	4041743	D	DOW	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Wale	DB	L/Sgt	5126716	A	DOW	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Allott	JH	Pte	984286	D	KIA	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Bailes	S	Cpl	5440378	A	KIA	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Donovan	VJ	Pte	5120895	A	KIA	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Peck	AE	Pte	4922977	D	KIA	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Sidwell	JW	L/Cpl	4926966	D	KIA	17/10/1944	Ijsselsteijn
Gregson	R	Cpl	4038897	B	KIA	18/10/1944	Veulen
Penn	EE	Pte	4036386	HQ	KIA	18/10/1944	Veulen
Shotton	BW	Sgt	4038510	C	KIA	18/10/1944	Veulen
Phillips	HH	Pte	4105865	A	KIA	22/10/1944	Veulen
Price	GL	Pte	4105468	A	KIA	22/10/1944	Veulen
French	JH	CQMS	4031984	A	DOW	23/10/1944	Veulen
Knight	D	Pte	4041880	A	DOW	23/10/1944	Veulen
Carden	W	Pte	4042197	D	KIA	31/10/1944	Grientsveen

Cpl Bevan had been a member of C (Ledbury) Company and later Y (Ledbury) Company 2nd Battalion. He was serving at the time of his death with 2KSLI and was first reported wounded and later his death was notified.

CAS/1

INFANTRY RECORD OFFICE,
SHERWSBURY,
24th. OCTOBER 1944.

MADAM,

I REGRET TO HAVE TO INFORM YOU THAT A REPORT HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM WAR OFFICE TO THE EFFECT THAT NO. 4104934.

RANK...CORPORAL.

NAME...Edward Cyril BEVAN.

REGIMENT...THE KING'S SHROPSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY.

HAS BEEN WOUNDED IN NORTH WEST EUROPE.

ON THE...DATE NOT YET KNOWN

THE NATURE OF THE WOUND IS SERIOUS WOUND LEFT ARM, XX, RIGHT LEG AND LEFT EYE AND NECK.

I AM TO EXPRESS TO YOU THE SYMPATHY AND REGRET OF THE ARMY COUNCIL.

YOURS FAITHFULLY
C.O. DROWNE,
FOR LIEUT. COL.
OFFICER 1/c OF RECORDS.

4/K

INFANTRY RECORD OFFICE,
SHERWSBURY,
25th. OCTOBER 1944.

DEAR MADAM,

IT IS MY PAINFUL DUTY TO INFORM YOU THAT A REPORT HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE WAR OFFICE NOTIFYING THE DEATH OF

NO....4104934. RANK.....CORPORAL.

NAME...Edward Cyril BEVAN.

REGIMENT.....THE KING'S SHROPSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY,
WHICH OCCURED IN NORTH WEST EUROPE.

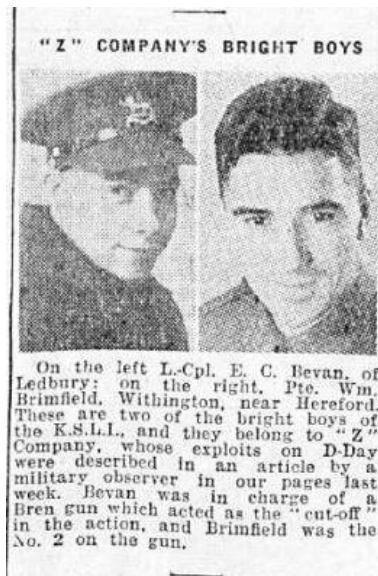
ON THE 14th. OCTOBER 1944.

THE REPORT IS TO THE EFFECT THAT HE DIED OF WOUNDS.

I AM TO EXPRESS THE SYMPATHY AND REGRET OF THE ARMY COUNCIL AT THE SOLDIER'S DEATH IN HIS COUNTRY'S SERVICE,

I AM,
MADAM
YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT,
(SGD)H. BYRNE,
FOR LIEUT. COL.
OFFICER 1/c OF RECORDS.

Cpl Bevan and his wife



CQMS French



4038897 Gregson

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM

Holland 414^E - 14.

The following ^{has} been concentrated here:—
 (Name of Cemetery) VENRAIJ BRITISH CEMETERY
 (Full Map Reference) Holland Sh 2A & 3A 1/250.000 E.773271.

Report No. BAOR/Conc
4390

13m NE EINHOVEN. 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	RAF <i>RCAF</i>	521413	HORRELL <i>HORRELL</i>	A. J.	F/O	11.10.44 <i>11.10.44</i>	K/A	I	E	12	21.6.46	DEURNE Holland Sh 2A & 3A 1/250.000	16360
2	15/19 H	7912303	DINHAM	E. K.	Tpr	17.10.44	"	I	F	4	"	DEURNE Holland Sh 4 1/100.000	16488
3	RA	1084940	WALTERS <i>WALTERS</i>	L.H.G.	Bdr	29.10.44	"	I	F	2	"	" 712235	16616
4	"	907348	ROBERTS	E.C.	Gnr	2.11.44	"	I	F	3	"	IJSSELSTEIN Holland Sh 19SW 1/25.000	16109
5	HEREFORD	4105865	PHILLIPS	H.H.	Pte	22.10.44	"	I	F	9	"	DEURNE Holland Sh 4 1/100.000	16654
6	"	4105468	PRICE	G.L.	"	4.11.44	"	I	F	10	"	"	"
7	"	4038510	SHOTTON	B.W.	Sjt	18.10.44	"	I	F	11	"	DEURNE Holland Sh 4 1/100.000	731223
8	"	4038897	GREGSON	R.	Cpl	4.11.44	"	I	F	12	"	"	"
9	"	4036386	PENN	E.E.	Pte	4.11.44	"	I	F	13	"	"	"
10	KSLI	4034958	HAYNES	M.E.	"	4.11.44	"	I	F	5	"	IJSSELSTEIN Holland Sh 19SW/E 1/25.000	18328
11	15/19 H	4/323540	WILSON	A.D.	2/Lt	19.10.44	"	I	F	6	"	DEURNE Holland Sh 4 1/100.000	728224
12													

Date 12 Jul 46

(Signed) *H. B. Chapman* ^{Col.}

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

Rank & Appointment D. D. G. R. E.

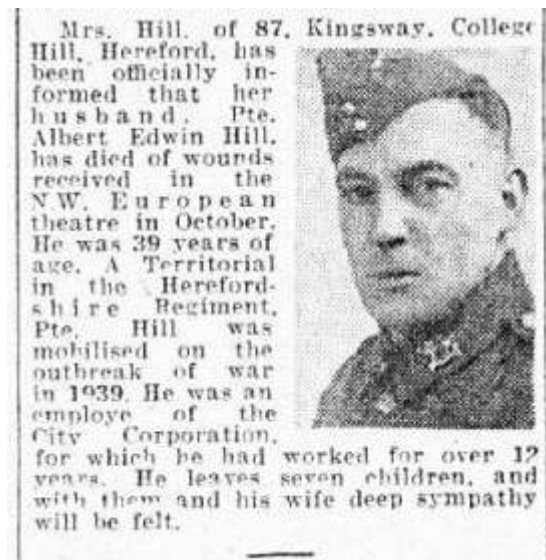
PSS.3088. 12.45. 20M



4922977 Pte Peck



4104983 Pte A Hill



Sgt Shotton

Sgt Shotton was Lt Ken Crockford's platoon sergeant and Ken always spoke in generous terms about him.

The death of Ben Shotton has never gone from my mind and since I know where he is buried, at the British military cemetery in Venray, I go to his grave every year. For years I have tried to find Ben's relatives, unfortunately without success. But on Sunday, September 20th 2009 a miracle took place. I was present at the annual remembrance service at the military cemetery in Venray. After the service I stood talking to some people when a woman tapped me on my shoulder. She had seen that I had laid a wreath on behalf of the Herefordshire Regiment and she told me that her father had also served with that regiment and that she hardly knew

anything about him. She asked me if by any chance I had known him, his name was Ben Shotton. I was flabbergasted but also very happy and grateful that finally I had been able to meet her. Now we regularly are in contact with each other and I have been able to tell her a lot about her father.



Ken Crockford with Sgt Shotton's daughter - 2009

Ken's ashes were interred in Sgt Shotton's grave when he died in 2014.

Wounded

The details of all those wounded is not known; some details are recorded.

On 17 Oct Bob Price was wounded. Bob is the author of the book 'Just A Walk In The Sun' and in it he recounts his experience of being wounded and subsequent treatment until he rejoined the Battalion in December. It is reproduced in full and well illustrates the process for casualties and reinforcements.

Army Form B. 104-81A.

No. CAS/K.
If replying please quote donor No.

It has not been reported into what hospital he has been admitted, nor are other particulars known, but in the event of his condition being considered by the Medical Authorities as serious or dangerous this office will be notified by cable and you will be immediately informed. In addition he will have been given every facility for communicating with you himself.

Office,
 OCT. 19 144

~~XXXXXX~~ MADAM,

I regret to have to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that (No.) 14552923.

(Rank) Private.

(Name) Robert Stanley PRICE.

(Regiment) The Herefordshire Regiment.

has been wounded, ~~and was admitted to~~ in North West Europe.

on the 17th day of October 1944. The nature of the wound is B. Wound Left Leg.

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

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

Yours faithfully,
C. P. Jones
 Lt. Colonel.
 Officer in Charge of Records.

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

FORM B. 104-81A/3



We then came under a ferocious mortar bomb attack; we took cover in the ditch that ran on either side of the road. In a few minutes it was chaos, I pressed myself into the soft earth as hard as I could. All around there were cries from the wounded as the shrapnel from the bombs found their targets. What happened next is hard to explain, a mortar bomb exploded where my feet should have been, and yet I felt no pain. I then realised I couldn't feel anything from my waist downwards — it was completely numb. I was terrified to look over my shoulder and see if my legs were still there. The first person to reach me was Jack Carroll, 'You've got a Blighty one there Bob' he said 'Are you hit anywhere else' I looked back and my feet were lying in the crater from the bomb, I must have had my legs wide apart when the bomb exploded! There was a hole in the front of my left leg just above my ankle and a small piece of shrapnel had gone right through my right foot, also a much larger piece in my right upper arm, I wasn't bleeding anywhere. In five minutes those bombs had killed nine of my mates and wounded thirty-three others, I was one of the lucky ones.

The first lull in the mortar attack the wounded were picked up and taken to the nearest 'Field Dressing Station' a marquee in a field just behind the lines, there the wounds were dressed. Serious cases were dealt with as soon as possible by a team of army surgeons. When transport was available we were moved farther down the line to an old school that had been converted into a 'Field Hospital', that's where we spent our first night. By now the numbness in my legs had gone. As each hour passed I could feel myself relaxing as the tension slowly melted away, I felt a great sense of relief, for me, my war was over, if only for a few short weeks. Tuesday the 17th October 1944 is a day I shall never forget. The next day we were transferred to a hospital in Brussels.

108 British General Hospital was a large old hospital probably built in the late 1890s. There were twenty-seven beds in the ward I was in, all soldiers recovering from wounds. Some were like me with only flesh wounds, others in a more serious condition with limbs missing or shot

up pretty badly. The courageous way these men behaved throughout amazed me, they were the most cheerful, the first to see the funny side of any situation and I know at times they were in a lot of pain. It was in this ward that I first encountered the drug penicillin, it was in short supply and was only given to the more seriously wounded, it saved many lives.

On the 22nd October it was my turn to go into the theatre and have the shrapnel removed from my leg and arm. They left the wounds open for a time, which made dressing them a bit unpleasant because they were much larger now and the dressing invariably got stuck to the wound every time it had to be changed. The chap in the next bed had lost his leg, so it doesn't need much imagination the pain he went through everytime they redressed it. I felt ashamed when I shouted out once when my dressing stuck, it was nothing compared with what they had to put up with.

Another experience I shall never forget is being given a blanket bath by a seventeen-year-old Belgium nurse, she bathed everyone in the ward that day. To coin a phrase, she didn't leave any stone unturned. I couldn't see an English nurse doing the same. Talking of English nurses the night sister on our ward was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen. I know at nineteen I may have been a little naive but every man in that ward thought the same. Her father was a regular soldier serving in India, he'd got red hair and a big red moustache, and her mother was Indian. What a combination! Her complexion was like someone with a lovely suntan, not too dark, large green eyes and dark waist length hair, which she kept in a bun when she was on duty. She was tall with a figure to match a beautiful smile, but her greatest asset was her compassionate nature, every night she would spend time at each bedside, reassure her patients that were in pain, hold their hands, give pain killers if required, write letters for those who couldn't because of their injuries. She listened to problems and sorted them out if possible; nothing seemed too much trouble for her.

Then one night she didn't turn up! Can you imagine our dismay when we learned she'd gone on days on another ward. The sister that replaced her was alright but the nights were never quite the same again. I'd been hoping to get a flight back to England from Brussels but the weather had been so bad all the planes had been grounded for a week. On the 31st October I left Brussels and travelled overnight by train arriving late afternoon at the French city of Rouen on the river Seine. There I was admitted to 6 British General Hospital. I was put in a much smaller ward than at Brussels with only seven beds.

They say we've all got a double somewhere, well I found mine in the next bed. It came as quite a shock. I was carried into the ward on a stretcher and lifted into bed next to this other soldier; it felt very strange looking at someone else that looked like you. The sister said, 'You're lucky finding your brother amongst all those that came in today'.

'We're not brothers', we both replied together, his voice sounded just like mine.

'Not brothers, not twins', she said.

The next thing she did was check the medical record sheets at the foot of the bed, and of course the names were different.

'You must be cousins then' she persisted.

'No relation', we replied.

We became quite famous for a short time, with other nurses; even a doctor came in to have a look at the resemblance. The next morning they wheeled me down to the theatre where my wounds were finally stitched up. I was beginning to think they'd forgotten me!

That night was the first night I'd had a decent night's sleep. All the time I was at Brussels I had very little sleep, especially the first week. Although I only wore pyjama trousers I found it too hot to sleep and the bed too soft. I suppose if you think about it, moving into a central heated building after living outside for over three months it's bound to take sometime to adjust to sleeping indoors. The next week went by fairly quickly, my wounds were healing up nicely and on 8th November I was able to get out of bed for the first time.

I felt very shaky and my left leg hurt when I put any weight on it, but that was to be expected. On the 12th November I received my first letter for over a month, it would be impossible to describe my feelings opening that first letter and reading all the news from home, it's no fun writing letters and getting none in return. The effect of a letter on a soldier from a loved one raises his moral, it's his very lifeblood, he becomes a completely different person, this first letter certainly raised my spirits again after waiting so long. It was soon after the 12th November that we were moved out of our cosy little ward they wanted our beds, and we moved into a separate building that contained about 20 beds. We were now all 'walking wounded', and had been issued with our 'Blues'. That was a light blue suit, white shirt and red tie, the standard outfit for hospitalised soldiers. It was while recovering in this ward that I met a Canadian soldier, I watched him making belts by plaiting coloured cords together. He said an old Indian had taught him. He could see I was interested, so I sat down beside him and he showed me how it was done.

At the time I felt a bit like an Indian with both my cheeks painted purple. I'd had a rash come out on my face, I did look a sight, but the purple antiseptic dye certainly was clearing it up fast. I didn't feel like going out of the hospital grounds looking like I did, so I went to the Red Cross office and bought two buckles and some cord. I kept myself busy for the next few days and made two lovely multi-coloured belts. I then packed them up and posted them back home to my girlfriend.

On the 19th November with 8 other lads I was invited to a party, by now my face was better so I went along, not knowing where except that it was some distance from Rouen. We arrived at this lovely house in the country and were greeted by Madame Lesouef, her husband and relatives. They could all speak very good English so we had no problem talking to them. We found out that Madame was really English and had married a Frenchman after the First World War. They made us very welcome. First they took us a little walk to show us a V1 launch site, then we all played card games or just sat talking, we had a very nice meal with wine and biscuits. I hadn't had such a good time since landing in France; it was the next best thing to a party at home. We were all sorry when the truck came to take us back to Rouen. The next day I had a bath, another pleasurable event. I made it last and enjoyed every minute of it because I knew it would be the last one for a long time.

My departure I know had been delayed because of the rash on my face, but on the 21st November the day had arrived. We were taken to Rouen railway station by truck, there we were loaded onto cattle trucks like sheep heading for the slaughter house, and I suppose if you think about it the definition isn't all that far out, for many of us wouldn't survive the winter. The only unknown factor was how many! The journey was terrible; it was very cold and wet, the draught through the slats in the sides of the carriage made it very

unpleasant. The track was in a terrible condition so the train's progress was very slow; we seemed to stop every few miles. We finally reached our destination after a 10 mile ride in trucks, tired, cold and fed up. Although after a hot meal and a wash and shave we all felt much better and the billets were buildings not tents.

We found out we were in 40 RHU (Reinforcement Holding Unit (transit camp)) at the little town of Corbie, about ten miles east of Amiens. This was the same RHU I'd spent those couple of days in at Aldershot before sailing for France. Much to my surprise I spent nearly a fortnight in this camp, the weather was mainly wet and cold, so I wasn't complaining, it was much better here than living outside with no protection from the elements. This time I knew exactly what to expect, and I wasn't looking forward to it! Unfortunately the days went by very quickly, we did training, route marches, night schemes, I even did a guard. In the beginning my left leg was very painful, but it gradually improved. I was grateful to have this fortnight to get a bit fitter before joining the regiment in the line.

There wasn't much entertainment; we spent most of our evenings in the NAAFI, or at the pictures. A lot of the lads went into Amiens at night, but I couldn't understand why they'd got scratches on their face and hands the next morning. They were very secretive at first and it was some time before I solved the mystery, apparently the train didn't stop at Corbie on the way back it only slowed down to about 20 mph. Round a bend before passing through the station. This was on an embankment the only way to get off the train was jump as it rounded the bend and roll down the embankment. The only problem was the bottom of the embankment was covered in brambles and that's where everyone ended up - now I understood where the scratches came from! With my bad leg it was out of the question for me, but it didn't deter some of the lads, in fact they got quite good at it; jumping off a train at 20 mph in the dark wasn't my idea of fun.

Again the day finally came for us to move on, we travelled by train to another RHU in Belgium. It took a day and a night to reach our destination, a long tiring journey, although this time we had carriages to travel in, so we had somewhere to sit, which was much better even though a lot of the glass was missing out of the windows. The next day we collected our new kit, I remember opening the box that contained my new rifle. It was covered with grease and took several cans of boiling water before it was serviceable. The following morning we set off by truck over the border into Holland, where we spent the night in a small camp. I met up with another lad from our old company; we passed the night away playing draughts. After breakfast our own 1 Herefords transport picked us up and took us back to the Battalion. There we split up and went back to our companies. I went back to 9 platoon, A Company, exactly the same unit as I had left seven weeks ago!

4038348 LSgt J Barber on 17 Sep 1944.

Army Form B. 104-81A.

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

It has not been reported into what hospital he has been admitted, nor are other particulars known, but in the event of his condition being considered by the Medical Authorities as serious or dangerous this office will be notified by cable and you will be immediately informed. In addition he will have been given every facility for communicating with you himself. 1944-

~~MISS~~ MADAM,

I regret to have to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office to the effect that (No.) 4038348.

(Rank) Lance Sergeant.

(Name) John BARBER.

(Regiment) The Herefordshire Regiment.

has been wounded, ~~admitted to hospital~~ in North West Europe.

Date not yet known.

~~XXXX~~ ~~XXXX~~ ~~XX~~ The nature of the wound is Left Thigh. (Wounded second time)

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

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

Yours faithfully,
J. Payne
Lieut. Colonel.
Officer in Charge of Records.

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

59900. M2158/1350 500m. P.S.G. 10/20 52-1171 Form B.104-81A.3

Telegrams: "Attest, Shrewsbury." 14
Telephone: Shrewsbury 2053. Extension

MEMORANDUM.

From OFFICER IN CHARGE, INFANTRY RECORDS, WHITEHALL, SHREWSBURY. 2nd November 1944.

To Mrs. M. Barber, 11, Hazlecourt Road, Pittshill, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, STAFFS.

Following Reference should be quoted in reply CAS/K.

Dear Madam,

With reference to my previous notification informing you that your husband, No. 4038348 Lance-Sergeant John BARBER, The Herefordshire Regiment was Wounded in North West Europe for the second time on a date not then stated. I have now received a report to the effect that the date of Wounding should read 17th October 1944.

May I express ~~to you~~ ^{to hope} that your husband is making satisfactory progress.

Yours faithfully,
J. Payne
Lieut. Colonel.
Officer i/c. Records.

MSP.

GT Marchant

WAR CASUALTIES

—◆—

WOUNDED IN FRANCE

Mrs. Marchant, of Portesham, Dorset, has received news that her husband, Pte. G. T. Marchant, has been wounded in France. He is the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Marchant, of 96, Albert Place, Westfields, Hereford. He has been in the Forces since January, 1940. Prior to joining he worked for Messrs. H. and G. Thynne, at the Holmer Tile Works. A brother, Sgt. A. J. Marchant, of the Royal Corps of Signals, has served abroad for three years, and was formerly a manager of the Excelsior Meat Coy., Ltd., Widemarsh Street, Hereford.



Honours & Awards

Name	Rank	Award	For Action	LG
De Carle GR	Lt	MC	17/10/1944	01/03/1945
French AG	Cpl	MiD	10/10/1944	22/03/1945
French AG	Cpl	MM	15/10/44	01/03/1945

Citations

6257. Wt.41210/577. 240X. 12/42. Wy.L.P. Gr. 656. Forms/W.3121/6. Army Form W.3121

IMMEDIATE

159 Inf Brigade **I. Army** Division **8** Corps **13 Nov 44**
 Schedule No. **1** Unit **1st Bn. Herefordshire Regiment** Division **5 Oct 44** Passed **24 Oct 44**
 Rank and Army or Personal No. **Lt. De Carle 3896** Corps **13 Nov 44**
 Name **DE CARLE Gordon Robert** (Christian names must be stated)

Action for which commended (Date and place of action must be stated)	Recommended by	or Reward	(To be left blank)
<p>On 17 Oct 44 Lieut De Carle was commanding the leading Pl of his Coy, which has been ordered to cross over the Noorden Canal by a bridge at Map Ref E 6823 which had just been constructed. The ground was very open, and, on approaching the bridge, Lt. De Carle's Pl came under heavy aimed mortar fire and suffered severe casualties. Although he himself was wounded he encouraged his men forward personally leading the dash over the bridge which was under direct and close MG fire. In short bounds, he eventually made his way 500x beyond the canal crossing, and, although he had only twelve men left, he managed to get within grenade range of a strongly held enemy position. By crawling to a flank and opening fire on the enemy from an unexpected angle he intimidated the enemy into surrender. Fifty prisoners were taken. He reorganised his position and took over command of the remainder of the Pl on his right, which had also suffered heavy casualties. Just before dark the advance continued, and Lt. De Carle led his Pl</p>	<p><i>G.R. Turner</i> (G.R. Turner Cain) MC Lt.Col. (Immediate) Comd. Hereford.</p> <p><i>J.B. Churcher</i> Brig. Comd. 159 Inf Bde. (J.B. CHURCHER)</p> <p><i>W.H. Johnson</i> Maj.Gen. Comd. 11 Armd Div.</p>	<p>MC 1-3-45</p>	<p>28410</p> <p>LIEUT. GENERAL COMMANDER, SECOND ARMY. P.T.O.</p>

B.H. Don

159 Inf Bde. 11 Armd Div. 30 Corps

Date recommendation passed fwd
Received _____ Passed _____

Brigade _____

Schedule No ...
Unit 1st Bn The Herefordshire
Regiment.

Division _____

Rank and Army Number
W/Corpl 4036078

Corps _____

Name FRENCH Arthur George.

Army _____

Action for which commended	Recommended by	Honour or Reward	(To be
			left blank)

On 10 Sep 44, North of HELCHETTERAN 3575 (Map Sheet 47), the Pl in which Cpl French commanded one section, was given the task of crossing the rly line with a tp of tks, and mopping up a considerable number of enemy positions in open ground beyond. The Tks immediately came under fire from two Inf A tk weapons. The Bosche A tk weapons were some 150 yards from Cpl French's section, and between large open ground which was swept by enemy MG fire and rifle fire from covering posns. The whole ground was extremely open and there were no covered approaches to these enemy A tk weapons which could be used.

by *W.C. French* (Immediate)
Lt.Col.
Comd 1st Hereford.
(G.R. Turner Capt).
Brig.
Comd. 159 Inf Bde.
Maj.Gen.
Comd. 11 Armd Div.
Lt.Gen.
Comd. 30 Corps.
Lt.Gen.
Comd. 2 Army.

Cpl French instantly realised the danger to our tks, and with supreme personal bravery, rushed forward with his section across the open ground. Despite the fierce enemy SA fire he succeeded in reaching, with his section, the enemy A tk gun posns, despatching with bayonet five of the enemy; the remaining eight enemy with two Bazookas then gave themselves up as prisoners.

The successful elimination of these enemy a tk defences was brought about entirely by the speedy and heroic action of Cpl French. With a section of only six men, by his courageous and determined leadership, he was able to annihilate superior numbers of the enemy.

B.L.A.
15 Sep 44.

G.R. Turner Cain
Lieut Colonel.
(and) 1st Bn The Herefordshire Regt.
(G.R. Turner Cain)

Officers' Plot

See Separate post

ORs' Strength Return

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

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

Reinforcements continued to be received:

4918970 Sgt W Green joined the Battalion from 5 Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment:

NOTIFICATION OF IMPENDING RELEASE PAGE THREE

PART I
To: O.C. Military Disembarkation Camp Unit in U.K. To be completed by units overseas who are dispatching men to U.K. for release.

Surname (Block letters) GREEN
 Christian Name(s) Walter
 Army No. 4918970 Age and Service Group 262
 Present Rank Sgt Unit, Regt. or Corps. 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Regiment. KSLI
 Documents attached A.F.B. 122 H.1151

PART II
To be completed by unit overseas or in U.K.

(a) Trade on enlistment Concrete & Spentia Road (b) Trade courses and trade tests passed
 (c) Service Trade
 (d) Any other qualifications for civilian employment

Military Qualifications
 Testimonial:
 Sgt. Green joined this unit in Oct 44. He is a sound, capable man, and has shown himself to be a good handler of men. Intelligent, reliable, he has a cheerful personality. Altogether a good man.
 Date 9 FEB 10 1946 B.A.O.R.
 Officer's Sign. Comdg. 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Regiment

Army Education Record (including particulars under (a), (b), (c) and (d) below).
 This Section will not be filled in until the receipt of further War Office Instructions.—
 (a) Type of course (b) Length (c) Total hours of instruction (d) Record of achievement.
 (i)* (ii)* (iii)* (iv)*
NIL
 * Instructors will insert the letter "I" here to indicate that in their case the record refers to courses in which they have received instruction.
 Signature of Unit Education Officer James Capw

PART III
To: Officer in charge of Record Office, Shrewsbury

Permanent Address (If not known, insert temporary address):
14 TURNERS HILL, OAKHAM
DUDLEY WORKS

Military Disembarkation Camp Unit Stamp
 or Unit Stamp
 * MILITARY DISEMBARKATION CAMP UNIT *
 * 15 FEB 1946 *
 * READING *

Surname (Block Letters) GREEN
 Christian Name(s) Walter
 Army No. 4918970 Age and Service Group 262
 Present Rank Sgt Unit, Regt. or Corps. 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Regiment. KSLI
 Documents attached A.F.B. 122 H.1151

DISEMBARKED
 26 14 FEB 1946
 1st Bn. The Herefordshire Regiment. KSLI

