

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive)

1985

The friction of war: A study of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, 1940-1945

Geoffrey Hayes
Wilfrid Laurier University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd>



Part of the [Military History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hayes, Geoffrey, "The friction of war: A study of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, 1940-1945" (1985).
Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive). 13.
<https://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/13>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Services des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

CANADIAN THESES

THÈSES CANADIENNES

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

**THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE**

Canada

"THE FRICTION OF WAR"

A STUDY OF THE LINCOLN AND WELLAND REGIMENT

1940-1945

By

Geoffrey William Hayes
B.A. Wilfrid Laurier University. 1983

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts-degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
1985

© Geoffrey William Hayes 1985

8

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, a Canadian infantry Regiment which fought in North West Europe during the last ten months of the Second World War. It follows the Regiment's development from its mobilization in 1940 until the end of hostilities in May 1945. The relationship between the soldier, the military organization with which he could best identify and the field of battle is the central theme of this study. Through the use of both archival and oral evidence, this study examines what Carl von Clausewitz called "the friction of war." It details how men were trained for and reacted to the challenges of the battlefield. It examines these concerns by emphasizing the fluidity and fragility of a military organization which was also supposed to be a source of comfort to the soldier. In this way, a better understanding of the difficulties met during this time can be attained.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | i |
| INTRODUCTION | iii |
| I THE BEGINNINGS | 1 |
| II INTO BATTLE | 30 |
| III THE PURSUIT INTO BELGIUM | 64 |
| IV INTO HOLLAND | 93 |
| V KAPELSCHE VEER | 126 |
| VI THE RHINELAND | 156 |
| VII INTO GERMANY | 180 |
| CONCLUSION | 215 |
| APPENDIX | 222 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 224 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been over two years since Terry Copp suggested to me that a study of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment would be a worthwhile topic for an M.A. thesis. The work has been difficult at times; it has also been exciting, boring and confusing. Terry has gone through these trials with me. I thank him for his advice and his friendship.

I would also like to thank my family for having the patience and understanding that I have needed over this time: my parents and brother offered thoughtful advice and encouragement by studying my drafts and listening to my problems. Erin Gilligan spent three weeks patiently typing and doing all of the countless things that I have asked of her. I only hope that I can repay her in the coming years.

This study would not have been possible, if not for the cooperation of the thirty six men I interviewed from the Regiment. Their recollections were often painful, but their strength and enthusiasm was an inspiration. Mr. T. Roy Adams, President of the Lincoln and Welland Association, provided me with a list of names from which I could start my inquiries: he also made me welcome on the Regimental trip to Holland in September 1984.

Over the past two years, Jim Swayze, my uncle, has been an endless source of information, anecdotes and materials. His generosity cannot be measured. The insights I gained from him as we walked through the towns in which he fought forty years ago were invaluable. It was a rare experience which I shall never forget.

I have not only learned much from my uncle during my studies, I have also learned a lot about him. The respect others had for his abilities as a soldier--and still have for him as a gentleman--are unbridled and sincere.

Quite literally, he was a part of the Regiment from its very beginnings in 1940, until its final parade in January 1946--a remarkable achievement. This study is for him.

Waterloo, June, 1985.

INTRODUCTION

This is a history of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, a Canadian infantry Regiment which fought in North West Europe during the last ten months of the Second World War. This work will complement the Regiment's Official History, whose author clearly delineates the limitations of his work in the introduction:

I have tried to provide a reliable account of what took place, but in doing so have left the reader to read into the text the emotions he felt at the time of these events. Consequently, I have tried not to express the feeling of the Regiment on the loss of individual officers and men: those who were with the Regiment will know how they felt as well as I. (1)

The relationships between the soldier, the military organization with which he could best identify and the field of battle will be the central theme of this study. It will follow the development of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment from its mobilization until the end of hostilities in May, 1945. I offer no apologies for this narrative approach for it best reflects what I believe to be the least appreciated character of any military organization. As much as soldiers might take comfort in the cohesiveness and associations formed in the Regiment, it is nevertheless a very fluid, fragile entity. Literally thousands of individuals were on strength with the "Lincs" during its active wartime existence, even though it never had a working establishment of more than 850. Only half of this number were actual fighting troops, those that were repeatedly exposed to what John Ellis has called the "sharp end" of battle. It was this group that would suffer the greatest proportion of casualties and would be in need of the greatest number of replacements. This means that the Lincoln and Welland Regiment that had trained since 1940 to enter battle in France in late July, 1944 was not the same Lincoln and Welland Regiment that was found on the road to Bad Zwischenahn, Germany in May of

1945. If one views the Regiment as so many of its former members do--as a family--then the Regiment was perpetuated by no less than four generations of fighting troops during its time in Northwest Europe: the casualties sustained were about equal to the strength of its four rifle companies each being fully replaced four times over. The analogy is not completely satisfactory: some periods were more costly than others: some men survived all ten months of battle working in the rear echelons. These men were witnesses to the changing face of the Regiment. Those who were wounded fighting toward Falaise in August 1944 have a different perception of the organization than those who fought in the Rhineland seven months later. These generations are almost (but not completely) distinct: they are bound by a common membership in the Lincoln and Welland Regiment.

It was the nineteenth century Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz who wrote:

Everything is very simple in War, but the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction which no man can imagine who has not seen war...Through the influence of an infinity of petty circumstances, which cannot properly be described on paper, things disappoint us, and we fall short of the mark. (2)

It is this "friction of war" with which we must deal in order to understand the battlefield and the effects it has on its occupants. The main concern is to examine these "petty circumstances"; aspects which Clausewitz felt were too elusive to be appreciated by those who have not witnessed battle. By its very nature, military writing categorizes (and thereby obscures) these circumstances through an extensive and esoteric vocabulary. As Arthur Marwick suggests, this is by no means unique to military writing: "Many of the well-worn labels and generalizations, unhappily, stand as barriers between the historian and his reader on one side and the real texture of the past on the other." (3).

The Regimental war diary--a daily record of the unit's activities--is seemingly the logical basis for this sort of examination. According to the instructions regarding its maintenance: "A good war diary makes possible the accurate and detailed reconstruction of circumstances, conditions and action." Unfortunately, the process by which the war diary material was selected and written often prevents the events being discussed from being fully understood:

2 August [1944] Clear and Warm

0030 (hrs.) "A" & "B" Coys were met by h[eav]y M[achine] G[un] and mortar fire from both flanks as they moved up the r[oa]d... In the confusion, Maj F B Fisher, O[fficer] C[ommanding] "B" Co[mpany] became missing, and his coy moved back through "A" Coy to BOURGEBUS; on orders from 10 C[anadian] I[nfantry] B[rigade] the code-word for "C" Coy to pass through "D" Coy to attack TILLY was given, although "B" and "A" Coys were not est[ablished] to prevent a counter-attack from LA HOGUE. "B" and "A" Coys were collected in BOURGEBUS and reformed for a second attempt to est their pos[itio]n; Lt. J S W Burnett was placed in com[man]d of "B" Coy. This second attempt was not successful, and C Coy also was forced to withdraw after reaching a pt 100 yd NORTH of the orchard...(4)

The scene described is unspectacular; it tells us little about the fate of the Regiment or the nature of the fight. Even the reliability of this account must be questioned as this August 1944 entry was not examined and signed by the Regiment's Commanding Officer until 14 December 1944, three and a half months later. A former Regimental Intelligence Officer knew of these shortcomings:

One of the duties of the Intelligence officer is to keep the daily diary of the Regiment. Well, that's very fine in theory and it didn't work very well in practise. How are you going to sit down and take notes when you're in the middle of a war?... So what we had to do was piece it together...(5)

This study has drawn on a considerable body of material collected from interviews with over thirty five former members of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. The majority of these interviews were conducted individually at the interviewee's home or place of business. The sessions lasted an hour and a half on average and focussed on any aspect of the interviewee's military life

that he cared to discuss. The interviewer did refer to the Regimental history and war diary materials as guideposts while specific questions were posed which attempted to bring out the more intimate, routine details of their experience. The talks were recorded and edited during transcription. The end result is found on almost 300 single-spaced pages..

Those interviewed are by no means a representative sample of the thousands who served with the Regiment: they are merely those who responded to some 100 requests that were based on a list provided by the Regimental association. Most of these men were very candid about their wartime experiences, although the memory lapses were sometimes deliberate: ("The bad parts, I think you just kind of wash them out of your mind.") (6) Others doubtless selected their answers to avoid embarrassment to themselves and their comrades. Clearly, Paul Thompson, the author of The Past Speaks, is correct when he suggests that there are "no absolute rules to indicate the reliability of oral evidence, any more than that of other historical sources." (7)

The former Intelligence Officer's assessment is one example of how oral evidence can be used to supplement, or test the available written material. A personal milestone (i.e. birthdays, or days when friends were killed or wounded) can often clarify the war diary even if specific dates have been forgotten or confused. Interviews can also give insight into the feelings, motivations and reactions of the those involved: these anecdotes contribute to the 'texture' of the standard battle narrative. These stories may not always be based on fact. Their significance as historical sources lies in what they can tell us about the Regiment, military life in general and the nature of the battlefield.

Let us examine the war diary entry to which we have already referred to demonstrate how it can be clarified by oral evidence. It states that two

companies met heavy MG and mortar fire from both flanks as they moved up the road toward the town of Tilly. Some of those who were there that night better illustrate the atmosphere of their first experience in battle:

--It was just a blaze of tracer out there--

--My most vivid recollection of that [night] was the intense shelling. Now it is pretty hard to recall just how terrified we all were in a slit trench and just anxious to dig yourself into the ground.... Every time there was a break in the shelling, you would peak out of the trench and someone would be screaming for a stretcher bearer. [I'm] not sure how any of us survived that night and day.-- (8)

The attack went in after dark so the troops could not see the machine gun and mortar positions. Private Barton was in Major Fisher's B company and he remembers advancing in single file until the firing began, where upon "we ran forward and fired a couple of rounds... And then everybody went down." He lay with two others, one of whom was killed by the machine gun fire: "I can still see the tracer coming through the stubble and just drumming into him." (9) The Regimental History describes how these men were reluctant to fire "for fear of shooting one another" since the lines of advance became separated and disorganized; a statement doubtless based on eyewitness reports and which is consistent with Private Barton's experience. (10) The war diary reference to the "confusion" is now more understandable.

The remainder of Major Fisher's company (which one officer had then estimated to have suffered 19 casualties by that time) "moved back [read: crawled] through "A" Coy to BOURGEBUS." There, both companies were "reformed for a second attempt to est[abl]ish their posn." Only two platoons actually received word to attack again as the orders were not issued to (or received by) the remainder of the companies. One reason for this might be in the communication problems suffered that night. The Battalion Headquarters had been moved into a German dug-out at the start of the attack where "it was

three times as difficult to maintain signal lines" according to the artillery commander then attached to the Regiment.(11) "This second attempt [by only 2 platoons] was not successful" according to the war diary. One of the two platoon commanders there that night remembers that "we tried to advance just about 100 feet and there was just a wall of machine fire--we just could not get through."(12) The other platoon commander was killed during the action. The Regiment suffered 65 casualties on this, its first night in battle: 30 of them were taken prisoner and Major Fisher, one of the four rifle company commanders, was among the 15 killed.

As this was the fourth Canadian unit to unsuccessfully attack this feature, other inferences can be made about the importance with which both sides viewed the objective. Clearly, the soldier and his commander live by very different sets of attitudes and assumptions, the most important of which is described by John Keegan in his book, the Face of Battle:

• The concepts of 'win' and 'lose' through which a commander and his chronicler approach a battle are by no means the same as those through which his men will view their own involvement in it.(13)

By outlining the strategic decisions which committed the Regiment to particular actions, the natural and in many ways irreconcilable gulf between the General and those he leads will be better understood.

This study will detail the seemingly endless route marches and training periods in Canada; the monotony of the guard duty and the value of the battle drill in Newfoundland; and the divisional training schemes and the final preparations in England, so that one may gain a sense of how a Regiment is forged together over the years. Once into battle, the Regiment would learn the most basic of military doctrines, best expressed by Thucydides: "War is the last of all things to go according to plan." To understand how the "friction

of war" affected the men of one Canadian infantry Regiment is to appreciate the difficulties faced and the sacrifices made by thousands of young Canadian men.

INTRODUCTION: NOTES

1 Maj. R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954). (Introduction.)

2 Carl von Clausewitz, A Short Guide to Clausewitz On War, ed./intro. by Roger Ashley Leonard (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 84.

3 Arthur Marwick, The Nature of History (London: The MacMillan Press, 1970), p. 170.

4 War Diary, The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, (PAC RG-24 Vol. 15.104), 2 August 1944.

5 C.O. Borthwick, Taped Interview, 11 April 1984.

6 S.C. Elford, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.

7 Paul Thompson, The Past Speaks: Oral History (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 134.

8 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 September 1984; Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.

9 R.B. Barton, Taped Interview, 5 July 1984.

10 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 136.

11 J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983.

12 Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.

13 John Keegan, The Face of Battle (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), p. 45.

CHAPTER I: THE BEGINNINGS

On Saturday 22 June 1940, a telegram was delivered to the Lake Street Armouries in St. Catharines, Ontario, the headquarters of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. This was the Regiment of the Niagara region. Officially, it was not four years old, although its origins could be traced to the Lincoln militia which had fought in the war of 1812. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) was established in December of 1936 upon the amalgamation of the area's two local militia units which perpetuated Niagara's active battalions during the First War. The militia's call to service came on the morning of 26 August 1939 when its commanding officer, Lt. Col. R.S.W. Fordham, received orders to mobilize. By 7:00 P.M., his men were positioned along a forty kilometre stretch of the Welland Canal, guarding against saboteurs. The unit became a part of the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) in September but its guard duties continued into the fall when the RCMP took over their positions. (1) Pending further orders, the Regiment remained in a "state of suspension" as some men were posted elsewhere while others were encouraged to return to civilian life. Lieutenant-Colonel Fordham continued to train the remnants of his militia through the winter as the "phoney war" dragged on in Europe. The Regimental history describes the atmosphere of the time:

This was a sad end for an efficient unit. The general feeling was that the Lincoln and Welland Regiment had lost its place in the mobile force by being tied down on the canal until all the vacancies in the order of battle were filled. (2)

When Germany invaded Norway and Denmark in April 1940, then Belgium and the Netherlands in May, a new flurry of activity was sparked in Canada. The telegram which authorized the Lincoln and Welland Regiment to commence active

recruiting to the full strength of an infantry battalion was received the day France capitulated. In one month, the Regiment which had once seemed destined to spend the war in obscurity, boasted a strength of 18 officers and 787 other ranks. A reinforcement company was added to this establishment in August.(3)

Most of these men were single and in their late teens or early twenties; some had jobs but more had been unemployed work for some time, so some enticement must have been in the relatively secure basic wage the army then offered. In the Niagara region, some might have been prompted by local advertising ("WON'T YOU JOIN UP NOW?").(4) For some, their joining was an impulsive act, prompted by friends or relatives enlisting. A sense of adventure was also a factor as the army was usually a second choice to what many considered to be the most romantic branch of the armed services, the air force:

It was all an adventure. We didn't really understand what war was all about. War to us was all glory: people flying in the air, daring-do and nobody ever got killed. We tended to think of it as one glorious adventure...I don't think we really understood what the cause was. There was a war on and people were joining up, your friends were joining up...You were going to see the world...We didn't fully realize what death was. Death, at least to me, was where old people died...You never thought of young people.(5)

Some of the older recruits shared an understanding that the war in Europe was against something basically wrong and evil. The crisis in Western Europe prompted one man to enlist:

Just before I joined, they had lost all of these people at Dunkirk...I never thought they would recover. I never did. So I thought 'Hell, they're going to need everybody they can get.'(6)

Upon signing on and passing a medical examination, the new recruits were sent to Niagara Camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, where 13 Infantry Brigade was stationed under Colonel O.M. Martin.(7) Literally hundreds of bell tents dotted the common near Fort George, the Regiment's first home while on active

service. The new environment must have been a shock for those unfamiliar with military life:

Especially for a guy like me, who had been making my own decisions for a number of years, to be thrown into a group camp like that with...people telling me to do this, do that, it took a lot of adjusting. I felt like I was losing something.(8)

Another shock came when the recruits began to realize how ill supplied the Regiment (like the entire Canadian Army) was at that time. Bill Leslie signed on at the University Armouries in Toronto in July of 1940:

When we joined, I was only 19 years old. I only had one suit in those days...I had a pair of white shoes and they told me when we...signed up...'You don't have to bring anything with you. When you get over to Niagara, we'll have everything there for you.' We got over there and they didn't have a thing, nothing. Not even a toothbrush. I trained for two weeks with the white shoes, marched...and the suit was just ruined.(9)

With the men equipped with the old Ross rifles and officers sporting pistols on loan from private collections so they could wear something on parade, the Regiment began its training.(10)

For the troops, a normal day would begin at 6:15 A.M. and would continue through until 5:00 P.M. Training periods were approximately forty-five minutes long and dealt with the more elementary skills of the infantrymen such as rifle, bayonet and squad drills, as well as the inevitable route marches and aspects of march discipline.(11) To make what must have been a tedious day more interesting, the companies often played football or baseball. Such a regime was not always followed when the Regiment was needed to save the local fruit crop or to be extras for the filming of the movie, 'The 49th Parallel'.(12)

Prospective officers began training at the camp's Officers Training School. It was also run with limited resources: "even the pamphlets we had were pretty well all from World War I."(13) One graduate recalls the unusual but effective techniques of a drill instructor in the school:

He'd been an old Boer War and World War I veteran...He was a hell of a good drill instructor, no question. I always remember him because he carried a great long stick. It was not a swagger stick and it was not a cane. It was more like a whip. It was fairly big at the bottom but it tapered up and it was probably six, eight foot long. At the end, it was very thin and as you were drilling and forming up, he'd walk behind and hit you behind the knees with it. [It was like he] was training horses...(14)

Every four weeks, each unit in the Brigade was rotated between barracks in Niagara Falls, Thorold or Chippawa for further training schemes or guard duty. Guarding power installations against saboteurs seems like a ludicrous activity in hindsight. The soldiers of 1940 would have agreed. Charles Hemphill's first guard posting was on the Chippawa bridge where he did little more than "march back and forth across the bridge [and] talk to the girls." Once the sentries were outfitted with tunics and putties, they quickly became the subject of many an amateur photographer's attentions.(15) Even with such diversions, it was a tedious job. One company (approximately 120 men) would be on guard duty for two weeks. For one of those weeks, each sentry would be on duty for two hours of every six. The corporals in charge of each sentry post had an even tougher life: they were on duty for eight consecutive hours of every sixteen.(16) As none of the power sites were ever actually threatened, the only excitement came when a stray leaf broke the electric beam which ran across the canal, thereby setting off a very loud alarm.(17) The sentries had their own ways of easing the boredom: the Regimental war diarist kept a careful record of the number of shots fired at objects floating in the canal. Not all were properly suited to sentry duty, as this corporal's report from October 1940 suggests: -

Suspicious sounds in bush, persisting after sentry's challenge, whereupon sentry fired. Corporal of guard suggests that sentry be further instructed in duties of sentry near residential section as contrasted with those of sentry in area of actual combat. Sentry has had previous attacks of jitters in the dark and is either damned timid or goddamned simple, in the sinister sense of the word. In any event, the sentry would seem to be eminently unsuited to his assigned task and the corporal of the guard doth so contend.

Amen.(18)

Numerous factors hindered the Regiment's training during the fall and winter of 1940-1941. This was a new organization, still not used to the minute administrative details involved in its daily maintenance. The Regiment was still on its home turf, so problems also existed with those whose sense of military discipline and punctuality were not yet developed. The Regimental war diarist, writing in February 1940, put it more emphatically: "Absence without leave must stop."(19) It was an organization of men reluctant to lose the freedoms of civilian life.

In April 1941, this entry was recorded in the Regiment's war diary: "All kinds of rumours are being passed along regarding our next move. The majority are quite sure that we are going some place far removed from this district. Perhaps this accounts for the increasing number AWOL."(20) The spreading of rumours was quickly becoming a major pasttime. This time, the rumours were true: on 21 April, Lt. Col. Muir announced on afternoon parade that the Regiment was moving. Each man was granted four days leave.(21) On Thursday 8 May 1941, the Regiment boarded trains at the Niagara Falls station. It was a scene repeated all across Canada during those years as the local citizenry bid farewell to their Regiment. Their destination was officially described in the press as a "distant Canadian training centre" but presumably, few were unaware that they were off to Nanaimo, British Columbia. The four day sojourn west must have been exciting for the many troops who had never been far from home; one described it as a "trans-Canada barnstorming tour or miniature blitz-krieg of each town where we stopped for any length of time."(22)

Once established in the barracks at Camp Nanaimo, overlooking the city, the Regiment's training continued. As the threat of a Pacific war then seemed very real, a passive air defense scheme was implemented: blackouts, air raid

warnings and gas alarms became an unpleasant fact of life during the Regiment's three month stay in the west. To sharpen the troops' awareness, all passing aircraft during training periods were to be "regarded as hostile and necessary precautions should be taken regarding concealment as a part of daily training." (23) Gas sentries (equipped with respirators and paper indicators fixed to bayonets which turned yellow in the event of a gas attack) were posted on the numerous route marches, the longest of which was a battalion strength exercise to Victoria in July. Robert Ross, a Niagara Falls native who had been a piper with the militia before the war, recalls that these manoeuvres often simulated air attacks on ground forces:

It was the same old training from World War One: digging trenches, airplanes coming over and dropping bags of flour on you as bombs. I remember as the plane came over we would swing our rifles up--'aircraft right, aircraft left'--but in real battle it never happens that way because you keep your head down and you never fire on aircraft that way. They had to have things of that nature. (24)

At the time, the units' reaction to these 'raids' was enthusiastically observed and dutifully recorded by the war diarist: "[For] troops still quite raw in these elementary matters, the unit displayed exceptional understanding of the requirements of modern warfare." (25)

By the middle of September, 1941, the Regiment was back in Niagara for yet another emotional farewell a few days later. The troops had been issued CANADA badges on the trip east: a sign that they were moving out of the country. (26) When they entrained again on 24 September, they learned of their ultimate destination--Newfoundland. It would be the Regiment's home for the next year and a half. The troop trains deposited the unit in Quebec City where the HMS Lady Drake was docked, ready to initiate the now experienced train travellers to the unpleasanties of a sea voyage. Seasickness was the least of their worries as their corvette escort was a constant reminder that they were moving ever closer to war. (27) Upon landing, the unit boarded what

they not-so-affectionately dubbed the "Newfie Express." One officer recalls a memorable conversation he had on his first trip to the units' first base at Gander airport:

I always remember going up on the train from St. John's and there was a doctor on the train that was evidently stationed in St. John's and he rode the train up with us...He was kind of a poker faced individual. He sat there and didn't have much to say. We were trying to sleep on the floor and on the seats. It was a night trip pretty well. And, in the morning we were getting close to Gander. And I can remember trying to see something out the window and it appeared to be a lake out there...I said, "I didn't know there was a lake at Gander." He said, "that's no lake. That's a goddamn runway out there. Is this your first trip here?" I says, "Yeah." He says, "This is your inauguration to miles and miles of bugger all surrounded by miles and miles of fuck all." I thought that explained it pretty well.(28)

The main enemy here was the weather. When the Regiment arrived that fall, "A typical Gander day" was cold and overcast with occasional rain. In the winter, the snow was sometimes so deep that one NCO recalls having "to tunnel to get into the sergeant's mess from the sergeant's quarters."(29) The Regiment's main role at the airport was to man sentry posts while American transport planes refuelled for night crossings overseas. It was a dreary and lonely job. Accomodations did little to ease the situation as the newly erected barracks were inadequate for the units' approximately 811 other ranks and 39 officers: "We were in the barracks there and the damn double deck bunks were about two feet apart. It was depressing...Fellows didn't even have room enough to even swing their arms."(30)

The strength of the Regiment fluctuated considerably during this period as many were sent off on courses both in Canada and England. Some were lost permanently as they were sent as reinforcements to such units as the Royal Rifles who were captured during the fall of Hong Kong in December, 1941. The war diarist felt that their loss strengthened the Regiments' resolve: "The loss of the members of the unit makes us feel all the more desirous of taking

their places and evening up the score with the yellow men."(31)

The training continued for those without appointed duties, although the inadequate training facilities at Gander often posed problems. As this diary entry from March, 1942 suggests, some of the drills were improvised:

Training Coy. ('B' company) held firing practice with Bren guns this afternoon at Lake Gander. Great delight and fun, as well as excellent training for the boys is derived because there is no measured range. Floating targets, such as balloons tied to pieces of wood, cans, and bottles are ideal for these practises. The reason for this is there is nothing but the 30 yard range at Gander.(32)

This same month, the first flight of the Prince Edward Island Highlanders began to take over the sentry posts at Gander. The unit was moving to Lesters' Field in St. John's, the headquarters of the Canadian forces in Newfoundland--Force 'W'. The move was certainly welcome, as it was reported that "everybody is in good spirits now that we are back in civilization."(33)

The guard duty continued. On one week rotations, each company sent detachments to three coastal posts in the event of any enemy landings. Two companies rotated every twenty four hours as stand-to company. These men were confined to camp and were on half an hours' notice to move out at anytime. A quarter guard for the camp area was also drawn from stand-to company. A fourth company was appointed as the duty company. It supplied men for work in the kitchens, the canteens or the barracks: all of the "mundane, but necessary chores that permeated military life.(34)

For the remainder of the Regiment, the daily training focussed on the newly arrived weaponry and equipment which further defined the now increasingly distinct components of the unit. This was where the men of the rifle companies were first introduced to the tools they would depend on in action two years hence. Daily sessions showed off the capabilities of such weaponry as the Bren gun, or the 2" mortars and the 36 grenade. It was here that many of the men learned to drive the universal carriers, a tracked

armoured vehicle. Inspection teams would eventually examine the knowledge of each man; even the cooks and drivers were not excused. If these Tests of Elementary Training (TOETs) showed training levels to be inadequate, the Company Sergeant Major (CSM), the one responsible for matters of training and discipline, would organize a period of more intensive drill. If the TOET's showed satisfactory results, it marked the attainment of another stage in the education of the Regiment.

Weapons training was only one part of this incredibly long and complicated program. In May of 1942, the men began learning to function in the hostile environment of the battlefield. That month, the Regiment was introduced to a British Army innovation, Battle Drill, by Maj. J.F. Madill and Lt. J.F. Swayze who had both just returned from courses overseas. According to Canadian training manuals on the subject:

The object of Battle Drill is to inculcate into a fighting body a system of Battle Discipline and Team Spirit and to give every man a knowledge of certain basic team "plays" which will guide him in any operation which he may undertake in battle."(35)

Battle Drill was not only to keep troops fit and free from the boredom of more routine exercises, it also served in "actually inoculating the soldier and commander against the fear, the noises and unexpected disturbances which characterise operations in actual battle as compared with those carried on under average training conditions."(36) The drill is well remembered as each soldier crawled under barbed wire or over various obstacles while live ammunition was fired over his head. Basic tactics or "team plays" were repeated endlessly under these conditions. Eventually, these tactics of "fire and movement" would become automatic to the infantryman and his section. In theory, any given attacking force would be divided into two: in a standard infantry section of eight to ten men, two or three would man an automatic weapon (usually the Bren) to 'cover' the riflemen as they dashed ahead. The

advance would continue in a series of 'bounds' as the forward riflemen would then supply covering fire for the machine gunners who would 'leapfrog' ahead again. If all went according to plan, the objective would be taken by the charging riflemen using their grenades and rifle fire as well as the rapid fire of the machine gunners. Upon taking the objective, the machine gunners would move up with the riflemen and 'consolidate' the position to prepare for either enemy counterattacks or another section to push on using the same method. Such tactics ("one leg on the ground and one in the air") are applicable to larger military bodies as well: Regiments, Divisions, even armies may leapfrog past one another, using scores of tanks or artillery pieces for supporting fire. The principles involved are the same as those used by even the smallest tactical unit of men. (37)

The training schemes--somewhat longer and more complex than those in Canada--were continued in St. John's. To the delight of the local citizenry, the alert and stand-to companies often competed by either attacking or defending the approaches to the city. (38) More realistic schemes were also organized which would foreshadow the grand exercises in which the Regiment would be involved in England.

As difficult as these drills may have been, the night usually brought relief from the day's activities. In St. John's, the taverns and wartime hostels were a welcome change from the isolation of Gander airport where such films as "The Mark of Zorro" or "Geronimo" might be watched for weeks on end if the supply train couldn't get through. (39)

The Regiment still retained no less than three bands while in St. John's: the brass and bugle bands performed at concerts as well as the occasional war savings radio program; the pipers became a fixture in the city as they played the retreat every evening. (40) For those with less refined tastes, a bottle of

Newfie screech cost about ninety cents.(41) There were also women in St. John's: more than one veteran recalls stories of "quarter guard Anny" who would often brighten the lonely and boring job of the sentry.(42) The Regiment also had its own newspaper by this time, further evidence that the unit was becoming a more cohesive "family". The L'inc Well was a surprisingly attractive newspaper which was started in Nanaimo under Cpl. Dick Bell. Under such bylines as "B-Company Bull," men could make short jibes at their fellows. Clearly, they had more on their minds than the intricacies of the Bren gun:

Things we would like to see again: Pte. Ross "Fatso" Welbanks pushing a baby buggy along W street for some-one....

What's wrong with Pte. Aylwin. The local girls don't seem to appeal to him anymore. Is it the girl at home? Ah, love, it's got him bad.(43)

The Regiment also had its moments of tragedy while in Newfoundland. Men died as the result of accidents or scuffles: some even took their own lives.(44) In December 1942, the Knights of Columbus hostel burned down during a dance and radio broadcast. Five hundred were in attendance; over one hundred perished including three from the Regiment. At the time, the blaze was rumoured to have been an act of sabotage.(45)

The prospect of yet another Newfoundland winter did little to maintain morale. Gord Brittain had signed on underage two years before, so as a "veteran" Linc at the age of eighteen, he was getting restless. As he recalls: "We were anxious to go...The time was so monotonous...We didn't do any actual fighting in Newfoundland, except maybe among ourselves."(46) Others were frustrated because they felt so isolated from the war:

We were called out a couple times. They sank a couple of ships in the Straits of Belle Isle and they were supposed to have had some submarine sitings. We never saw a bloody thing. They would call us out on other excursions and we saw nothing...The war was starting to hit us because there were black outs every night. The merchant seamen, they had a whole hostel or building...on Water street in St. John's and you would see the merchant seamen coming in. A lot would be badly wounded...You could see the ships with holes in the sides

where they had been attacked. It was getting more serious all the time and we were thinking the war was getting away from us because we were stuck in Newfoundland.(47)

The routine continued through a second Newfoundland winter. The duties of each company were changed each Monday. Training continued when the weather permitted but often went on regardless as skiing was included in the training syllabi. A lecture series led by those returning to the unit from courses offered a way to keep officers abreast of the newest and everchanging aspects of their trade.(48) Although everyone might not have been enthused about overseas service, the threat of disbandment must have been a real worry to everyone. A number of drafts were taken during this period; an indicator that the Regiment had lost its place in the order of battle. Its numbers had dwindled as a result: by 30 April 1943, only 603 all ranks were on strength; several hundred below the normal working establishment.(49)

Finally, the rumours that the Regiment was moving back to Canada were confirmed. By June of 1943, the Regiment had moved under canvas at Aldershot, Nova Scotia to complete preparations for the move overseas. It was a hectic time as new equipment and clothing was issued while army examiners interrogated the troops. As one officer remembers: "We had a great cleaning out...They had another medical examination for everybody. People over a certain age were dropped. Then we had lots of reinforcements come in."(50) The character of the Regiment began to change as a result: the ties to the Niagara region became more strained. Some measure of this can be seen in the Regimental officer corps. Of the thirty seven officers who landed in France in 1944, almost a quarter of them (9) were taken on strength during the winter and spring of 1943, before the Regiment went overseas. As these men were not from the Niagara area, they were sometimes "regarded with considerable suspicion."(51)

Partly because of this period of transition in Canada, it is difficult to assess the level of training the Regiment had reached by the summer of 1943. Many had become acquainted with their supporting weaponry and battle drill was by then a familiar exercise. The men had also spent a lot of time guarding canals and airfields; activities which had doubtless helped each grow accustomed to the military routine and organization but which taught few lessons in modern warfare. It was a Regiment well practised in the art of coordinating its component parts in training. Once in England, the Regiment would be forced to expand its field of focus as it would be subsumed in a much larger organization. It is from this perspective that one officer felt that the Regiment was then a group of "old soldiers without very much training." (52)

The unit left from Halifax harbour aboard the troop ship Louis Pasteur in the early morning of 17 July 1943. Although the Regimental History described the crossing as "uneventful", more than one man recalls that it was on this ship, named for the father of modern health and hygiene, that they suffered from crabs. (53) On 22 July 1943 the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, with a strength of 37 officers and 788 men, disembarked at Gourock Scotland. In one year's time, the Regiment would leave to fight in France.

The units' first destination was Fleet, Hampshire, southwest of London where it became the focus of attention of such dignitaries as Canada's Minister of National Defense, J.L. Ralston, and the Chief of the Canadian General Staff, Lt.-Gen. Kenneth Stuart. Lieutenant-General E.W. Sansom, then General Officer Commanding (GOC) II Canadian Corps also inspected the troops, as well as their small packs, billets, orderly rooms and regimental stores. (54)

On 19 August 1943, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment became a part of 10

Canadian Infantry Brigade of 4 Canadian Armoured Division.(See App. I) The spectre of disbandment that had hounded the men for so long had finally passed. The first generation, a group of men bound by their membership in an exclusive organization which they themselves had forged, were now assured that they would enter battle as one.

The unit was also organized onto its final War Establishment this day. With a full establishment of 38 officers and 812 other ranks (which was seldom, if ever, attained) the Regiment was headed by a battalion headquarters consisting of the commanding officer and those who would directly assist him in battle (i.e. the intelligence section). A headquarters company with a strength of approximately 100 all ranks was made up of the Signal Platoon (No. 1) and an Administrative Platoon (No. 2). The signallers or the "sigs" were often men who were sick of the routine of the rifle companies.(55) Once into battle, they provided one of the main elements which would dictate the success or failure of an operation--communications.

The actual fighting arm of the Regiment--those that would see the most of the "sharp end" in less than a years time--consisted of a support company and four rifle companies. The support company was divided into four platoons, each responsible for a specific task or weapon. The mortar platoon (No. 3) was equipped with six, 3" mortars, the short range artillery for the unit. Two mortars were manned by a section of twelve with a sergeant in charge of each section. The eight "universal" or Bren-gun carriers of No. 4 platoon provided the Regiment with limited cross-country mobility. The anti-tank platoon (No. 5) was one of the biggest platoons with a full strength of about sixty all ranks. It went into battle with six 6-pounder guns (so named because of the weight of the projectile) with about six men responsible for each gun. Number six platoon was the pioneer platoon, "the engineers for the Regiment."(56)

Their tasks not only included mine clearing, but also any special maintenance or construction that might be required. In addition to this establishment, a scout platoon was mustered from the rifle companies in late February 1944. Their role was the "procuring and reporting of information relevant to the enemy." (57) They would work closely with the intelligence section at battalion headquarters. In total, the entire support company had a full strength of 7 officers and 184 other ranks. (58)

The rifle companies were the core of the fighting strength of the Regiment: their efforts would form the basis of any infantry Regiment's success in combat. Each had a full strength of 5 officers and 120 other ranks, divided between a headquarters and three rifle platoons. A platoon was composed of three sections, "the basic tactical unit" used in battle. The full, or ideal section consisted of eight riflemen and two junior non-commissioned officers (NCO's): usually a corporal and lance corporal. (59)

Only about half of a Regiment's establishment was constantly exposed to the "sharp end." Some were "left out of battle" (LOB), ready to reform a company in case it suffered severe losses. Others were a part of the Regiment's rear echelons, responsible for supply and maintenance. Approximately 150 vehicles serviced the fighting companies alone. (60) When equipment and personnel were attached from the artillery, the Army Service and Medical Corps and the engineers, it was a complex operation to maintain the relatively modest numbers in an infantry battalion.

In early September, the Regiment moved to Norfolk, the site of the Stamford Battle area. Here, the Regiment was first introduced to the other units in the Brigade while they took part in a long series of tactical exercises or "schemes" known by such names as "TAKEX 1", "OBSEX 1", "GRIZZLY II" or "HARROW 6." Throughout the fall of 1943, the unit worked with the

other supporting arms of the Brigade and Division. As one officer put it: "The most important thing we had to learn was to coordinate our movements with artillery, machine guns and tanks." (61) In the area near the town of Thetford, the Regiment was introduced to the tankmen:

We worked with the tanks in the Norfolk Battle area, and they did a very good job there, it was well thought out. We spent a certain amount of time familiarizing ourselves with tanks; we rode around on them to get the tankers picture of it and there was a great deal of effort made to work together... (62)

The Regiment took part in numerous Brigade-strength mock attacks on a feature known as Frog Hill ("How many times we captured Frog Hill,... I don't remember..."). (63) One typical exercise, "BRIDOOON", was designed to simulate a tactical advance of Divisional-strength against 'enemy attacks' made by 9 British Armoured Division. (64) The role of the Regiment was to hold bridgeheads along the line of advance so as to allow other units to pass ahead. Details of the scheme literally flooded battalion headquarters as operation orders and intelligence summaries simulated the background to the battle. This scenario pitted "Southland" against both "Northland" and "Heathland." The latter two had entered into secret negotiations regarding the disposal of a chrome mine which was to have been shared equally between "North" and "Southlands." The purpose of this seemingly ludicrous description was to make sure "the little man with the gun" was kept aware of the broader strategies for which he was fighting. Such "embellishments" in the hands of imaginative officers were to motivate the men to fight more effectively. (65) This was the military's way of dealing with a problem inherent to large scale warfare. These efforts were not always successful, even in training exercises:

Even though I was an NCO, I found them boring because it seems that they were... exercises for the officers and the higher people. You always seemed to be forever, hour after hour, standing around... doing nothing and you didn't know what you were doing. You'd move from this place to that place and you didn't seem to be

fully in the picture... And then, all of a sudden, they say, "OK. Its all over with... We've captured so and so" and you really didn't know what the hell you've done. However, it was an experience for the people who were running the units....(66)

One officer describes what he felt were the purposes of such exercises:

As far as the private soldier in the section is concerned, the larger the scale exercise, the less he knows what's going on, and the less he has to do with it... The basic thing is that regardless of how much shooting is going on, nobody is going to get hurt and that applies to all ranks... As far as the individual battalion is concerned, it may train the officer [and] the signallers--communications are the big thing that you gain in exercises--but as far as fighting a war is concerned, the value is not as great as some people would lead you to expect... Exercises of two divisions operating at the same time, and its complete chaos, nobody knows what's going on. But again, they're necessary in that in action half the time you don't know what's going on but you should at least know what facilities are available to find out what's going on....(67)

Upon the completion of BRIDGTON, the Regiment moved south to billets in Crowborough in East Sussex, south of London. Training on a platoon or company level began again. By December, two-500 yard obstacle courses were built by B company so that battle drill training could continue. Weapons training was also revived in the nearby town of Tunbridge Wells, where the Hawkenbury Ranges were located. As the war diary from December suggests, some were still in need of instruction: "Results [for C Coy] showed good shooting but very poor weapon handling."(68) The reorganization over the previous months had illuminated some training deficiencies. It also cost the Regiment its commanding officer of three years; Lt. Col. Muir vacated command on 18 December. Muir was a native of St. Catharines who had served in the First War and had been affiliated with the Regiment for many years. He was a popular leader who would be missed.

His replacement took over 2 January 1944. He was Lt Col. J.G. McQueen, formerly of the Calgary Highlanders of 2 Division. In 1942, he had been the senior Canadian officer of the "First Canadian Special Service Battalion"

which, together with American units, trained as the "First Special Service Force." (69) His reputation as an enthusiastic officer was established quickly when he immediately issued a memorandum to all officers concerning the low level of weapons training. The memo began with a very forceful tone:

TO: ALL OFFICERS

5 Jan 44

WEAPON TRG

1. The sole object of weapon trg (training) is to teach all ranks the most efficient way to handle their weapons in order to KILL THE ENEMY. Let us measure efficiency on this basis: the number of enemy that we can kill. This means that we must measure our "hitting ability". A hit produces a casualty, a miss or a near hit does not. There are no "inners" or "magpies" in battle. I want every soldier in the Regiment to be confident that he can kill with his personal weapon, at a reasonable range. (70)

McQueen ordered an intensive two week period of weapon training which would be assessed by seven teams of examiners, one for each weapon: Rifle, Bren, Machine Carbine (Sten gun), Grenade, 2" mortars, PIAT* and Gas.

The arrival of reinforcements was another interruption to the routine. Ninety six of them came in late January, bringing the Regiment to its full war establishment. John Reeve was one of those men. He arrived from Aldershot with little idea of what Regimental life would bring. All he was told was that "If you thought your army training was tough, you just wait until you get in the Regiment." Reeve went to D company, some of whom were billeted in the home of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He recalls the welcome he got that first morning:

The next morning, we were all in fatigues. Now when you're in fatigues, its very difficult to tell an officer from corporals, sergeants, or who have you. Our platoon of new recruits were there. One tall guy came out, and one short guy. They came up to our platoon and they hollered at us to stand at attention. We stood there and they walked along the front of us. They asked us, "Did you shave? Did you shine your boots?" It got really scary until the

* PIAT: Projector, Infantry Anti-Tank. This weapon "was a shoulder-controlled weapon firing a hollow-charge bomb designed to penetrate armour." (Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 545)

actual officer came out and these guys ran and got in the platoon.
(71)

Such were the rites of initiation into the Regiment.

In early February, 1944, the Regiment prepared for Operation STAMMER, the first time the 15th Field Regiment would demonstrate the capabilities of its 25-pounder guns. The 15th Field was a standard unit composed of three eight gun batteries. Each battery was assigned to one of the three infantry Regiments in the Brigade: the 17th battery, under the command of Major J.C. Clement, was assigned to the Lincoln and Welland. Operation STAMMER was the beginning of a long association between the two units for as Major Clement has commented: "The history of my battery, the 17th battery, is the history of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment." (72) On that day in February, it must have been a suspicious group of infantrymen that listened to the gunners tell them that they could in fact advance "under" an artillery barrage. It was a suspicion with which one can readily sympathize as an infantry officer describes a typical advance under a "creeping barrage":

How many times did I walk along with a section on either side of me looking at my watch and pacing, with artillery going overhead...the common rate of advance was 100 yards per minute and if the barrage is going to lift every minute, its going to lift every hundred yards. You want the infantry as close behind it as they can...because it comes down at a very steep angle of descent...You don't want to get too close to it or else you get killed and there's always short rounds...because as they fire, their guns get warm. There's less compression behind the projectile as its driven down the gun barrel and its tends to fall short....If we're talking about 13,000 yards which is a hell of a long way, then you realize that you don't need very much percentage when you are staying about 120 to 150 yards behind it. (73)

The gunners were "confident in their own weapon, and their big job was to educate the infantry that it could be done safely and consequently [the artillerymen] were right up...in the very first wave. It worked out with no casualties." (74) Even so, the infantry may well have had just cause to be wary of the guns after Operation STAMMER as the "shoot" was cancelled prematurely

when some rounds were fired short.(75)

By mid-February 1944, the Regiment was found rehearsing assault landings on the beaches of Loch Fyne in Scotland:

You hit this sandbar and your [Landing Craft] would stop. [Someone would then yell]... "away you go" and WHAM, you're over your head in water. It was pretty cold...

And the last landing we made, we had to scale practically a cliff. You had to keep your rifle above water. When you're getting up the cliff out of the mud, I think that was the most strenuous exercise we were on. (76)

These exercises usually ended with all ranks receiving a hot cup of tea or cocoa "followed by the usual discussion on how it should have been done." (77) In light of the intensity of these exercises, it is somewhat curious that the war diarist would suggest that this training in Scotland was "enthusiastically taken up by all ranks." A possible explanation to this attitude is found when one learns of the large number of WRENS in the area: there were "thousands of them" according to one man's memories.(78)

By 23 February, the Regiment was back in Crowborough. Five days later, the Division was introduced to its new commanding officer, Major General George Kitching, DSO who succeeded Major General F.F. Worthington, CB MC MM. The new Brigadier of 10 Infantry Brigade, J.C. Jefferson, DSO ED was also introduced at this time. The next day (29 February) General Montgomery inspected the Division.(79) What some would no doubt consider to be the highlight of these inspections occurred on 9 March. Most must have known who the "most distinguished personage" was when permission was granted to allow cheering along the parade route.(80) For some of those present, the Inspection by King George was a memorable experience for different reasons:

I think we got up around 4 in the morning. We were there by half past five and lined this bloody road for miles. They had air support flying overhead for cover. King George and the General [went] right down the middle of the road. I don't think they even looked up, you know? That's not right I don't think: getting guys out of bed at that time to stand by the road and they don't even look at them. (81)

Such ceremony was only a minor interruption in the daily routine of the Regiment. The CSM's kept up the pressure up with their training schedules for as one remembers repeatedly telling his men: "I'm not worried about my life, its your life I'm worried about. You're no damn good to me dead." (82) Companies worked on a host of tactical situations which could be expected in battle: river crossings, mine field breachings, night patrolling and infantry cum tank advances. Street fighting was another well rehearsed activity for as the war diarist recorded: "It was discovered that this is a difficult job even when the enemy are only armed with Thunder Flashes and Blank Ammunition." (83) The difficulties and dangers of street fighting are worthy of examination for they demand all of the unique skills good infantrymen must possess. A former officer details some of the elements of this exercise:

If you're going for a house...you put a lot of fire down on that because these guys are going to run across that open ground...They simply run like hell for that house, that's all there is to it. They don't fire anything, they're just running as fast as the Lord will let them. When they get to the house they flatten out against it and they go through the house clearing drill...maybe throw a grenade through a window, one guy opens a door from the side...another guy shoves it open. [a] couple guys jump in...to either side...

There's the control of all this and it takes some doing because you don't have wireless at that level. That's the section level...So you have to do all this by whistle, voice control at times--even voice control is not too good if there's an awful lot of stuff going on, they may not hear you--and verrey flares. Every officer carries a verrey pistol with blue, green, white and red flares. (84)

Indeed, as a war correspondent once suggested, the term 'street fighting' "is a bad misnomer, because the last place you see any sane man is in a street where every yard is usually covered by a well-sited machine gun." (85)

As the Regiment continued to train during its final months in England, a sense of confidence must have permeated the ranks as each man became well-drilled in his role and those of his cohorts. Thomas Craigen had signed up in 1940 and was in the carrier platoon by this time. Unlike the rifle companies where each infantryman honed skills which were common to his

fellows, the support companies demanded more specialized training. The results were the same. As Craigen remembers: "[We] were keyed up like a fighter in a corner...just raring to go at them...Personally, I thought, 'Let's get this damn thing over with'...We had been hanging around for years."(86)

The average private probably had little inclination to read, let alone appreciate the details posted in the daily orders which were clues to the monumental events of which they were soon to be a part. The ever-increasing restrictions, combined with the inevitable rumours, were signposts that their days in England were numbered. In April, mail restrictions were imposed and the Regiment was regularly placed on one hour notice in the event of any threats against southern England.(87) In May, any use of binoculars within 10 miles of England's southern or eastern coast was forbidden.(88) By invasion day, all operational vehicles had been grounded and waterproofed in the event of a landing at high tide. Embarkation tags were soon issued and as of 13 June, the Regiment was on a six hour notice to move.(89) A rash of absences without leave (AWL) were quickly halted after 10 June when any future absentees faced a charge of desertion.(90)

The Division was to have landed in France on D+22 (28 June). As Caen did not fall until 10 July, there was not enough room on the Normandy bridgehead. For the Regiment, then under canvas on a golf course outside of Crowborough, it was a costly delay. During the evening of 5 July, Pte. Rod Barton, a reinforcement who had come to B company only one month before, was about 50 yards from the common area near his company cookhouse. He recalled seeing some of his buddies having a game of cards, relaxing after a day of training and hauling water as the transport was then waterproofed and immobile. This tranquil scene was suddenly interrupted:

I hear this V1 coming. At England at this point, it rises very

gradually back up towards London. And...there's this V1 coming right up this valley. It just cleared this house where we used to pick up this water and it just came right in the camp. If you hear about V1's, they tell you that after the motor stops, you can count to ten. This one didn't stop: the motor was still running when it hit the tree...It killed 9 men. Their bits and pieces were laying all over the place...and where they had been, all that was left, was their torsos. I can remember their pasty colour: they were just a chocky, grayish [colour] ...Certainly, within two minutes, the place was aswarm with people from Crowborough: nurses, doctors....people coming down to help...That made us respectful of the V1 very, very much. After that, we dug slit trenches to sleep in. (91)

As the official history commented, "It was the worst such disaster to a Canadian military unit in the United Kingdom, and a grisly foretaste of the future." (92)

The shock of the tragedy hadn't dissipated when, nine days later, the code word "Vassal Tomorrow" was sent to all company positions. The Division was finally on its way to France. In the predawn cool of Tuesday 18 July, the Regimental convoy left Crowborough and wound its way through the quiet streets of London to a marshalling camp near the Tilbury docks. The men then received their final issues of rations and equipment for the crossing and the initial assault. They included: two twenty-four hour food packs; one sterilizing outfit; one emergency ration; one tin of cigarettes; one Tommy cooker with refills; one lifebelt and three vomit bags. (93) Robert Ross was then with the mortar platoon and he recalls his reaction to receiving such "luxuries" as a new blanket and some chocolate bars while in the transit camp:

Everybody got a new blanket. We thought this was great but we didn't realize it was a death blanket: that after you got shot, they would roll you up in your bloody death blanket. Green as grass....

I remember getting the issue of chocolate bars and lifebelts and I remember the padre giving us prayers and I said 'I don't think I'm going to like this at all. This is my death warrant.' (94)

The final days in England were chaotic as men and equipment were accounted for and organized onto three troopships, all done under the constant threat of the buzzbombs which often sent the men running under wharfs whenever

one of their engines was heard to cut out.(95) Finally, the endless administrative details were sorted out and the ships carrying the men and equipment of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment slipped out into the busy sea lanes. The crossing took over five days due to bad weather.

One of those aboard remembers his comrades tossing their English currency into the channel. It was a romantic gesture which must have characterized the enthusiasm of this first generation. Indeed, they had good reason to be enthusiastic: they were a well-conditioned, well-practised group of men who felt they had trained hard, some for nearly four years. Few would have been aware of any deficiencies in their training and it is difficult to find evidence to suggest that they were not as well trained as any other Canadian infantry unit.

Nevertheless, in three weeks time, this first generation of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment would be decimated. An organization which had developed its skills and enthusiasm over a period of years would stumble in the intensity of its first engagement.

CHAPTER 1: NOTES

1 Maj. R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954), p. 97; Col. C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Vol. 1: Six Years of War (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1957), pp. 149-51.

2 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 97.

3 Ibid., p. 98. Lt.-Col. Fordham was appointed to command Internment Company "M". Major C.A. Muir, who had commanded the militia's "C" company in Fort Erie, became the Regiment's Commanding Officer.

4 St. Catharines Standard, Saturday 13 July 1940, p. 12.

5 R.S.J. MacIntosh, Taped Interview, 6 April 1984.

6 D.W. Fowle, Taped Interview, 18 November 1983.

7 St. Catharines Standard, Monday 24 June 1940, p. 1.

8 T. Craigen, Taped Interview, 27 June 1984.

9 W.P. Leslie, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.

10 E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984.

11 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.101), September 1940.

12 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 99; War Diary, L & W, September 1940.

13 E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984.

14 Ibid.

15 C.V. Hemphill, Taped Interview, 17 November 1983.

16 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983.

17 C.V. Hemphill, Taped Interview, 17 November 1983; E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984.

18 "Report by Acting Lance-Corporal O'Hagan," War Diary, L & W, 29 October 1940.

19 War Diary, L & W, 9 February 1941.

20 Ibid., 1 April 1941.

21 Ibid., 21 April 1941.

22 Ibid., 9 May 1941.

23 Ibid., 16 August 1941; War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.102), September 1941.

24 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.

25 War Diary, L & W, 21 July 1941 (Vol. 15.101).

26 St. Catharines Standard, 24 September 1941, p. 17; R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.

27 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.102) September 1941.

28 E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984.

29 War Diary, L & W, 22 September 1941; A.E. Hills, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.

30 E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984; War Diary, L & W, 1 November 1941.

31 War Diary, L & W, 25 December 1941.

32 Ibid., 6 March 1942.

33 Ibid., 19 March 1942.

34 "Daily Orders" War Diary, L & W, 19 March 1942; J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983; C.V. Hemphill, Taped Interview, 17 November 1983.

35 Training: 4 Canadian Armoured Division (Ottawa: PAC RG 24 Microfilm, C 5422, HQS-20-3-4).

36 Ibid.

37 J.B. King and John Batchelor, Infantry at War 1939--1945, Purnell's History of the World Wars (London: Phoebus Publishing Co.), pp. 5-8.

38 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 109.

39 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984; K.M. Dunton, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.

40 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.

41 D.W. Fowle, Taped Interview, 18 November 1983.

42 K.M. Dunton, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984; C.V. Hemphill, Taped Interview, 17 November 1983.

43 Line Well, Xmas 1942 in War Diary, L & W, December 1942; War Diary, L & W, 31 July 1941 (Vol. 15.101).

44 War Diary, L & W, 12 May 1942; R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.

- 45 War Diary, L & W, 12 December 1942.
- 46 G.H. Brittain, Taped Interview, 26 June 1984.
- 47 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.
- 48 War Diary, L & W, 28 December 1942; War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.103), 9 January 1943; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 111.
- 49 War Diary, L & W, 30 April 1943; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 111.
- 50 E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984; War Diary, L & W, June 1943; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 113.
- 51 R.L. Rogers, Taped Interview, 21 February 1984. This trend would continue as only 35 percent (13 out of 37) of the Regiment's officers who entered battle in August could claim the Niagara area as their home. (Maj. R.A. Paterson, A Short History: The Tenth Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hilversum, Netherlands: De Jong & Co., 1945)), p. 71.
- 52 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983.
- 53 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.
- 54 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 115.
- 55 K.M. Dunton, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984; D.W. Fowle, Taped Interview, 18 November 1983.
- 56 P. Easser, Taped Interview, 10 July 1984.
- 57 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.104), 1 March 1944.
- 58 J.M. Hitsman, "Fighting Strength of an Infantry Battalion," in "Manpower Problems of the Canadian Army During the Second World War." (Canada, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History: Document #63, App. L, 17 August 1953), p. 353.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 "Vehicle Allotments for Companies," War Diary, L & W, 17 July 1944 (App. 20).
- 61 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 119.
- 65 "Exercise BRIDOWN, Operation Order #1: 31 October 1943), War Diary, L & W, November 1943 (App. 14).

- 66 G.H. Brittain. Taped Interview. 26 June 1984.
- 67 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 68 War Diary. L & W. 16 December 1943.
- 69 Stacev. Six War Years. pp.104-08.
- 5). 70 "Memo: McQueen to Officers." War Diary. L & W. January 1944 (App.
- 71 J.E. Reeve. Taped Interview. 27 October 1983.
- 72 J.C. Clement. Taped Interview. 31 October 1983.
- 73 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.
- 74 J.C. Clement. Taped Interview. 31 October 1983.
- 75 War Diary. L & W. 5 February 1944.
- 76 A.E. Hills. Taped Interview. 11 July 1984.
- 77 War Diary. L & W. February 1944.
- 78 A.E. Hills. Taped Interview. 11 July 1984.
- 79 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 122.
- 80 War Diary. Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.104). 7 March 1944.
- 81 D.W. Fowles. Taped Interview. 18 November 1983.
- 82 A.E. Hills. Taped Interview. 11 July 1984.
- 83 War Diary. L & W. 4 April 1944.
- 84 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.
- 85 John Ellis. The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II (Newton Abbot: David & Charles. 1980), p.92.
- 86 T. Craigen. Taped Interview. 27 June 1984.
- 87 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 24; "Daily Orders #53." War Diary. L & W. 8 April 1944.
- 88 War Diary. L & W. 24 May 1944.
- 89 Ibid.. 6 June 1944.
- 90 Ibid.. 10 June 1944.
- 91 R.B. Barton. Taped Interview. 5 July 1944.

92 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 127.

93 War Diary. L & W. May 1944: "Diary of Move of Bn HQ, HQ Coy & SP Coy
OPERATION 'OVERLORD'." War Diary. L & W. July 1944 (App. 17).

94 R. Ross. Taped Interview. 9 April 1984.

95 Ibid.

CHAPTER II: INTO BATTLE.

The distance between the Norman cities of Caen and Falaise is about 32 kilometres. The land between has changed little since the hot, dry summer of 1944: the view from these gradually sloping plains is interrupted only by scattered villages and farms. As one moves farther south toward Falaise, the land becomes more rolling and thick stands of trees dot the landscape. Roads sunk between steep bramble-covered banks are the area's most characteristic feature. This was the setting for some of the fiercest fighting of the Second World War. It was here where the first generation of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment experienced its 'baptism of fire.'

The Regiment landed on the shores of France on 25 July. As the unit moved south through the ruins of Caen and the country just south, the flattened buildings, the dead, bloated livestock in the fields and the lines of wounded and battle-weary soldiers heading to the beaches were the first indications of what lay ahead:

When we landed in France, we were just starting to move up...We got talking to a few more [troops]. I know one of the questions of one was 'How do you get along at night? How can you tell where the Germans are?' He says, 'After a week, you'll learn.' 'How?' He says, 'You can smell them...You won't believe this until you're up there but they've got different uniforms that smell different. They use a different type of soap'. And he was right. You learned to live like an animal: by instincts, by sense, smell and everything else.(1)

I remember the first night we went in...to relieve the Queen's Own at Bourgebus, and Hicks was in the carrier with me and Red White was driving and I'm in the back. There were flashes going around. We were laughing like hell. We got jammed up and got out of the carrier and went in a house and a shell landed in there and killed a guy. Then we realized it was something. We were going in like kids.(2)

Today, to walk from one end of Bourgebus to another would take all of three minutes. During the summer of 1944, to do the same meant having to go to ground three or four times to avoid the "almost constant" mortars and artillery.(3) Since 7 British Armoured Division had literally walked into the town on 20 July after Operation GOODWOOD, Bourgebus became the focus of wrath of the German positions which lay no more than 1 kilometre to the south. At the southeast corner of Bourgebus--where the now-repaired church marks the road heading south--one can appreciate why the Germans left Bourgebus without a fight. There, dominating the area from the high ground, is the village of Tilly-la-Campagne.

By August 1944, Tilly was little more than a rubble-strewn crossroads; grim evidence of the enemies determination to resist the Allies' southward advance. Operations GOODWOOD and SPRING had both failed to take Tilly on 19 and 25 July respectively. In the later attack, 3 Division's North Nova Scotia Highlanders suffered 139 casualties against units of the Leibstandarte S.S. Adolph Hitler Division.(4) With the arrival of 4 Canadian Armoured Division into the bridgehead in late July, its task was clear: replace the now-exhausted 3 Division and continue to attack south. Its first engagement was ordered by General Guy Simonds, commander of II Canadian Corps, who "proposed to ease the 4th Canadian Armoured Division...gradually into 'the feel of things' by mounting a small-scale operation to take Tilly-la-Campagne.(5)

The Regiment began to take over the slit trenches manned by the Queen's Own Rifles on the night of 30-31 July. It was a move not without incident for it was quickly detected by the enemy: "They opened up on us. We were trying to get in and take over slit trenches that nobody had ever seen...it was pitch dark."(6) By the morning of 31 July, A and B companies, under the command of Majors A.U. Gilles and F.B. Fisher, respectively, were dug in along the

forward edge of the town facing Tilly. The carrier platoon was forward of these two rifle companies, but they were afforded some protection in a large stone barn. C and D companies, under Majors R.F. Willson and J.F. Swayze respectively, were in reserve positions: Willson's company was in the northwest end of the town near the Battalion Headquarters, the school and record office; Swayze's men were "out on the flank" dug into the cellars and behind the walls near the church at the east end of the town.(7)

It was in these positions where most of the first generation was introduced to the 8.8 cm. German artillery piece--the "88". One soldier describes the initial frustration he experienced during those first barrages:

We were in little dog holes...and they were coming over with these 88's. These were shells that burst in the air and they splattered all over the place. We got a few hits there; some of the boys got hit pretty bad. Its something you can't fight back at. Its not like a guy's 200 yards away and he's got a rifle in his hand. You can do something about it. These damn things come moaning over there and splatter all over the place. And they cover quite an area.(8)

Life in a slit trench was frustrating, but also terrifying:

I don't think I ever got used to it. I was always afraid...You're always visualizing the next one is going to drop right on top of you in the slit trench. Another thing that really bothered us was airbursts. You're pretty safe inside a slit trench and you're down below the surface of the ground with artillery fire and they can land within a few feet of you as long as they don't land in the trench, and generally, you're pretty safe. It shakes you up. But the bloody air bursts...they burst above you and then shatter, so you had no protection from that. That would frighten you too...(9)

Even soldiers preoccupied with incessant airbursts get hungry. Over the next week, the men were to get little prepared food as the company cookhouses had been set up about 3 kilometres north of Bourgebus in the town of Cormelles, a suburb of Caen. As any vehicle movements sent clouds of dust into the hot summer air which alerted the enemy in Tilly and La Hogue, Bourgebus was cut off during the day.(10)

As night fell on the 31st, 2 Division's Calgary Highlanders prepared to attack Tilly from some farm buildings west of the town which had been captured by the Essex Scottish on 29 July.(11) As Lt.-Col. McQueen was a former member of this Regiment, it seems clear that he offered them the services of one of his companies to put in a diversionary attack from Bourgebus. Major Swayze's D company was chosen for the task. This was to be the the Regiment's first action and the men of the company were understandably nervous as the first rumours of casualties had begun to circulate. Then Pte. John Reeve of 18 platoon D company remembers that such reports made one "...battle-wise in a big hurry...It hits you that people really do get killed out there."(12) To divert the men's attentions, Maj. Swayze and CSM Hills brought out a deck of cards and began a game of cribbage in the company headquarters.(13) As the appointed time of attack drew near, Swayze was honest with his men. One of his privates remembers being told, "Its not going to be a bloodbath, but I might as well tell you, some of you aren't coming back." The men's response was predictable: "Everybody looked at everybody else and thought, 'Well, that's too bad for the other guy.' Nobody figured it was going to be them."(14)

At 1:00 A.M., 1 August 1944, 17 and 18 platoons moved out of Bourgebus: 16 platoon under Lt. R.M. Davis stayed in reserve. Lieutenant R.F. Dickie led 17 platoon through the high wheat fields to a railline west of Tilly to act as a base. These men were less than a kilometre north of the town when "heavy MG and Mortar fire made further adv. impossible."(15) With no where to go, Dickie and his men found shelter under a small rail viaduct. Meanwhile, Maj. Swayze led Sergeant Joe Connolly and ten others from 18 platoon along the Bourgebus-Tilly road to assess the Calgary Highlanders' attack. This group made it as far as Point 63, about 500 yards from Tilly where the main road was intersected by a sandy farm path which led to the railway near Dickie's

position. In the darkness and thick fog, Swayze saw a "sea of flame" before him. Deciding that the Highlanders' attack had failed (as he felt he was "being paid...to use my goddam common sense") he sent his men back one at a time, toward Bourgebus.(16) By morning, the scattered remains of Swayze's patrol had literally crawled through the units' 3" mortar lines. Lieutenant Dickie's platoon was cut off for another twenty four hours.(17).

For those back in the town, it was not a night they would soon forget as it was one of the first of many spent under a blanket of shelling:

It was so bad that night. I'll never forget it as long as I live. We had taken over a German trench and it was right in the kitchen of this house...That house must have been a hundred years old because they had no concrete on the floor, just hard clay...One guy got on his knees, I remember...and he was praying...I thought, 'Gees, that guy's got courage.' He was right on his knees at the bottom of that trench and he said, 'I just don't want to die.' I said, 'Look it...don't worry about it. If you get hit, you won't know it anyway...Let's talk about chocolate sundaes or something like that, something important.' We were just young guys. So I sat on the edge of this trench here, inside this old house, talking about chocolate sundaes: wouldn't they go down good now, and all this crap; and he was on his knees on the floor praying to the Lord.(18)

The shelling continued throughout the next day as the Divisional command prepared for yet another Regimental-strength attack on Tilly-la-Campagne. This was prompted by General Montgomery who had called General Crerar on the morning of 1 August, asking if General Simonds could "put on further prods to continue to pin him [the enemy] down." (19) Simonds then decided to renew the attack on Tilly that night. Clearly, one observer is correct when he writes that this small crossroads "had become something of a fixation with the Corps Commander." (20)

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was appointed to the task; the attack would commence at midnight. The war diarist of the 15th Field Artillery was naively optimistic when informed of the plan as he wrote that "everyone was set to hear that the 4th Division had done what both 3 Division and 2 Division

had failed to do. It was a chance for the Lincoln and Welland to get their feet wet and the weather was fine for it with a 3/4 moon."(21)

The gunner's war diarist was far more sober the next day: "the Lincs got stopped at about 0200 hrs and were pinned down. TILLY remains in German hands."(22) The attack had failed. The plan called for a preliminary artillery bombardment of twenty five minutes duration by one medium and two field regiments. At midnight, the lead company was to make its way to the road leading into Tilly from the south. Armed with PIATS, this company was to cut off the southern approaches so as to prevent a counterattack from La Hogue before Tilly itself could be captured. A second company was assigned the same task in the event of the first company losing surprise.(23) With the southeastern or left flank occupied, a third company was to attack from the right flank where Lt. Dickie's platoon was still maintaining a position. Their job, in the words of one report, "was to clean up the village itself."(24) A fourth company was to lie in reserve with a squadron of tanks to attack, if need be, by first light.

After a rare meal of stew (brought in after dark) and a briefing by the scouts, (when one private remembers being told "how terrific it was going to be") the leading company, Major Fisher's B company, set out in single file towards their objective. Private R. Barton was the second man on a Bren gun in the lead section of the lead platoon. He recalls that the night was as "black as pitch" as they advanced; the men whispered to one another as they walked forward through the wheat. Barton doesn't recall how far they had gone but a Divisional report states that B company made it no further than 500 yards from Bourgebus.(25) It must have been there when a corporal to one side of the advance yelled, "let's go B company" and the men began running forward. A verey flare then lit up the sky: a signal to the German defenses. The company

went to ground after firing only a few rounds, unable to move as tracers from the machine gun positions ripped through the wheat around them. When Barton went down, Pte. E.J. Blake was nearby with a PIAT on his back:

[Blake said] 'Help me get this PIAT gun off my back.' And I crawled up to him, started getting the straps off his shoulders. And they must have seen some movement because I can still see the tracers coming through the stubble and just drumming into him. I was sort of laying on a little bit of an angle behind him and I was never touched.(26)

Soon after, Barton became one of thirty Lincs who was taken prisoner that night. For him, the war was over after two days. This was also the last battle for Major Fisher and Private Blake: both were killed that night. Unable to move forward because of the heavy machine gun and mortar fire, the remainder of Fisher's company withdrew back to Bourgebus with Gilles' A company to reorganize.(27)

The plan continued even though the left flank was unprotected. Soon after midnight, the Brigadier ordered C company under Major Willson to pass through Major Swayze's position at Point 63, the spot halfway along the Tilly-Bourgebus road which Swayze had reached the night before.(28) Willson's company made considerable progress, going at least 400 yards beyond Point 63 to within 200 yards of the north edge of Tilly itself. According to a Divisional report, the Germans were waiting for them: "The enemy allowed the second coy. to infiltrate in their posn.: when he was certain of the exact location he engaged them with MMG's [Medium Machine Guns] from three directions and also with very hy [heavy] mortar fire."(29) Those not cut down retreated for, as one officer recalls, "It was just a blaze of tracer across there."(30)

By 2:00 A.M. August 2, Gilles' company and the remainder of Fisher's men, then under Lt. J.S.W. Burnett, prepared for another attack out of Bourgebus. Although the Brigade record suggests that "line communication was maintained

continuously until 0530 hrs." orders were being confused.(31) This may have been partly due to Lt. Col. McQueen's insistence at the outset of the attack to move the battalion headquarters to a "battle headquarters": a German dugout across the road from the original headquarters. As the battery commander, Major Clement, recalls: "it was three times as difficult to maintain signal lines" in this position.(32) Whatever the cause of the confusion, only two platoons from A company, No. 7 platoon under Lt. E. Phair and No. 8 platoon under Lt. J.G. Martin, attacked again. Lieutenant Martin recalls that Major Gilles decided to take his men out but they were soon forced to ground by "just a wall of machine gun fire." "We just could not get through" as Martin recalls. He continues describing the attack in which Lt. Phair was killed:

"Andy finally crawled up beside me in the middle of the night and said 'Well, we've got to get up that hill.' And I replied: 'You be my guest. There is nothing we can do.' When it was nearly light, I said to Andy that I was taking my platoon and going back to Bourgebus and he reluctantly agreed. The Argylls had come up to take up some of our positions and in the dark they were within an inch of opening up on us, huddled there in the wheat field. Fortunately, they didn't. If we hadn't known there was a war on, we sure as hell knew it after that night--it was just awful."

"My most vivid recollection of that night was the intense shelling. Now it is pretty hard to recall just how terrified we all were in a slit trench and just anxious to dig yourself into the ground...Every time there was a break in the shelling, you would peak out of the trench and someone would be screaming for a stretcher bearer. [I'm] not sure how any of us survived that night and day."(33)

By 5:45 A.M., Lt. Col. McQueen reported to Brigade that the attack was unsuccessful and that his troops were reorganizing north of Bourgebus.(34) It had been a difficult initiation: in less than five hours, the Regiment suffered 64 casualties, 15 of which were fatal. The strength of Gilles' and Fishers' companies had been cut by thirty percent.(35)

The next day, Bourgebus was fully handed over to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the unit marched back to Bras where it spent the night in a field north of the town. For the troops, 3 August was a rest day:

for the officers. it was a time to assess what went wrong. In a meeting with the officers. Brig. Jefferson expressed the view that "insufficient determination had been shown in attacking what should have been a two-company objective." (36) The men of the Regiment did not share the Brigadier's opinion.

Few would argue that the inexperience of the Regiment did not play a role in the final outcome. Lt. Col. McQueen was reported to have received his "sketchy orders" late, thereby not allowing time enough for proper reconnaissance. (37) Private Barton's recollection of the scout's somewhat vague and reassuring reports prior to the initial attack tends to reinforce this point, as does the confusion surrounding Major Gilles' subsequent advance. With such confusion at the command level, the troops themselves were far from 'being kept in the picture.' Many of the advancing troops were reluctant to return enemy fire "for fear of shooting one another"; a reluctance perhaps derived from the fact that the lines of advance quickly became separated and disorganized. (38) Corporal Ken Hipel was with Maj. Willson's company and he recalls that "You've never seen so much confusion. Nobody knew what was going on...Just before daylight, we were pinned down and I mean pinned down. When I come out of there, my small pack looked like a sieve. We couldn't tell who was firing, whether it was our boys, other than from the noise." (39)

That the men had packs on at all betrayed the Regiment's inexperience for the rifle companies--especially Fisher's and Gilles' men--were overloaded with equipment and they soon discarded it. On 5 August, Lt. Col. McQueen ordered a court of inquiry to examine the reasons why so much equipment was lost. The officer's testimony vividly portrays not only the large amount of equipment taken into the battle, but also the ferocity of the action. Lt. R. Colucci testified at the inquiry:

I am OC 11 Platoon, "B" Company, Lincoln and Welland Regiment. On the night of 1/2 August 44 "A" Coy, "B" Coy, and some carriers were proceeding along a track from BOURGEBUS south-east to TILLY LA CAMPAGNE, both in Calvados. The equipment worn by "B" Coy at that time was battle-order, including small packs, respirators, pouches utility, mess-tins, and water-bottles. Approximately twenty shovels and fifteen picks were distributed throughout the company. After an advance of about 800 yards we were fired upon by enemy MMGs from the front and both flanks. The company was pinned down and eventually retired, suffering 19 casualties. On orders from Capt. M J McCutcheon who assumed command when Major F B Fisher was known to be missing, I had the NCOs check the equipment of "B" Coy on 2 Aug 44 and found the following shortages:

| Item | Total lost | By E.A. (Enemy Action) |
|------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Rifles, | 22 | 22 |
| Brens, | 3 | 3 |
| Stens, | 3 | 3 |
| Magazines Bren | 148 | 75 |
| Magazines Sten | 32 | 20 |
| Respirators, | 53 | 19 |
| Skeleton Web, | 53 | 19 |
| Haversacks, | 37 | 19 |
| Mess Tins, TP, | 67 | 19 |
| Water bottles, | 59 | 19 |
| Pouches Utility, sets, | 38 | 18 |
| Mortars, ML 2", | 1 | 1 |
| PIATS, | 3 | 3 |

(40)

In subsequent attacks, one company commander recalls that they "went in with the absolute minimum. You went in with your rifle and a bandolier of ammunition." (41) A rifleman concurs: "We went in with a bandolier and a rifle, no identification. We took everything off, we couldn't take anything.... We found that if you had your rifle, your ammunition, a couple of grenades, that's all you need." (42)

Even considering the Regiment's inexperience, it is clear that Tilly-la-Campagne was no "two-company objective." The town offered its German

defenders a host of advantages, not the least of which was its commanding view of the area. In retrospect, the men of the Regiment realize the difficulties they faced on that first night:

We were up against Germans who had been in that piece of real estate for Lord knows how long. They knew every square inch of it. The wheatfields were all growing and they had cut swathes through them so no matter how you crossed them you were going to be trapped in an awful lot of fire. They knew we were coming and there was only one way to go get them. They had their tanks...hull down into the ground and they had their 88 guns at ground level. Also they could fire them straight ahead, they didn't have to lob them. They were firing point blank almost, as were all of their multiple machine gun positions....It was a horrendous episode.(43)

Another recalls that the battle for Tilly gave him a more realistic view of the role of the artillery. Although one might have hoped that "an infinite amount of artillery preparation will annihilate the defenders and...[the infantry]...would walk right through them," this was not to be the case. He continues: "With good troops, and certainly the Germans were good troops, after the second round falls on Tilly, you don't kill anybody. They might have suffocated in a few of their slit trenches or something, but you didn't kill anybody. And as soon as the barrage lifts, they're up there."(44) To paraphrase an astute observation in a unit war diary during this time: "A lucky...officer on his first assignment learns a lot of things."(45) So do his men.

Most of the Regiment spent the next few days after 2 August in Bras, only a few kilometres north of Bourgebus: a "rest area" still well within the range of enemy guns and aircraft. Immediately after the battle, the mortarmen went under Brigade control and began bombarding Tilly, preparing for the Argyll's attack three days hence. One morterman remembers that "We fired everything that we could...After you fire a couple of hundred rounds, the mortar plate, you have to dig it out with a pick and shovel because it just bangs into the

7
earth."(46)

On the morning of 5 August, a sixteen man patrol under Lt. Burnett was ordered to Tilly "...to see whether the town was still occupied by the enemy."(47) Burnett and his men were fortunate, for despite Brigade reports that Tilly had been deserted, the Argylls convinced Brigade that they were in error since "somebody still in the area of Tilly was continuing to engage our [the Argylls] area with small arms and Mortar fire."(48) Later that night, the Argylls became the fourth Canadian infantry regiment to be repulsed from Tilly. As the Lincs had been ordered to occupy the town upon the Argylls' success, many were doubtless developing a healthy disrespect for the military planners.

After the Argylls' attack, the Division was relieved ("without regret" the Regimental history suggests) by 51 Highland Division in preparation for a major advance south to Falaise, codenamed TOTALIZE. The first phase of the plan called for two infantry Divisions--the 51st on the left (east) of the Caen-Falaise highway with 2 Canadian Division on the right (west)--to break the main defensive line by following a preliminary bomber run and a massive artillery barrage from 360 guns. To speed the infantry's advance, specially-adopted armoured vehicles, dubbed 'unfrosted priests', would carry the troops forward behind this wave of bombing.^(49) Phase Two would send the more mobile armoured Divisions--4 Canadian Armoured Division on the right and 1 Polish Division on the left--through the positions taken in the first phase to the high ground between Caen and Falaise.

The Regiment was then in Cormelles. Few of its men knew of, or cared

^These vehicles were also called "kangaroos." The first models were self-propelled Priests with the gun removed. They carried about 12 men. These were replaced eventually by a "modified Ram cruiser."(See Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 546.)

about such details. Even so, as the clouds of dust began rising to the south on the afternoon of 7 August, everyone was aware that something big was in the offing.(50) Later that night, as the Regiment formed up south of the railway in Caen, the "deep, all pervading rumble" of the bombers and guns signalled the beginning of TOTALIZE.(51)

The Regiment moved out of Caen by midnight, the troops on foot (with "small packs", the war diarist noted). The Division slowly moved along the route marked by the Engineers, then bathed in a ghostly artificial light which one officer recalls made it seem "as bright as day."(52) By mid-morning of the 8th, the unit was ordered to Rocquancourt, a town located on a forward slope facing south, a clear target for the enemy gunners. The unit again dug in while plans were finalized at the Brigade command post. The men had then learned the necessity for, and the routine of digging in:

[The slit trench]...became your home. Everytime you moved, you had to stop and dig another slit trench. Most of the times you wouldn't use the ones that were already there, because they had them pinpointed with mortars. They could drop a shell in a damn slit trench. So you dig new ones in different locations for safety. So that became your home. If you had to go to the bathroom you went to the bathroom in one end of the slit trench. You ate in the other end and tried to sleep if you could.(53)

The hard Norman soil made digging in difficult so the infantrymen always looked for ways to make this seemingly endless exercise go more quickly and easily:

I dug down my eighteen inches. I always tried to pick a tank track to dig because that would get me down four inches right away. I was sure of that. I got down my eighteen inches [in] shale rock. Oh Gees, it was tough digging. My hands were bleeding. I'm digging in so often. My hands were just raw.(54)

As night fell, the unit abandoned their hastily dug positions and moved 3 kilometres south to Cintheaux which the Argylls had captured that afternoon. There, bloody hands or not, the men dug in again and spent another night in an open field. By the next morning, the Argylls had cleared the area south of

Cintheaux and preparations began for the Lincs to strike 3 kilometres south along the Caen-Falaise highway to the town of Grainville-Langannerie. Again, orders were hurriedly received and issued so that the advance did not begin until 1:00 P.M. In the rush, the artillery was not their targets; an ominous sign of what was to come.(55)

Gilles' company and B company, then under Maj. M. McCutcheon made the initial attack. McCutcheon's men on the right immediately met "very stiff resistance." Two supporting tanks from the South Alberta Regiment (SAR's) were knocked out by mines in the advance. Nevertheless, Willson's and Swayze's companies were able to pass through and enter the town from the west to cover the routes of escape. Willson's men met "particular difficulty in house to house fighting" but Swayze, then no more than 100 yards from Willson, remembers only "sporadic" resistance.(56) For some men, this was their first close view of the enemy and as Swayze recalls, their first reaction was to stare in amazement, not shoot:

← We got into the main street, and I put one platoon on the one side of the street and I was on the other...About 50 yards down, two German soldiers ran across the road with a machine gun. They were just putting it in a better position, and, it being the first German any of us had ever seen, we just stood there with our mouths open and watched them run across.(57)

The men must have regained their composure for by 6:00 P.M., Grainville-Langannerie was cleared and thirty prisoners had been captured. With only sixteen casualties suffered through the day, the men must have been well satisfied with their efforts. In the view of one officer, "by that time, the troops felt they were seasoned troops more or less."(58) They were also hungry. So when orders came in at 7:00 P.M. to advance to a spot just northwest of the high ground between Caen and Falaise, their morale plummeted accordingly.

At 8:30 P.M., the Regiment moved off into the dusk. Swayze's company was

out in front, led by the scouts. Now it is easy to see where they made their error in map reading. At the southwestern edge of Grainville-Langannerie, there is a fork in the road where a dirt path heads south to farms near point 195, the high ground. The other roadway swings west over about 2 kilometres of flat country. As the roads both cross the same railline at points about 1 kilometre from the fork, a wrong turn might not be noticed. In any event, a mistake was made which nearly sent the entire Regiment into the enemy-held town of St. Germaine le Vasson. Major Swayze remembers that his company went forward with one platoon leading the company headquarters and the other two platoons in the rear:

We started off in single file, south from Grainville-Langannerie, frankly, not really sure where the hell we were going. We were to occupy this area and take up a firm base...But I did know that we were going for some high ground and we're going along in the night, then all of a sudden...down ahead of us is a church...I ran up ahead of us and said [to the scout] 'Do you have any idea where you are?' The guy broke down and said, 'I'm lost...' With that, we went and lay in the ditch...I was up at the front and...there was a group of Germans marching...down the street toward us...The war diaries [read: the Regimental History] say that we shot up the patrol or something. Maybe twelve were killed there but we never killed them because Dick Davis took the last two platoons and retreated back the way we'd come and I took the forward platoon...and we ran between the houses through an orchard. I remember running through that orchard because as I ran through it, these Germans would rise up and you could see their coal skuttel helmuts and they didn't know who we were but I damned well knew who they were...We got in a wheat field and put the men all in a circle and we laid in the wheat field all night.(59)

Miraculously, Swayze's 'lost' platoon made it back to their own lines intact the next day. The exact location of the other companies is not clear for the night of 9 August. As Willson's company was at the rear of the advance with Battalion Headquarters, they managed to get onto the correct objective. There they were met by parts of the support company which had stayed in Grainville-Langannerie until led south by Major Clement. Sometime in the early morning of 10 August, Clement's carrier-mounted radio went dead which

limited the artillery support that was to be so desperately needed once dawn came. A wireless unit in one of the mortar platoon's carriers was set on frequency with the command post in Grainville-Langannerie was the only way in which the guns could be contacted. When the radio's antenna was shot off, Signaller J. "Smokey" Barkwill kept the unit operating until the afternoon of the 11th, when an artillery FOO [Forward Observation Officer] finally restored direct contact with the guns.(60)

By the morning of 10 August Gilles' and McCutcheon's companies had moved forward, but as the official Regimental history suggests, "faults in the arrangement of the position began to appear."(61) By 9:00 A.M., the Germans (some of whom were supposedly disguised as wounded Canadian soldiers) counterattacked and overran an anti-tank gun position, killing its crew. The two forces were so close that neither could bring the gun to bear on the other.(62) Corporal Hipel of Willson's company recalls his stay near Hill 195, a feature subsequently labelled "Butcher Hill":

That was the hungriest I ever was, or thirstiest in my life....I had one can of sardines and about this much water for I don't know how many days. In the daytime, in that blistering sun, you just couldn't move. If you stuck your head up, that was it. We were right on the edge of a grain field...and the Jerries, you couldn't see them in there. The minute you stuck your head up, it was game over. You just didn't get out of that slit trench.(63)

Some relief from the shelling came later that day when the Canadian Grenadier Guards' tanks (CGG's) moved forward to engage the enemy. Food and medical aid did not arrive until the 11th when a convoy of anti-tank carriers braved the dangers to reach the forward positions.(64) At 5:00 P.M., the North Nova Scotia Highlanders began to take over the Linc's positions.(65) TOTALIZE was over. The Regiment had suffered 53 casualties on 10-11 August. Its survivors had lost their morale: "The men were pretty well shattered."(66)

By 13 August, 10 Brigade had been moved just southeast of Cinthieux,

about 10 kilometres south of Caen where it was subjected to yet another period of heavy shelling. Major Swayze, having returned from his ordeal in St. Germaine le Vasson, well remembers this 'rest' area for it was here where he took the blast from an 88 shell which landed near his slit trench. As he had taken to wearing British battledress, he awoke in a British hospital. (67) His replacement was Major C.K. Crummer who had joined the Regiment in England as head of the reinforcement company. He came forward on 13 August, riding with the new commanding officer, Major W.T. Cromb Jr., formerly Second in Command of the Argylls. Cromb had previously served with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in Italy so his battle experience was extensive and valuable. Upon assuming command Cromb (then promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel) immediately began preparing the unit for the next operation toward Falaise. Operation TRACTABLE. One soldier attached to battalion headquarters recalls the first time he saw his new commanding officer in charge, a story which illustrates the respect he gained from his men:

I remember the first orders group he had. It was out in a field... All the company commanders were there...and the bloody shells started landing in between us. Everybody [took cover] and old Cromb's still standing there talking. And everybody got up, one by one, looking kind of sheepish. He put the stiffness in your back, that guy did. But later on he said, "I wasn't brave; I was scared shitless..." (68)

For the men who had suffered through the previous days, Cromb's order to keep the cookers "as close to the coy. as possible, instead of in A Echelon" was both popular and logical. (69) By then, the men were already learning that one couldn't depend on regular meals no matter where the cookers were. They soon became acquainted with the fine art of preparing meals during any lull in the daily routine:

I'll never forget the first time I met Col. Cromb. We were moving up. We had stopped and we asked 'How long are we going to stop?' 'Maybe 10, 15 minutes' [came the answer] So right away, out come the little portable cook stoves we had. We were making sandwiches...He [Cromb] came by and there was no use hiding it. I

think it was myself who asked him "Would you like a cup of tea?" He had his own cup on the belt and he had a cup of tea. He says, 'Well, here's one bunch of boys I don't have to worry about... They know enough to take care of themselves.' (70)

August 14 was another hot summer day. By midmorning, the unit's rifle companies had climbed into their Troop Carrying Vehicles (TCV's) to prepare for their part in what has since been described as "one of the most remarkable assault operations of the Second World War." (71) TRACTABLE was really a continuation of TOTALIZE in both method and purpose: two Armoured Brigades were to lead the advance south to "dominate Falaise." They would be followed by two brigades of priest-borne infantry. The columns formed up to the east of the Caen-Falaise road: on the right (west) 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade would be followed by 9 Infantry Brigade. On the left or east side, 4 Canadian Armoured Brigade would lead, with 8 Infantry Brigade close behind. Once the advance began, the two mounted Infantry Brigades would break directly toward Falaise via the Laison River valley. The third wave of the two columns--7 Brigade on the right, 10 Brigade on the left--would follow the armoured advance to the highground northeast of Falaise in their TCV's. (72)

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was mounted in seventy vehicles, lined up seven abreast and ten deep. (73) When the third wave received orders to move in mid-afternoon, its columns drove into a fog of dust and smoke: evidence of the activities of not only the armour and artillery, but also Bomber Command. Sergeant Gord Brittain of the mortar platoon was in his carrier on that day and he remembers actually "enjoying it in a way [as] nobody seemed to be firing at us." (74) Indeed, the Regiment was fired on only once during its initial advance, before it was stopped at the town of Rouvres, where the shallow, yet high-banked Laison river proved to be a significant tank obstacle. The men debussed and dug in on an extended line along a hedge just north of the town. By 4:00 P.M., the Argylls and Lincs had crossed the Laison

river and had gone forward to Olendon, 4 kilometres to the south, where the Lincs spent the night.(75) Two companies of Argylls moved a further 2 kilometres east to Perrieres, yet another ancient Norman farm village with its characteristic high stone walls and narrow streets. These towns are situated in the troughs of long rolls of land that break onto the high plateau east of Falaise. Just as the enemy had moved out of Bourgebus to defend the high ground at Tilly-la-Campagne not a fortnight before, so it was that he was willing to retreat from the Laison river valley to hold these plateaus as the broken remnants of the German Seventh Army prepared to retreat northeast through the now-threatened Falaise pocket.

The orders issued for the subsequent phases of TRACTABLE were relatively clear. As Second British Army's advance had been slowed to the west, 2 Canadian Division was ordered to take Falaise. The 3rd and 4th Divisions were to capture the high ground to the north of Falaise. With 1 Polish Division, which would come east on 15 August, the final push would commence toward Trun and Chambois, two towns east of Falaise which together formed the "neck" of the Falaise pocket. If all went well, the escape route would be closed between II Canadian Corps and the American Third Army, then moving up from the south.(76)

August 15th--day two of TRACTABLE--was a confusing and costly day for 4 Division. The 10 Brigade war diary reports that the Algonquins were "firmed up on EPANCY" at first light. In fact, the town was not "completely cleared" until that afternoon and only then with help from the Lake Superior Regiment and a squadron from the Governor General's Foot Guards.(77) One reason for this delay doubtless lay in the woods no more than 2 kilometres southeast of the town where an estimated 150 tanks--the equivalent of about 3 Canadian tank regiments--were reportedly preparing to counterattack. Such an arsenal was

certainly the product of either a hurried typist or the imaginative observations of a patrol.(78) Nevertheless, Typhoon aircraft were dispatched to bomb the woods and any potential threat was crushed.

At 3:00 P.M., the Lincs. together with a squadron from the SAR's, moved just south and west of Epancy where they were to seize the ground overlooking Falaise. Gilles' and Crummer's companies led the way, their only cover being the high banks of the roadways. Their attentions were soon fixed on the woods a few hundred yards to their left where a machine gun nest forced Crummer's company to ground. Immediately, Crummer radioed back for artillery support (which, as the 15th Field war diarist commented was "...established well enough and soon enough to be of tactical value.")(79) The support Crummer's men received was a fine example of proper artillery coordination:

I got on the blower to the Colonel back at command and I gave him a map reference and Jake Clement was on the edge of that woods in a minute. Now the edge of that woods wouldn't be any more than 200 yards from us...On the map there was an indication of buildings and I said, 'play along the edge of that woods, up 200 yards.' And he laid it right in there. He would whip...smoke in first to range and I would tell him the range was about right. And now "let him have it" and the guns would really open on it. They danced around there for five minutes and it was all over. We got the Jerry and the machine gun was destroyed and his leg practically off and smiling at us...He must have been an S.S. type and you've got to give it to them. They were real rough soldiers. They didn't back up an inch.(80)

During this action, Major Gilles was shot and killed by a bullet wound to the stomach. Like Forbes Fisher, Andy Gilles was one of the originals of the Regiment; he had been a high school teacher from Niagara Falls. His company came under the temporary command of Lt. Martin; it "pushed on" against the machine gun and mortar pits which lay ahead.

The main issue that afternoon was whether a tank cum infantry attack with proper artillery support could be organized to advance the nearly two miles to

point 159, the high ground north of Falaise. An excerpt from the war diary of the Canadian Grenadier Guards dated 15 August well illustrates the confusion of that afternoon:

It was now 1300 hours...Several units were tied up at the same point. Major Parish from the BCRs and reps from the SAR, and the Corps Recce came up. One sqn of the LSR with the L&W were moving to the wood at 1540. Observation showed the high ground to be open and flat without cover and it was felt by both the BCR and ourselves that an adv across this ground without inf and proper arty sp would prove disastrous. A plan was decided on with the BCRs, and arty concecs were called for on the woods to the left and in front. The arty failed to come down however. The GGFGs at 1500 hrs reported themselves on the objective, but this turned out to be a false alarm for they were to our right rear. All together the whole day proved very much wasted.(81)

By nightfall, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment had dug in with a squadron of CGG tanks just southwest of Epancy. They had suffered 47 casualties this day: 8 of them, including Major Gilles and Lt. W.G. Adams, were killed. With the exception of 1-2 August, 15 August had been the Regiment's most costly day in battle.(82)

At 2:00 A.M., 16 August, the unit moved a further 5 kilometres north to point 103, north of Olendon, where "an attempt was made to rest and refit."(82) Twenty three hours later, the advance commenced again. The Division was ordered to cross the Ante River at Damblainville, just northeast of Falaise. It was to then head southwest, straight toward Trun.(83) With the Lincs in a reserve position after their fight on the 15th, the Argylls and Algonquins prepared crossings of the Ante. By the morning of 17 August, the Argylls had cleared Damblainville but "were subjected to very heavy mortaring and shelling from enemy mortars on a hill to the south..."(84) which neither they nor the Algonquins could overcome. The direct route to Trun had been cut off to the Division.

That afternoon, II Canadian Corps moved to take Trun by "the back door";

that is, by moving through the heights north of the Falaise-Trun highway. Such a rerouting was no small feat when one considers the literally hundreds of Divisional vehicles which had to negotiate the area's narrow, winding and often unreconnoitred roads. The Lincs led 10 Brigade's advance. It was to halt at Point 104, about 4.5 kilometres northwest of Trun. The advance went about 1000 metres beyond their objective with the result that the unit Command Post was fired on by 1 Polish Division, which was then advancing toward Chambois to the east. The unit quickly found its bearings and moved back just to the north of their elusive objective. (85) At about 6:00 P.M., with the Regiment dug in, Lt.-Col. Cromb, Capt. Lambert of the anti-tank platoon and Battery Commander Clement set out towards Point 104. As Clement remembers, they drove straight into trouble:

Colonel Cromb, Lt. Lambert [sic] and myself piled into the jeep and we went up the sideroad to take a look at possible positions. And we came out beyond the corner of a wood and found ourselves staring at a German great big tank. The minute we came out of course, it started to swing its gun on us. Well, I never turned a jeep around so fast in my life. And Lambert whipped out his pistol and fired a shot at it, and we hightailed it back down the road perhaps 400 yards to where my guns were. I ran up to the very first gun and yelled an order for smoke... And I said 400 yards and the fellow set the cap, rammed it up the thing, pulled the trigger and we threw 3 or 4 smoke shells up there to screen the tank. And it disappeared. Thank God. (86)

By Friday 18 August, "the German retreat through the [Falaise] Gap had reached full flood," as Commander-in-Chief West Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge had authorized a full withdrawal two days before. (87) The Lincoln and Welland Regiment were committed to Trun, the Division's westernmost objective. For the Regiment, the capture of Trun was a watershed as its time there is still a vivid memory for many of its men. Trun was the Regiment's first glimpse of the cost of victory.

In the early afternoon, the Regiment began slowly descending towards the town, then ablaze from earlier visits by both tanks and Typhoons. Major

Gilles' company had been taken over by Major J.A. "Johnny" Baldwin. His men went forward with a troop of tanks to clear the town while the rest of the unit waited on the outskirts. By 3:00 P.M., each of the four rifle companies covered the approaches to the town as the armour, artillery and the machine guns of the New Brunswick Rangers were set up to stop a counterattack. None ever developed: the Regiment suffered only one casualty this day. In its place came those whose will to fight was spent. As night fell and the fires continued to burn despite the efforts of the Captain Easser's Pioneers to blast fire lanes, over 500 prisoners of war (pws) had surrendered, been relieved of their weapons (as well as their money and other items of interest or value) and sent back. (88)

For many, the experience of meeting the enemy face to face brought odd revelations:

I thought John Reeve would last about 15 minutes in action, because my impression of a German soldier was about six foot with a brush cut. When I got there, he was going to pull out a great big sword and [makes the sound of sword cutting] that's the end of you.

When I captured my first German, it was in a wheatfield and I yelled [German for] 'Hands up.' I was in a crouching position. I could see the grey blue helmet and this grey uniform and as he stood up, I stood up and I was about a foot taller than he was. It gave me the greatest feeling in the world. (89)

For others, the fact that so many prisoners seemed to be just ordinary men put the seeds of self doubt into their minds:

Its hard to explain how you feel when you see these prisoners being taken back. A couple of days ago, you were fighting with them. And you start to wonder...if these guys have got families...Its really hard to put it all together without getting emotional about the whole thing. Because you start to think about your own family...and if you're ever going to get back. There's no hostility...You feel, 'I'm in the army because I feel I'm doing the right thing. Sure, this guy, if he had a choice, maybe he wouldn't be there either.' (90)

Private Ken Dunton was a signaller who by then was driving the Commanding Officer's armoured scout car. On one of his patrols near Trun, he had captured Colonel Bruno Gerloch, the commander of 708 German Infantry Division.(91) On another patrol, Dunton's party captured a convoy of German wounded:

You'd never believe the Falaise gap, unless you were there. I could tell you, and you'd think I was shooting the breeze...That was absolutely fantastic. You wouldn't believe how many dead. Well...a platoon of us went down this road out of Trun. These resistance guys come along...[and told us] to go down to this crossroads. There were a lot of Jerries there. I think there were seven of us...Just as we got there, this convoy of German trucks was coming down...and we stopped the convoy...And we opened them trucks up and they were full of wounded Germans: arms off, legs off, head bandaged up, you name it...And they weren't just laid on the floor, they were stacked in as though you'd thrown maybe 25 guys in each, one just on top of each other...What a goddamn mess that was.(92)

It is the memory of the almost incomprehensible destruction which lingers with the veteran who experienced the Falaise gap. One recalls seeing "miles and miles of German vehicles, bodies, horses bloated with the heat; civilians cutting steaks off the horses for food. It was just a horrible mess."(93)

For most of the Regiment, the battle for Normandy ended in Trun on Saturday 19 August. At 2:00 P.M. that afternoon, a request was received for infantry support in St. Lambert sur Dives; a small farm village 3 kilometres east of Trun which was the Division's easternmost objective. It had been reached earlier that day by one squadron of SAR tanks, together with a depleted company of Argylls and some self-propelled guns. Another company of Argylls, together with Maj. Willson's 13 and 15 platoons (under Sergeant D. Sowray and Lt. J.A. Dunlop respectively) plus 17 platoon under Captain R.F. Dickie, reached St. Lambert later that afternoon.(94) As 1 Polish Division had been unable to capture Chambois a further 2 kilometres east of St. Lambert, an escape route for the Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer Army was still open. Their main natural obstacle was the Dives river; two of the three river crossings in the gap were in St. Lambert. So it was that a detachment of the Lincoln and

Welland Regiment would be at the centre of the battle for the Falaise gap: an ordeal of three days duration which would earn Major David Currie, commander of C Squadron of the South Alberta Regiment, the Victoria Cross.

Once into the town, the Linc's platoons were divided to support the positions already established: Sowray's and Dickie's platoons were positioned near the main crossroads of the town, 200 metres north of the Dives. Dunlop's men (of which there were about sixteen, half a regular platoon) were led by a runner to a farm along the Dives, south and west of the main intersection where an Argyll platoon under a Sgt. Stewart was dug in. Two SAR tanks also covered the route of German advance from the southwest. As Dunlop recalls, his position was relatively quiet the first night. His men were busy herding prisoners back to St. Lambert:

To get them back to the main force, we gathered them in lots of perhaps 100 to 150, and marched them directly across the field, with one of our chaps escorting. I remember we were careful to tell the escort that he must take them only to the town and then return for more, since we were extremely short of help. One of our chaps, who was armed only with a rifle, asked if he might perhaps have a sten gun, in case some of the prisoners decided to turn on him or escape. To this I recall Sergeant Schuler replying, "If they do that, it won't matter a damn whether you have a sten gun or a rifle, you will be dead anyway." (95)

Dunlop estimates that at least 1200 prisoners gave up at their position that night.

In St. Lambert itself, Major Currie, the officer commanding this isolated garrison, was forced to give up part of the village to tighten his defenses against increasing German pressure. As he recalls, "During the night, there was considerable firing and no one got much sleep." (96) Corporal Hipel of Sowray's 13 platoon also recalls that night which brought the first rain to the area since July:

By the time we went in it was dark...We were put up along this hedgerow, the tanks were dug in for the night. It started raining; it was miserable. All that we had was what you called a belly

trench...We had no idea of what the country looked like because in the dark you haven't got a prayer, other than that we could see the tanks and our job was to protect them.(97)

During the night, the enemy still inside the pocket planned a counterattack in hopes of joining with II S.S. Panzer Corps advancing from the north.(98) The attack began at 8:00 A.M., Sunday 20 August. Dunlop's positions at the river crossings were almost overrun. The troop commander ordered a retreat with the prisoners ahead, followed by the infantry with the tanks covering the rear. The enemy covered their retreat from the river with machine gun fire. Their application of fire and movement was fairly effective, as Dunlop recalls:

We began playing the old game of "leap frog," by which each of us would run perhaps 20 or 30 yards, then dive flat on the ground. Someone in a different sector would then get up and run his stretch and do the same thing. By doing this we were fortunate in getting out with a minimum number of casualties from number 15 platoon...(99)

Dunlop lost only three men over their stay in St. Lambert: one of them, Lance Corporal J.E. Harvey, was killed on this retreat, as was Sgt. Stewart of the Argylls.

After a night spent blindly fighting isolated counterattacks, Corporal Hipel recalls that the Germans charged into St. Lambert like Indians coming "across the prairie": a description similar to that found in the SAR's war diary of that day: "At about 0800 hours waves of German Infantry began moving against the positions. It could hardly be called an attack as there was no covering fire plan, simply a mass movement of riflemen."(100)

The enemy was forced to rely on the sheer weight of its numbers in the desperate hope that some would get out. The cost was high. With the scores of vehicles and horse drawn carts converging on the three river crossings, the long, slowly moving lines were easy targets for both the aircraft and the ground guns. The results were horrendous. By Monday 21 August, the focus of

the battle was in the north where the Poles still fought to close the gap. St. Lambert--then little more than a scrapyard of destroyed vehicles surrounded by stone buildings in various states of collapse--formed the western edge to what the Germans called 'Das Korridor des Todes'. 'the Corridor of Death.'

Even as the Allies fought to close the Falaise pocket, the plans for the next stage--the pursuit of the escaping German armies into the low countries--were already being distributed. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the pursuit began even before the pocket had been closed. Why wasn't the small garrison at St. Lambert sur Dives reinforced?

Major Currie's party were sent east on the basis of orders issued to 4 Division on Friday 18 August by General Simonds. He reconfirmed them the next morning, emphasizing that (in the words of the Official history) "the encirclement must be complete: no Germans were to escape."(101)

With such clear objectives (4 Division was still responsible for the area from Trun to St. Lambert-Moissy) it is curious that 4 Armoured Brigade would be preparing to drive out of the pocket toward Vimoutiers, a town some 16 kilometres northeast of Trun, on 19 August. Only a "loose" encirclement was achieved later that day when the Poles and Americans reached Chambois, but the break-out the next morning clearly illustrated that far more men and weaponry should have been on the left side of the pocket at St. Lambert. As Currie's men fought for their very survival on 20 August, the rest of the Division was either preparing to pursue an enemy who had not yet escaped, or were obtaining "as much rest as possible..."(102) The Lincs and Algonquins were both in rest areas north of Trun that morning, the latter preparing to move out with the Armoured Brigade which had just come under the command of Brigadier Robert Moncel.(103)

As the intensity of the fighting grew that day, the Armoured Brigade's advance was cancelled so it could go to the aid of the Poles still fighting north of Chambois. They were of "little help" as they went no further than Pt. 240, some 6 kilometres north of Chambois.(104)

The 10th Infantry Brigade was also ordered to this area on the afternoon of the 20th so that a strong Divisional front overlooking Chambois could prevent another breakout that night. The 3rd Division's 2 Armoured and 9 Infantry Brigades were placed under 4 Division for this operation.(105) The Lincolns were well west of this defensive position, spending the night of 20 August about 5 kilometres north of Trun at pt. 259. The men in St. Lambert were 7 kilometres away.(106) They had been forgotten as the plans for the pursuit were set aside to help the Poles farther north.

General Simonds went to the area around St. Lambert that evening and immediately ordered it strengthened against further attacks. As one commentator has suggested, "It was none too soon."(107) It is plausible that Simonds went to St. Lambert after receiving General Montgomery's directive issued earlier that day in which he urged that "This is no time to relax, or to sit back and congratulate ourselves." The Canadians were to keep the "bottleneck" between Trun and Chambois "securely corked."(108) Given the events at St. Lambert earlier that day, these urgings were too late in coming: the "bottle" had not been corked in time. Major-General Kitching was relieved of his command of 4 Division on 21 August.

By 22 August, the battle east of Falaise was at an end. With it passed the first generation of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. Between 31 July and 20 August, the Regiment lost 253 men, 60 of whom were killed. The fighting effectiveness of the Regiment had been diminished by at least one half. Among these casualties were three rifle company commanders: two were killed while a

third sustained blast injuries. Major Willson was soon transferred. The Regiment also had a new Commanding Officer. It was an organization far different from the one which had landed in France not one month before.

CHAPTER II: NOTES

- 1 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.
- 2 J.H. Barkwill, Taped Interview, 16 November 1983.
- 3 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 September 1984.
- 4 Col. C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. 3: The Victory Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960), pp. 189-90.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 202, 204.
- 6 C.O. Borthwick, Taped Interview, 11 April 1984.
- 7 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,104), 1 August 1944.
- 8 T. Craigen, Taped Interview, 27 June 1984.
- 9 G.H. Brittain, Taped Interview, 27 June 1984.
- 10 Maj. R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954), p. 133.
- 11 Terry Copp and Robert Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise (Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1983), p. 84.
- 12 J.E. Reeve, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983.
- 13 A.E. Hills, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.
- 14 J.E. Reeve, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983.
- 15 War Diary, L & W, 1 August 1944.
- 16 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 17 The Calgary Highlanders suffered 178 casualties on their attack on Tilliv; 51 of which were fatal. (Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 206).
- 18 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.
- 19 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 206.
- 20 Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise, p. 82.
- 21 War Diary, 15th Field Regiment (PAC RG 24 C. 17 Vol 14,295), 1 August 1944.
- 22 Ibid., 2 August 1944.

23 Lt.-Col. J.C. Garnett "Immediate Report Number 1 Attack-- Tilly la Campagne 0760--Night 1/2 Aug." (HQ 4 Canadian Armoured Division : 7 Aug 44 Vol. 10,944 Folder 249C4.D29): War Diary, L & W, 1 August 1944.

24 Garnett, Divisional Report, p. 1.

25 Ibid.

26 R.B. Barton, Taped Interview, 5 July 1984.

27 War Diary, 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade (PAC RG Vol. 14, 156), 2 August 1944.

28 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 135.

29 Garnett, Divisional Report, p. 2.

30 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 September 1984.

31 War Diary, 10 CIB, 1 August 1944.

32 J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983; War Diary, L & W, 1 August 1944.

33 Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984

34 War Diary, 10 CIB, 2 August 1944.

35 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 137. Daily casualty figures have been calculated by referring to the casualty lists in the Regimental History.

36 War Diary, L & W, 3 August 1944.

37 Rogers, Regimental History, pp. 135-6.

38 Ibid., p. 138.

39 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

40 "Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry Held in the Field 5 Aug 44." War Diary, L & W, August 1944 Appendix I7., p. 2.

41 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

42 J.E. Reeve, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983.

43 C.O. Borthwick, Taped Interview, 11 April 1984.

44 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

45 War Diary, 15th Field, 2 August 1944.

46 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 137.

- 47 War Diary, L & W, 5 August 1944.
- 48 War Diary, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (PAC RG Vol. 15.005), 5 August 1944. This entry was also in the Argyll's war diary on 5 August 1944: "At 0110 hrs a Lincoln and Welland man returned to our lines. He had been wounded in their attack on Tilly the night of August 1st, and after lying out in No-man's-land for three days and nights, had slowly made his way back to our lines."
- 49 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 216-218; Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise, p. 90.
- 50 Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.
- 51 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 218.
- 52 War Diary, L & W, 7-8 August 1944; Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 53 C.R. Brown, Taped Interview, 22 February 1984.
- 54 R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.
- 55 War Diary, L & W, 9 August 1944; Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982; J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983.
- 56 War Diary, L & W, 9 August 1944; Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 57 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983; War Diary, L & W, 10-11 August 1944; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 142.
- 61 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 143.
- 62 War Diary, L & W, 10 August 1944; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 143; J.A. Dunlop, Taped Interview, 1 August 1984.
- 63 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.
- 64 War Diary, L & W, 10-11 August 1944; Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 231.
- 65 War Diary, L & W, 11 August 1944.
- 66 C.K. Crummer, Taped Interview, 13 June 1984; J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983; J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983; Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.
- 67 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

- 68 K.M. Dunton. Taped Interview. 11 July 1984.
- 69 War Diary. L & W. 13 August 1944.
- 70 K.A. Hipel. Taped Interview. 19 January 1983.
- 71 Copp and Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Falaise. p. 112.
- 72 Stacey. Victory Campaign. pp. 238-41; Copp and Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Falaise. p. 112.
- 73 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 157.
- 74 G.H. Brittain. Taped Interview. 26 June 1984.
- 75 The Regiment sustained only six casualties on 14 August. Its luck was not shared on other parts of the battlefield. The 4th Armoured Brigade, which had taken Rouvres earlier that day, lost its Commanding Officer, Brigadier E.L. Booth. He was killed during the advance. The most unfortunate ones were those in the rear echelons who were bombed by their own aircraft. First Canadian Army lost a total of 65 killed, 91 missing and 241 wounded that day: the result of not only poorly timed bomber runs, but also by the use of yellow recognition smoke which was the same colour as that used by Bomber Command to mark their targets. (Stacey. Victory Campaign. pp. 243-4).
- 80 C.K. Crummer. Taped Interview. 13 June 1984.
- 81 War Diary. 22nd Canadian Armoured Regiment, Canadian Grenadier Guards (PAC RG 24 Vol. 14,260). 15 August 1944. Stacey is certainly right when he suggests that the death of Brigadier Booth was one reason for such indecision. (Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 249).
- 82 War Diary. L & W. 16 August 1944.
- 83 Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 250.
- 84 War Diary. A & S Highlanders. 19 August 1944.
- 85 War Diary. L & W. 16 August 1944.
- 86 J.C. Clement. Taped Interview. 31 October 1983.
- 87 Stacey. Victory Campaign. pp. 254-5.
- 88 War Diary. L & W. 18 August 1944; Rogers. Regimental History. p. 156.
- 89 J.E. Reeve. Taped Interview. 27 October 1983.
- 90 T. Craigen. Taped Interview. 27 June 1984.
- 91 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 156; Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 156.
- 92 K.M. Dunton. Taped Interview. 11 July 1984.
- 93 G.H. Brittain. Taped Interview. 26 June 1984.

94 Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise, p. 124; War Diary, L & W, 19 August 1944.

95 J.A. Dunlop, "St. Lambert sur Dives, August 18 to 21, 1944" (Personal Account: Typewritten), pp. 3-4.

96 Major D.V. Currie, V.C. quoted in The Battle of the Falaise Pocket, After the Battle 8 (1975):19.

97 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

98 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 262.

99 Dunlop, "Personal Account," p. 6.

100 War Diary, 29th Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, The South Alberta Regiment (PAC RG 24, Vol. 14,295), 20 August 1944; K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

101 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 259.

102 War Diary, L & W, 20 August 1944.

103 War Diary, L & W, 20 August 1944; War Diary, Algonquins, 20 August 1944.

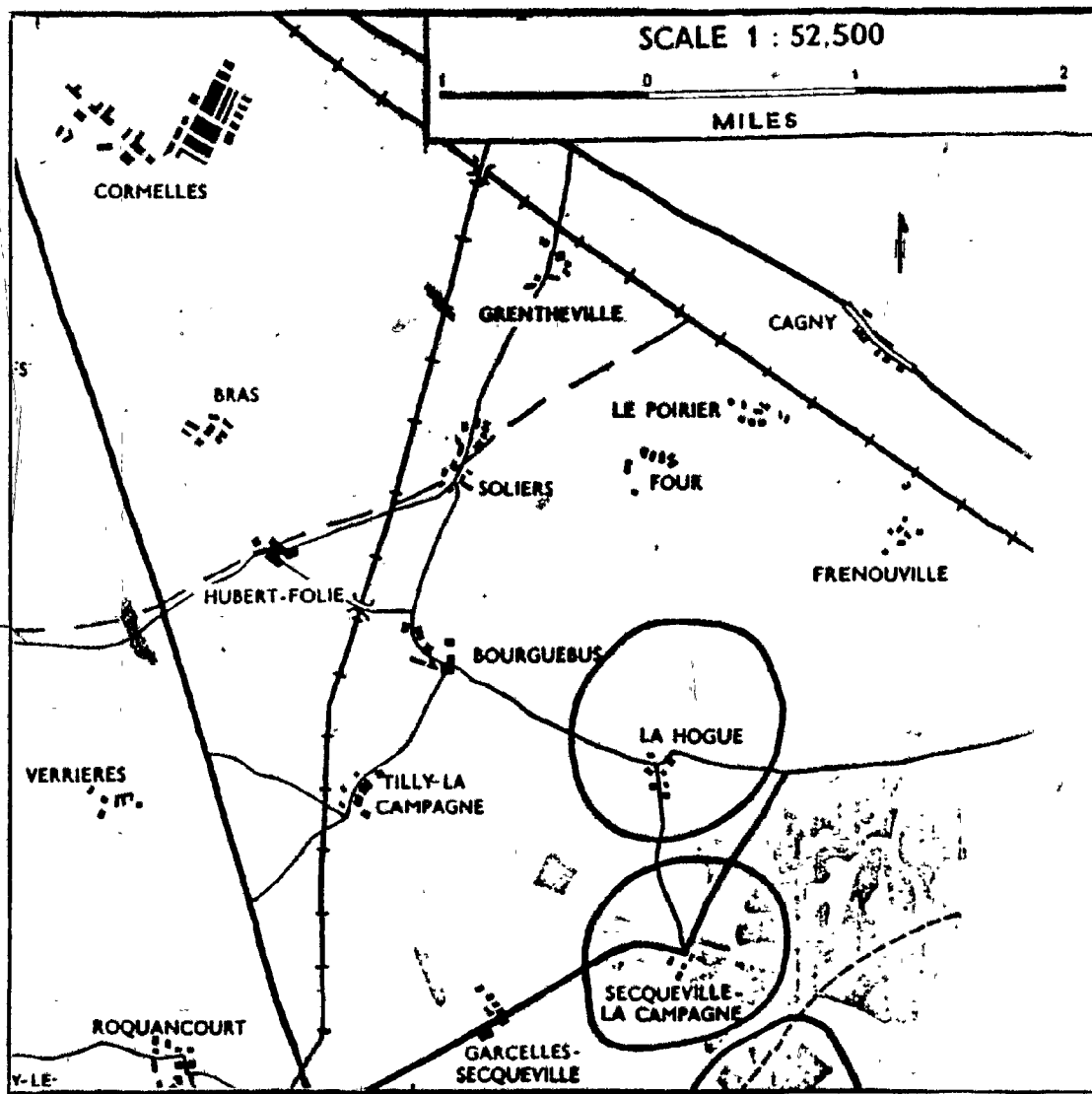
104 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 263; Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise, p. 128.

105 War Diary, 10 CIB, 20 August 1944.

106 War Diary, L & W, 20 August 1944.

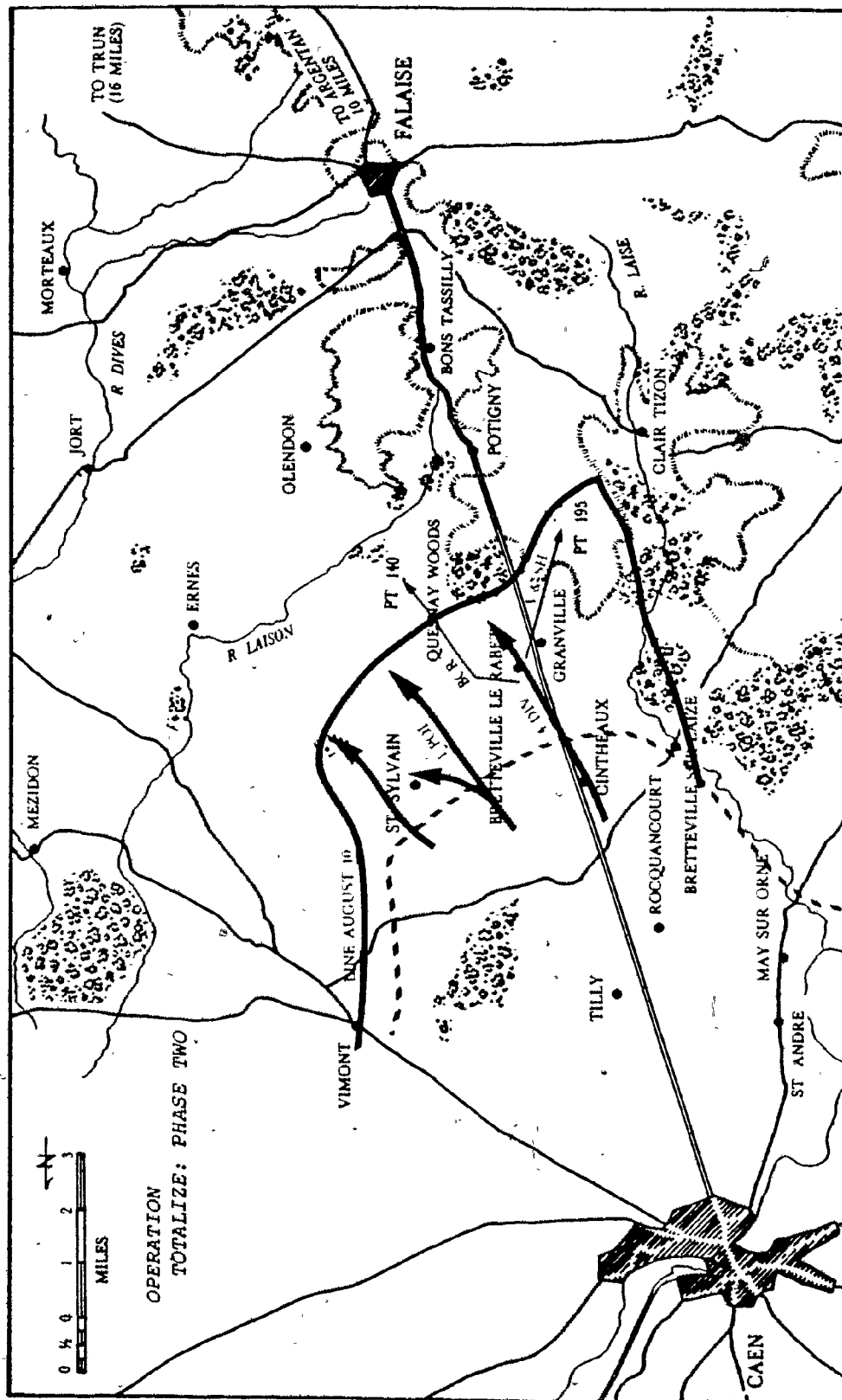
107 Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise, p. 128.

108 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 266-7.



SOUTH OF CAEN

Source: Operation Totalize,
British Army of the Rhine,
Battlefield Tour,
(London, 1952).



Source: Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Falaise (Alma: Maple Leaf Route), p.99.

CHAPTER III: THE PURSUIT INTO BELGIUM

The remainder of the first generation of the Regiment were unaware of the vital strategic and historic issues of which they were a part. For these men, the days between 20 August when they were relieved at Trun and 22 August, when they were issued orders for the pursuit, were relatively uneventful. On Monday 21 August, the Regiment came under the command of the 27th Armoured Regiment, the Sherbrooke Fusiliers, to reinforce the positions of the now-exhausted Poles. As the units prepared for the night move, the men from St. Lambert rejoined the ranks. They had little time to rest, as Corporal Hipel recalls:

The tough part of it is, we were in there [St. Lambert] and they finally took us out. We were supposed to go back for a rest. When we got back, we only had about an hour's rest and then they loaded us on the damn tanks and away we went with the rest of the Regiment. (1)

At 9:00 P.M., 21 August, the Regimental convoy moved into line and headed into the darkness. The infantry, many of them clinging to any available handhold on the hard armour, endured what the Regimental history describes as "One of the most miserable nights of the campaign: sleep was impossible [and] the rain was cold, piercing and incessant." (2) In the predawn mist of 22 August, the convoy halted at Val Bequet, some 8 kilometres northeast of Chambois. Now soaked and exhausted, the men probably gave little thought to the fact that no enemy had been met during the night. The battle for Normandy was finally over--the pursuit of the German Armies had begun. In accordance with General Montgomery's directive of 20 August, "the cork" was to be withdrawn and 21 Army Group was to "advance rapidly" to the Seine River. In the Canadian sector, 4 Armoured Division was on the right, pushing northeast toward the Pont de l'Arche, south of Rouen. (3)

Today, one can easily fulfill Montgomery's directive in an afternoon. The most direct route from the Trun area is the N138 which passes through Monnai,

Broglie, Bernay and Brionne, astride the Risle river, the final barrier before the Seine. The unhurried might turn east at Bernay, through the green lush valleys of the Foret de Beaumont where the quaint towns of Beaumont le Roger and le Neubourg are located.

For those who passed through here in the late summer of 1944, the journey was altogether different. Rather than admiring the otherwise beautiful terrain, those leading the immense Divisional convoys cursed the dense woods and winding roads for they offered perfect cover for an enemy anti-tank screen. On the afternoon of the 23rd, the entire 4th Divisional convoy was halted by such a screen. The Regiment, in line behind Brigade Headquarters in their carriers, TCV's and other vehicles of sometimes unknown origin (such as the Priest which had been recently acquired by the Pioneers) were ordered north of the centre-line to provide flanking protection. As the Regimental history relates, these were to become familiar tactics in the coming days: "By morning, the screen would usually be gone but the enemy would have gained time." (4) By midafternoon of the 24th, the Regiment had rejoined the divisional convoy on the N138, but not before losing a number of its motorcycles to the mud, a product of yet another rainstorm.

By 7:30 P.M., the column was halted outside Bernay where "the last of the enemy were winkled out of the town." (5) The newly liberated citizenry were appreciative, as the Brigade History relates:

Will Bernay ever be forgotten? Bernay where the people stood from morning till night, at times in the pouring rain, and at times in the August sun. Bernay where they never tired of waving, of throwing flowers or fruit, of giving their best wines and (sic) spirits to some halted column. Bernay where the local schoolmistress had her children lined along the main street singing in unison and in English "Thank you for liberating us." It was the Brigade's first large town, and many a hardened lad from Caen and Falaise felt his eyes fill as he witnessed the joys, the smiles, the tears, of wild gratitude and triumph all around him. (6)

Not all were happy to see the end of the German occupation in these towns. As one Linc recalls, those suspected of collaboration were dealt with quickly and severely: "We saw a lot of girls with shaven heads. When we got there, they went right after them. Some [were] hanging from the trees." (7)

The column didn't move east out of Bernay until nearly midnight, following the winding D133 along the banks of the Risle through the Forêt de Beaumont. At Nassandres, the Argylls found the bridge over the river destroyed, so the convoy headed north to Fontaine la Soret where the engineers built a crossing by the early afternoon of the 25th. (8) By 3:00 P.M., the Regiment had crossed the Risle: the Seine was now only about 30 kilometres to the northeast. Three hours later, the Regiment was within 10 kilometres of the river at La Haye Malherbe, stuck in traffic with units from the U.S. 2 Armoured Division. The 4th Division was dispersed in the confusion. (9) As night fell, Lt. Col Cromb/sent Lt. W.G. Booth and his A company platoon on a reconnaissance to the river with five SAR tanks. They met no opposition. By midday on the 26th, the Regiment had moved into the town of Criquebeuf sur Seine. (10) The shelling which immediately erupted from the heights beyond the river confirmed that any move across would not go unchallenged.

In the rush of the pursuit, Corps Commander Simonds was forced to issue verbal orders to his Divisional Commanders, one of them being 4 Division's newly-installed Maj.-Gen. C.G. Foster. He was ordered to seize a bridgehead across the Seine "by coup-de-main" between Criquebeuf and the Pont de l'Arche where the Argylls were established. (11) These orders were in stark contrast to the elaborate, though now-obsolete plans for the Seine crossing which had occupied First Canadian Army planners for over a year. (12)

The Regiment was then at the vanguard of II Canadian Corps. At its disposal was a troop of 20 mm. Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns from the 8th

Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, a platoon of the New Brunswick Ranger's machine guns along with the squadron of SAR tanks. Confident with this support, Cromb ordered the scout platoon across the 80 metre-wide river at 5:00 P.M.; their shovels doubled as paddles.(13) They soon returned to report that they had met no opposition on the far side. Major Crummer's company, along with C company under Capt. L. Snelgrove were waiting in the rear of the town preparing for a crossing into the town of Freneuse. In the late afternoon, Crummer was briefed by his CO; his orders were "to deny the enemy the use of the road running through Freneuse Sotteville, and Igoville and also...the use of the ground between Freneuse and the river where he could oppose the divisional crossing."(14) By about 8:00 P.M., the company began to cross using the same small boat the scouts had found earlier. In Crummer's estimation, it took two hours to get his men across. By 10:00 P.M. 26 August 1944, D company of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was the first Canadian infantry company across the river Seine.(15)

Under the light of the moon, the men pushed toward Freneuse: 16 platoon, under Lt. H.C. Paillefer dug in as best they could on the town's outskirts, looking east towards the towns of Sotteville and Igoville. The company headquarters and the other two platoons went into Freneuse near a chateau which housed a boys school. As Crummer remembers, the move into the town "had apparently been undetected which was amazing to me as the movement of 60-70 men across enemy territory at night is a precarious task."(16) By midnight, Crummer was to learn just how precarious a position it was when a runner from 16 platoon reported that Lt. Paillefer (who had been with the Regiment for only one week) and one other had been captured by a German patrol.(17) A confused firefight ensued in the town but fortunately, the darkness prevented either side from assessing the other's strength or position, and the Germans

retreated. Crummer's bridgehead had held.

To the south of the river, the bulk of the Regiment had contacted both the Argylls at the Pont de l'Arche to the east and the Algonquins in Martot, 3 kilometres to the west. The next morning, these two regiments were to pass through the Lincs' position and attack the heights beyond Sotteville and Igoville: the Algonquins were to assault Hill 88 while the Argylls were to take Hill 95. By the morning of the 27th, the tangled supply routes finally produced six storm boats and two class-9 ferries.(18) By 4:00 P.M. on the 27th, all of the "F" [Fighting] echelon vehicles of the Argylls and Algonquins were across the river. Unfortunately, this support couldn't compensate for the enemy's commanding view to the south. As one Linc who was in Criquebeuf that day recalls: "They laid the artillery down on us like you wouldn't believe."(19) By late afternoon, the Algonquins had taken Sotteville, but could not ascend Hill 88. To the east, the Argylls had not yet captured Igoville when their transport drove straight into the town: a Major, the Adjutant as well as the intelligence and signal staffs were captured. By the time the Argylls had captured the town (suffering 80 casualties in the process) their comrades had been evacuated.(20) Hills 88 and 95 were still held by the 17th Luftwaffe Field Division as night fell on 27 August.(21) The bulk of 10 Brigade was ferried across the Seine at Criquebeuf through that night: the rest of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was reunited with D company by midnight.(22)

The attack on the heights was resumed on 28 August. The Lincoln and Welland was ordered up Hill 88 while the Argylls continued their assault on Hill 95. Artillery and smoke concentrations preceded the attack, scheduled for 2:00 P.M. For three hours, an intense battle was waged under a blaze of heavy mortar and shell fire. The Regimental history describes the scene: "The enemy

had an unobstructed view of the companies as they advanced over ground providing practically no cover, and brought the fire of so many 88 millimetre guns to bear on the hill that many men later thought that its name was drawn from the enemy's guns rather than the height above sea level." (23) The Brigade history details the nature of the fighting that afternoon:

It must have been a breath-taking business to walk up that bare hillside into the very teeth of the enemy, and it was even more terrifying to look back from the ridge to the towns and the river. Every street in the town was almost within stone's throw, and all the former harbours and crossings on both sides of the river were in full view. It seemed unbelievable that the enemy should give up a defensive position offering such observation, and such strength. But de [sic] did, and departed with undue haste, leaving as an instance, a round dozen 8 cm. mortars set up, bombs and all in the woods above Igoville, their sites so well adjusted that the mere dropping of a bomb down the barrel meant a direct hit on one of the few streets in the town. (24)

The cost of reaching the hilltop was 30 men: 8 of them, including Capt. Snelgrove of A company were killed. The three days at the Seine brought the unit 52 casualties. As the Brigade history suggests, the Regiment was fortunate that the enemy was in retreat or the extent of its casualties could have been far greater.

On Tuesday 29 August, the Brigade pushed north through the cliffs southeast of Rouen. The Regiment had little trouble with the "small independent pockets" of enemy in the town of Ymare: it suffered a single casualty that day. (25) The convoys pushed north into Buchy the next day. By 8:00 P.M., a halt was ordered and the men began to prepare for a four day rest. These plans were cancelled two hours later as the final entry in the unit's August war diary suggests:

Orders were received at 2200 hr cancelling those previously issued: Linc & Welld R was to be prepared to move as of 0100 hr 1 Sep 44. The CO attended an O-Gp at 10 CIB, where he received instrs [instructions] for a thrust towards ABBEVILLE to profit by the disorganization of the enemy. (26)

September of 1944 began in an atmosphere of both triumph and disappointment. On 31 August, the Second British Army advance to Amiens on the Somme river had disrupted the next obvious German defensive line. To exploit this development, General Crerar was asked by General Montgomery to send II Canadian Corps to the area near Abbeville on the Somme so that the British could push on to Arras, then Belgium. In the planning rooms of SHAEF^(*), ~~this~~ news would have been received enthusiastically; for II Canadian Corps, particularly the "tired and depleted" forces of the 2 and 4 Divisions, such news would have brought only disappointment. (27)

September 1st was the first day of an almost continuous advance which ended only when the unit reached Belgium six days later. Beginning at 1:00 A.M., the convoy drove through the night, reaching Orival, 74 kilometres to the north, six hours later. (28) Private Svd Elford had been with the Regimental transport company since July, 1940. In September of 1944, Pte. Elford could be found at the end of the convoy, driving the sixty cwt. ammunition truck in the "F" echelon. He recalls that the first weeks of September were the most trying of his military career:

[We were] seven days in the seat of that truck. The only time you got out of there was when you stopped to get something to eat. Sometimes you didn't even get time to do that. Day and night. You would drive and the convoy would stop, your head would go down and the next thing you knew, they were waking you up to go again... All we had to follow was the little light [on the truck ahead]. It was pretty hard to stay awake when you were watching that little light. (29)

The convoy moved out of Orival on the afternoon of the 1st where it became ensnared with three British Divisions following the same route. As the Brigade reports: "Things were straightened out by time, and not by the hands of men." (30) By then, the men of the Regiment probably all felt like Cpl.

* SHAEF: Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force.

Hipel:

We moved like hell. We just hoped somebody knew where they were going. We were on the backs of the Sherman tanks riding so many to each tank... All wacked out and you get...on the back of those tanks. There's no way you could sleep because you're scared of falling off! It was just more or less push, push, push.(31)

Another long night was spent on the road to Airaines, which was reached by 5:00 A.M. on the 2nd. The Regiment was now 12 kilometres south of the Somme River. Before entering the town proper, Lt. Col. Cromb decided to first "dust up" the town with some artillery and mortar fire, despite assurances from both the local citizenry and the acting brigade command that Airaines was clear of enemy. Reports that a British officer had been blown up while driving through the town during the night made the CO suspect that Airaines was not yet completely liberated. The unit stayed in Airaines until the afternoon, where it probably received a cool reception from its war-weary citizenry.(32)

At 3:00 A.M., 3 September, the Regiment prepared to cross the Somme River at Abbeville: "No enemy opposition was met in crossing." The Regiment spent the next two days on the grounds of an estate near the town of Yaucourt-Bussus, east of Abbeville. The unit's rear echelons came up on the 4th "to service the companies"; it was a brief respite to the "push, push, push" of the previous days.(33)

When orders came down at 10:00 P.M., 5 September to continue the Brigade's advance through Northwest France into Belgium, few men would have been surprised. The remaining first generation of the Regiment were then experienced in the ways and demands of the military:

Did you ever hear the expression, 'To have to is a great master?' I think everybody just pulled on that idea. They felt, 'Hey, I've got to survive. I've got to get my butt going here.' And I think everybody pulled together and did the very best they could...Nobody expected...[the] weather conditions, the hedgerows, the farm houses, the obstacles...Nobody had any idea that this was going to happen to them. It was just one of those things that just had to be done and the guys went out and did it.(34)

It was a former CSM who said: "If you stay alive a week, you're learning all the time and you've got a good chance of staying alive." (35) Surviving a month of some of the fiercest fighting of the War had taught this first generations a lot. Since August, these men had learned to cope with the incessant noise and atmosphere of battle. As one sergeant recalls: "The noise, you pretty well get used to...[as] there would usually be a barrage all the time; either their artillery or our artillery." (36) The constant danger of enemy shelling prompted these men to use old doors or even grave stones, anything that was available, to cover their slit trenches. (37)

Other than the 'dreaded 88', the nebelwerfer or 'Moaning Minnie' was perhaps the best remembered piece of enemy artillery because of its distinctive sound which one American private compared to "the bark of a seal, or like someone scratching his fingernails across a piece of tin." One Linc remembers believing that it was a new German secret weapon. (38) As intimidating as this weapon might have been to the uninitiated, it did have a consistent pattern of fire, making it one way which always distinguished reinforcements from more experienced personnel. As Private Jack 'Smokey' Barkwill, a signaller, remembers:

I didn't mind the Moaning Minnies too bad because when you heard them come off, you would count so much. You'd get down in your slit trench and count to six. If they were still whining, either they were short or over. If they're going to hit you, they would be in below the count of six. I remember a lot of the replacements. They [the guns] would go off. We'd count to six and we'd stand up and they'd be as scared as hell. You knew what was happening. (39)

Small arms fire seems to have been much less feared among the infantry; an attitude perhaps explained by one Linc when he suggests that "They had to get you pretty dead on to get you [with small arms fire], but the shells, they could come [from] anywhere." (40) Such attitudes seems typical of infantrymen in general even though studies of these matters conclude that machine guns

were far more dangerous than either artillery or mortar fire.(41) The view of the battlefield from the statistician's desk is far different than that from the slit trench.

The most useful weapon employed by this first generation was its instincts, forged out of training, common sense and bitter experience:

After a while, it don't matter what people think, you do what's best for yourself. You hit a wall or you hit a ditch and you get up and look around after. I mean, the brave guys didn't last; when I'm talking about being brave, I mean being foolish.(42)

Quick decisions and reactions were needed when one was exposed to the "face of battle." A former rifle company sergeant gives an example:

When men come marching down a road that I know is enemy territory, I never give them any chance. [I] just shoot. They shouldn't be there. You don't give them that chance. Pitch dark, you can't see a hand in front of you, so how are you going to distinguish friend from foe? You don't. You just surmise that they're enemy.(43)

Those who lasted in the support companies were equally cautious, as a sergeant from the carrier platoon remembers:

As we were progressing up the road, we would spray the ditches if we weren't sure. Anything that looked suspicious at all, we would fire. In fact, we set the farms on fire and the houses. If we saw a haystack, and we thought there was any chance of somebody being in there, we would set the haystack on fire, because every fifth round [of ammunition] was a tracer.(44)

This experience was not lost on the officers who survived the first month for they soon learned that they were just as vulnerable (if not more so) to the dangers of battle than those they led. Some felt that they drew nearer to their men in the face of a common danger for as one company commander recalls, "the same bullet can get either one of you."(45) Another remembers going to considerable lengths to resemble one of lesser rank to avoid the unwanted attentions of enemy snipers:

I carried a rifle and 50 rounds around my neck, shaved off my moustache, wiped out my rank cloth crown with oil and mud, rolled up my trousers and wore issue boots. I looked like a private and I'm sure that saved my life.(46)

These seemingly trivial details do much to illustrate the unique behaviour of those who endured the vast array of dangers of the battlefield.

The Allied pursuit continued as Brussels fell to the British on 3 September, Antwerp on the 4th. On this day, General Simonds ordered II Canadian Corps to "continue its pursuit to the River Schelde" and to "destroy or capture all enemy south of the West Schelde and within First Canadian Army boundaries." (47) As events would subsequently show, these orders were to be difficult to fulfill in view of the conflicting demands and dwindling resources which would plague First Canadian Army for the next month and a half.

The effect these orders would have on the Lincoln and Welland Regiment would, as usual, be indirect but pervasive. The area of western Belgium which it would occupy was in sharp contrast to the regions of France through which the first generation was then travelling. The western Belgian landscape is flat and barren; the horizon is interrupted only by the farms, villages and tall, evenly spaced poplars which border the area's numerous canals. These waterways would replace the French hedgerows as the major geographical and tactical feature of the battleground. With supply lines then stretched from Normandy, shortages were to also have an effect on the pace of battle. So too would the issue of infantry reinforcements.

On Wednesday 6 September 1944 at 11:20 A.M., the Regiment moved off in the Divisional convoy, heading northeast on the D928. The Division's orders were to pursue the enemy to the Belgian town of Eekloo. (48) Lieutenant-Colonel Cromb, weakened by malaria, rode in the Regimental ambulance at the rear of the convoy. The Second-in-Command, Major L.H. Young assumed command while the 17th Battery Commander, Major Clement acted as a liaison officer. (49) The string of vehicles made good time through the long, rolling valleys of

northwest France, reaching St. Omer, 80 kilometres north of Abbeville, by nightfall. There, another blown bridge forced the convoy to halt, but only after an error in traffic control sent the Regiment through the town three times. At 10:00 P.M., the troops debussed and marched 19 kilometres in the cool, night rain until the transport could cross the Aa canal northwest of the town.(50) During that night, the march passed the remains of a V1 launching site; a point worthy of mention only because the last V1 was fired at London that day.(51) The cold, wet and tired men who passed by knew nothing of this.

By 2:00 A.M., 7 September, the vehicles "caught up with the marching troops" and the Regiment continued into Belgium, crossing the border at Oostkapel. The next day, the first Divisional obstacle was met just south of the historic city of Bruges--the Ghent Canal. Though few would realize it at the time, the arrival of these Canadian units at the canal "marked the end of a speedy advance and the beginning of a long period of operations against strong opposition, when little ground gaining was possible."(52)

Since leaving the Abbeville area, the Division had been divided into two Brigade strength battle groups so that a better balance of armour, artillery and infantry could be attained for the push into Belgium. As Moncel Force, (consisting of 4 Armoured Brigade and the Algonquins) pushed toward Bruges itself, Stewart Force (named for the acting head of 10 Brigade, Lt. Col. Stewart of the Argylls) was to cross the waterway south of Bruges to establish a bridgehead in the town of Moerbrugge.

The Argylls made the initial attack on the evening of 8 September, sending three companies across the 20 metre wide canal in two salvaged punts. As the Argyll war diarist later wrote: "Apparently it was considered that the crossing would be a routine matter since no boating material was brought up and no serious artillery program was laid down."(53) The question of supply

soon became a serious concern once it was discovered that the Germans were determined to defend this position. The degree of resistance first met that night was a surprise even though Ultra decrypts intercepted the day before confirmed that the retreating 15th Army had been ordered to defend the Scheldt pocket to the last.(54) As the men of the Argylls and Lincs were to find in this, the first test of German canal defense lines, clearing the Scheldt pocket was not going to be a 'routine matter'.

According to the Argyll's outdated maps, Moerbrugge was a mere "scattering of buildings." In fact, it was fairly well established: houses and shops crowded either side of the main street which led to the canal, where the engineers were hoping to rebuild a crossing. Three hundred metres from the canal, the street ended at an intersection where the local church (with its traditional high steeple) was situated. Since the open field southeast of the main street offered little cover to those coming up from the canal bank, even getting into the town was a difficult task. Once there, only extensive and costly house-to-house fighting would take Moerbrugge.(55)

The Argylls made considerable progress that first night under stiff shell fire which cost one company two officers and seventeen men before it was across the canal.(56) Even so, two companies managed to clear both sides of the main street to the church. The Germans soon stiffened their defenses by infiltrating along the canal which both cut the Argylls off from supplies and prevented the engineers from bridging the waterway. Eventually, the Argylls' C company, reduced to a strength of thirty, was surrounded and cut off on the left side of the main street near the church. An anti-tank gun set up at the main intersection fired down the main street and prevented this company from reaching the other Argyll positions.(57)

The Lincolns crossed into the bridgehead in the early morning of 9 September, using the one remaining boat from the night before. Major Crummer's company crossed first, some 200 yards east of the main street. Enemy machine gun positions along the canal bank made for "very slow" progress, but eventually, all four rifle companies crossed and formed positions about 1000 yards east of the church along the road leading out of town. Throughout the night, the enemy counterattacked repeatedly under an intensive artillery barrage. As the Regimental war diary pointed out: "The big question was supplies. As no headway could be made in building the bridge, supplies including food and ammunition had to be taken across by boat."(58) Major Crummer remembers that each man went across with twice the normal ammunition: "everybody carried a hundred rounds around their throats and we had the men carry a couple of cartons of small arms ammunition."(59) Once forward, the ammunition had to be carefully conserved; an incredible prospect considering the tenuous position in which these men were found. Crummer's company headquarters was in a beet root storage building just in back of his forward platoon. His orders were clear: "Now we haven't got much ammunition... Make every damn shot count. Wait until you're sure."(60)

With the counterattacks continuing throughout the day, there were plenty of opportunities to make 'every shot count': "We were lacing the hell out of the hedgerows. You'd see a section of men go in one end of the hedgerow and two men come out the other end... You knew you were getting someone."(61) These hedgerows were defensive barriers for both sides, as Ken Hipel recalls: "We got across there and were moving up along a hedgerow. We were moving along one side and the Jerries were moving down along the other side. Neither one knew the other was there. I never knew so many guys could keep so quiet."(62)

The Brigade war diarist reports that by the late afternoon of 9

September, the "infantry battalions had been able to clear up only a small bridgehead and small arms fire was still being directed on the proposed bridgehead." (63) Brigadier Jefferson (then well enough to assume command of 10 Brigade) was determined to complete the bridging that night. He ordered the bridgehead reorganized with the Argyll's Lt. Col Stewart in charge: the Lincs became responsible for the right side of the street; the Argylls were ordered to control the left side, where its C company had been holed up through the day. (64)

Details of the final hours of the battle are sketchy but it does seem clear that after the enemy's last counterattack at 7:00 P.M. (which came in from both flanks under "a heavy carpet of mortar-bombs") its forces were spent. (65) With the New Brunswick Rangers' machine guns covering the canal banks and a fresh supply of artillery ammunition finally providing protection from further counterattacks, the infantry again began to clear the town and consolidate the still-fragile bridgehead. (66)

By 7:00 A.M. 10 September, the first tanks of the SAR's were seen "rumbling up the tile, brick and glass littered street" of Moerbrugge (a scene which the brigade historian suggests brought "tears of relief" to the eyes of the besieged infantry.) (67) One company commander from the Lincs had a far different reaction when he met up with the tankmen who continued to reinforce the bridgehead throughout 11 September:

[After the battle] you're dirty...you haven't had very much sleep, no more than a couple hours of sleep at a time, and you haven't eaten too well because not too much of the rations may get up. You've sustained a bunch of casualties and held the bridgehead and then the armour comes rolling over and of course, the armour have been sitting back and frying eggs...They're all set to go...So they say 'Come on you guys, let's go after the Jerries' and you sort of say, 'Who, me? You go, I've been here for a couple of days...' (68)

The Regiment suffered a further 67 casualties (12 fatal) during those 'couple of days.' Major Crummer was among those wounded during this intense engagement. Three Military Medals and one Military Cross were awarded to members of the Regiment for this battle; a second Military Cross was awarded a member of the 15th Field Regiment when he took command of Crummer's company. (69) One unheralded hero of the Regiment was Pte. C.G. Sherman, a bren gunner with D company. As John Reeve recalls, Sherman paid the highest price for the defense of his section:

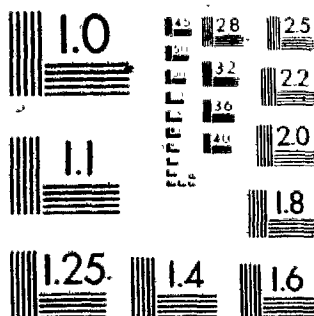
He just picked up his Bren gun, got out of the trench and he just stood in the middle of the road...[and] stopped the whole counterattack all by himself. And then a sniper got him from the side...I went over and grabbed him and he died in my arms. But the last thing he said was, 'Is there anybody on my Bren?' This is something they trained a Bren gunner. If you get hit or hurt, always make sure that somebody's got your Bren gun. (70)

On 11 September, the Brigade moved beyond Moerbrugge to expand the bridgehead north of the Ghent Canal. The Lincs were to advance a further 2 kilometres beyond the canal towards the towns of Lekkerhoek and Veldkapel. Major Baldwin's A company led the advance in carriers, supported by tanks. They were stopped some 700 yards short of Lekkerhoek by "very heavy MMG fire, from front and flanks..." as the enemy "had been unexpectedly slow in withdrawing." (71) The men crept into Lekkerhoek under Major McCutcheon's command after Major Baldwin fell wounded from sniper fire. (72)

The ground over which they advanced concealed far more than just human defenders. Private Dunton drove the acting CO, Major Young, forward to A company headquarters that day but a destroyed tank blocked the road ahead. It could have been easily bypassed by way of the shallow ditches on the roadside. Instead, they decided to walk. Soon after, Dunton met two comrades in a bren carrier which they had all shared until it had overturned during the pursuit. As he later wrote of that day:

After parking the car, I walked to the road, and "B" company

2



carrier, with my old comrades. C.S.M. McIntyre, and Private Evers, drove along. We waved to each other, and exchanged greetings. They proceeded up the road, took the ditch to the left of the burned out tank, and hit a mine. C.S.M. McIntyre was blown fifteen feet up, and draped over the limb of an elm tree. The driver had his feet blown off, and his arm also. Both died instantly... (73)

Mines were to become a prominent danger as the Regiment advanced into areas where the Germans had had time to establish better defenses. This day, seventeen men of the Regiment were casualties in what was supposed to be a relatively routine advance; eight of them were killed.

In the two days following the capture of Moerbrugge, the Canadian bridgehead was increased to a radius of about 6 kilometres which forced the Germans north of the Leopold Canal. (74) Moncel Force had suffered far fewer casualties than in Stewart Force during this time. It had entered Bruges unopposed after the Germans evacuated the town on 12 September. (75) On that day, General Simonds issued new orders in light of the increasing demands being placed on First Canadian Army prior to the ill-fated Allied push into eastern Holland (Operation MARKET-GARDEN). The 4th Division was to continue to clear the 'pocket' by channelling its efforts onto an axis marked by Moerbrugge; Maldegam which lay just south of the Leopold Canal between Ghent and Bruges; and Breskens, then the centre of German evacuation operations across the estuary. (76)

On the night of 13-14 September, these orders were followed to a disastrous end when the Algonquins attacked across the Leopold Canal at Moerkerke, some 8 kilometres northwest of Maldegam. Despite evidence which showed that the Germans were preparing a strong defense, the Algonquins were committed "in the expectation that a sudden surprise crossing would keep the enemy on the move." (77) The Algonquin Regiment suffered over 140 casualties in the battle which failed to gain a bridgehead over the canal. The Generals

were slow to assess German intentions in the pocket. This cost 4 Division dearly. On 14 September, the Corp's new policy reflected its then serious manpower shortages. Henceforth, 4 Division "would maintain contact and exert some pressure without dissipating resources in driving out an enemy who might well be retreating." The pursuit was to continue, but with only limited involvement. (78)

For the Lincs (by no means the most depleted unit in the Division) such a statement merely confirmed what had developed into a very serious shortage of infantrymen. The monthly field returns for this period show that as of the week ending Saturday 26 August when the Regiment reached the Seine, the unit's strength had dropped from a normal establishment of 811 all ranks to 603; a loss of 209 or the equivalent of almost two rifle companies. Of these losses, 196 or almost 94 percent of them were classified as non-specialists and tradesmen; they being the core of the fighting arm of the organization. (79) By 28 August, reports from 11 Canadian Corps suggested that the other infantry battalions of 10 Brigade were facing similar losses, going into action with only three rifle companies. (80) Two weeks later, the situation had worsened. As of Saturday September 9, the unit strength was down a further 38 to 565. Its losses were listed at 247, 95 percent of which (234) were a part of the fighting establishment. (81) If the full fighting strength of the unit was between 400 and 500, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment which fought at Moerbrugge was half the fighting strength of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment which fought out of Bourgebus not five weeks before.

By 12 September, the Regiment was at its lowest establishment of the war with at least 300 fewer men than when it landed in France. On this day, Major McCutcheon's B company had a fighting strength of nineteen. It was combined with C company when the unit advanced to Sijsselle, a town 3 kilometres

northeast of Veldkapel. 6 kilometres due east of Bruges. Upon arriving at the town, they "found that the enemy had withdrawn." For the next two days, the Regiment was out of action and, as the war diarist remarked, some "Much needed rits [reinforcements] arrived." (82)

On Friday 15 September, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment came under the command of 4 Armoured Brigade and moved east in convoy to the outskirts of the town of Eekloo. Major Swayze was then back in command of D company after recovering from his injuries suffered south of Caen. He recalls that it was a "nice, bright" day with "nothing going on at all, as far as we were concerned... There was no firing or anything." (83) Lieutenant-Colonel Cromb had also resumed his command by this time and he was not intent on giving anything but the widest interpretation to the Corps orders. As Major Swayze remembers, the Regiment did not become heavily involved with the enemy then retreating out of Eekloo:

We got to the outskirts of Eekloo and one of the... resistance fighters came steaming out and said, 'Hurry, hurry. The Germans are just pulling away from the station on the other side of town.' Colonel Cromb said, 'That's excellent. If we stop here and have breakfast, they'll all be gone by the time we get in'... That's why Eekloo thinks we were wonderful because they didn't get smashed up at all. The Germans were on their way out... (84)

Just one battle casualty was sustained on that day. The Regimental history reports that "The civilian population... was so enthusiastic that it became almost impossible to conduct anything approaching a proper military occupation." (85) Private Reeve would certainly agree with this assessment:

Eekloo was the place where more than one Belgian lady sat behind a Bren gun and all the guys ate that night because I know the house we were in, we did that, and I heard of some others that did that. Our position was to watch this crossroad. They kept saying... [that they wanted the soldiers to come in to eat]... So they sat behind the gun and we went back into the kitchen and ate. They had all this stuff cooked up for us... (86)

Cromb also made a wise tactical choice. If he had followed the eager resistance man and stalked the enemy to the rail station, an artillery piece situated there would most surely have caused considerable casualties to his already weakened force.(87) Today, a plaque is affixed to the townhall in Eekloo commemorating the events of 15 September, 1944. It is a lasting tribute to a commanding officer's decision to stop for a late breakfast while the Germans beat a hasty retreat.

The next week was spent continuing the push east to the next Divisional objective, the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal.(88) On 16 September, the Regimental Headquarters was organized in Lembeke while the companies, acting as independent fighting patrols with tanks in support, cleared the surrounding towns of Kaprycke, Oost-Eekloo, Nieuwburg and Ertvelde. Two days later, Cromb Force, a raiding party of tanks and infantry "designed to look like the vanguard of a division in the advance," moved north toward the Dutch border.(89) There, they were to attack the town of Philippine which lay 12 kilometres to the north on the main German escape route to the port at Breskens. The force never reached Philippine. The raid was to have been a 'lightning thrust'; it lasted for three gruelling days which not only reaffirmed the enemy's determination to defend their positions, it also demonstrated the difficulties armoured advances incur over ground that is under two feet of water. A further twenty nine casualties were suffered over that week between 16 and 22 September.

By the 22nd, the Regiment was ordered back to Maldegem, a town which they had passed through on the 15th on the way to Eekloo. The demands on First Canadian Army during what was then the height of MARKET GARDEN meant that General Simonds' plan for clearing the Schelde pocket--Operation SWITCHBACK--was delayed. The 4th Division was to have pushed north of Antwerp

for this operation. Instead, it had to occupy the southern and eastern extremities of the pocket until 3 Division could be released from clearing the channel ports. It was a severe setback to SHAEF's plans. For the Regiment, this delay would be an opportunity to reorganize its ranks.

Maldegam marked the Brigade's western boundary during this period. About 2 kilometres to its north is the town of Strooburg, where the Leopold Canal converges with the Canal de Derivation de la Lys, a double canal to the west. For three weeks, the companies were rotated every three days between the canal positions and Maldegam. In town, the men could enjoy a shower, shave, change of clothes and even a movie at the local recreational centre. (90)

The four rifle companies were reorganized during this period. Major K.B. MacPherson, who had previously led the support company, took command of A company; Major McCutcheon remained with B company; Captain J.L. Dandy headed C company while Major Swavze remained with D company. When not keeping watch over the canal, the companies trained, attempting to incorporate the new men into the unit. These reinforcements were often ignorant of some of the techniques which the more experienced men then took for granted. Corporal Cliff Brown recalls one incident during this time which illustrates some of their deficiencies:

At the Leopold canal...the Germans broke through and attacked us. We were the reserve platoon. We had gotten some replacements. I was putting detonators in 36 grenades and handing them out because we couldn't fire...[as] our own men were in front. These fellows were throwing the grenades and not pulling the pins. They hadn't been trained. They didn't know they had to pull the pin to allow the grenade to go off. And the only way they would have done any damage to the German that was attacking us would be to hit them on the head with the grenade. Then I'd doubt if they would have done any damage. We went out and picked up all these grenades that had pins in them. (91)

To avoid these mistakes, each reinforcement was paired with an experienced man so that the multitude of 'trade secrets' could be passed on.

John Reeve recalls that this arrangement sometimes had unforeseen benefits:

They told us 'Each one take a man and teach him what you know,' because we were losing guys coming up that weren't familiar with a schmeizer firing; our shells going over; shells coming in; mortars; moaning minnies; things like that. I picked a big guy from New Brunswick, Skip McKinnon. He must have been six foot two if he was an inch. I taught him everything I knew. The funny thing about that was he was a guardian angel for the whole rest of the war. When the war was over, we were sitting in a pub. He'd come over and say, 'Is anybody bothering you?' I felt like I had a bodyguard the rest of the war. (92)

Clearly, bonds developed as these new men earned a place:

Some of them were green, some of them had a little knowledge of what went on, but they sort of fitted in. So, any time new people came up, they turned out pretty good for us. We didn't have too many clunkers. (93)

Daily training at a platoon or company level helped to develop the skills of coordination and training that the first generation had found so important during their inoculation into battle. One company commander recalls running street and house clearing drills for four to five hours a day, sometimes with the Germans within shouting distance. Those that led these drills were now 'blooded' and knew that they would need to depend on their inexperienced comrades once the battle was resumed. A former company commander tries to explain the problem:

It sounds easy for us sitting here. But, if you've been sleeping in a hole in the ground, you've been eating before first light...and you haven't had a chance to get cleaned up because you're fighting, you get a sort of mental exhaustion...You don't react as quickly, you do dumb things...Afterwards, you think 'How could I be so stupid?' Its because you're tired and you're under continuous stress...That's why you're training...Not...to do the thing right when you've been sleeping and eating, but when you're dog tired, bone weary and hungry...and you're nerves are really tense. And that's why you have to train guys like that. And that's what I would do with these guys... (94)

The time spent along the canal itself was relatively uneventful, but it offered a valuable opportunity for those unaccustomed to manning a position so close to a front. Even so, the war diaries for this period suggest that some "sporadic SA and mortar fire" was exchanged across the canal. (95) The bigger guns were also kept occupied bringing "harassing fire" [HF] down on anything that might be important to the enemy:

Every now and then, you would drop a bucket of shells on a crossroad, hoping that you might catch something. And if, from an observation post you spotted movement, for instance around a farm house, you went to work on the farm house, usually giving up when you had flattened it completely using both medium and field artillery. (96)

The second generation could have witnessed fine fighting patrols which preceded 3 Division's attack across the canal at the beginning of October. The best known of these patrols (Operation STYX) involved Capt. Dandy's C company. At 5:15 A.M. on 27 September, Dandy's men crossed the Leopold just east of St. Laurent, a village 6 kilometres east of Strooburg. His men were supported by an extensive arsenal which was carefully prepared and coordinated. It included the strength of the Divisional artillery and detachments of mortars, Bofors guns and armour. A diversion was also supplied by McCutcheon's and Swayze's companies to the west. Dandy's men slipped into the town of Moershoofde and captured 15 prisoners without sustaining a single casualty. By 7:00 A.M., Dandy's men had crossed back, but not before some of them had enjoyed a quick breakfast of bacon cooked by one surprised captive. By noon, the men were on their way to Bruges for a well-deserved recreation. As Dandy remembers, Operation STYX was planned and rehearsed well in advance: "There was absolutely nothing to it: it was just a piece of cake." (97) So it was again on the night of 3 October when Sgt. Cliff Skelding led three other scouts across the canal. In seven minutes, the men knocked out a machine gun nest, "shot up a six man patrol" and returned with three prisoners. (98)

Occasionally, things did go according to plan.

At 5:30 A.M. 6 October, elements of 3 Division's 7 Infantry Brigade attacked across the Leopold canal just east of Strooiburg. To cover the crossing, Capt. Martin headed an extensive flamethrowing operation. The WASP-type flamethrower, which was mounted on the back of a carrier and capable of firing a sheet of flame over fifty metres, was used to some effect. As Thomas Craigen recalls, an experienced soldier was no-less shocked when he was introduced to these sorts of weapons:

Well, when you first see it, Holy mackerel, it just scares the tar out you. And your first thought is "My God, I walk into a dug-out and there's people in there and I'm going to do this with them?" I'll tell you, it makes you think.... War may make a lot of people lose their compassion... but its hard to do. (99)

For the next ten days, the Regiment lived under a wall of nearly incessant shelling as its companies held the canal bank while 7 Brigade fought for a bridgehead. Few were idle as the mortar-men and gunners returned fire while the signallers tried to repair their lines. (100)

These cool and cloudy days marked the end of 4 Division's days in this area. The Regiment received new orders on the night of 16 October: it was to follow the MAPLE LEAF route to "the new area" north of Antwerp. (101)

The time spent in Maldegam and area was a time of renewal for the Regiment. It had entered the area dangerously short of manpower, its men exhausted after a relentless push of over 400 kilometres. Its stay there was an opportunity to incorporate inexperienced men into the ranks and to give them some idea of what lay ahead. By 14 October, the establishment of the Regiment was listed at 782, just 29 short of full strength.

CHAPTER III: NOTES

- 1 K.A. Hipel. Taped Interview. 19 January 1945.
- 2 Maj. R.L. Rogers. History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954). p. 163.
- 3 Col. C.P. Stacey. Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. 3: The Victory Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960). p. 280.
- 4 Rogers. Regimental History, p. 164; War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment. (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,104). 24 August 1944.
- 5 War Diary. L & W. 24 August 1944.
- 6 Maj. R.A. Paterson. A Short History: The Tenth Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hilversum, Netherlands: De Jong & Co., 1945). p. 31.
- 7 C.V. Hemphill. Taped Interview. 17 November 1983.
- 8 War Diary. L & W. 25 August 1944.
- 9 Terry Copp and Robert Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp (Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1984). p. 27.
- 10 War Diary. L & W. 26 April 1944; Rogers. Regimental History, p. 165.
- 11 Stacey. Victory Campaign, p. 287.
- 12 Copp and Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp, p. 27.
- 13 War Diary. L & W. 26 August 1944.
- 14 C.K. Crummer. "A Night in Freneuse." (Personal Account. Typewritten).
- 15 Stacey. Victory Campaign, p. 283.
- 16 C.K. Crummer. "Freneuse".
- 17 Rogers. Regimental History, p. 433; Crummer. "Freneuse".
- 18 War Diary. 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade. (PAC RG 24 Vol. 14, 156). 27 August 1944.
- 19 K.A. Hipel. Taped Interview. 19 January 1983.
- 20 Paterson. Brigade History, p. 32.
- 21 Stacey. Victory Campaign, p. 287.

22 No less than 20 'beetle' tanks were captured by the Regiment during this period. They resembled a miniature tank, but were filled with explosives and sent to their objectives by remote control. (Rogers, Regimental History, p. 166; War Diary, L & W, 26 August 1944.)

23 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 168; War Diary, L & W, 28 August 1944.

24 Paterson, Brigade History, p. 33.

25 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 187.

26 War Diary, L & W, 30 August 1944.

27 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 297-8.

28 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 169.

29 S.C. Elford, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.

30 Paterson, Brigade History, p. 33.

31 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

32 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 169.

33 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment, (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15, 104), 3 September 1944.

34 T. Craigen, Taped Interview, 27 June 1984.

35 A.E. Hills, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.

36 C.V. Hemphill, Taped Interview, 17 November 1983.

37 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983; R. Ross, Taped Interview, 9 April 1984.

38 John Ellis, The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II (Newton Abbot: David & Charles Ltd., 1980), p. 89; K.M. Dunton, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.

39 J.H. Barkwill, Taped Interview, 16 November 1983.

40 Ibid.

41 Half of all casualties from machine gun fire were fatal while only 20 percent of artillery casualties were fatal. Mortar fire was even less dangerous. (Ellis, Sharp End, p. 89.)

42 K.M. Dunton, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.

43 C.V. Hemphill, Taped Interview, 17 November 1983.

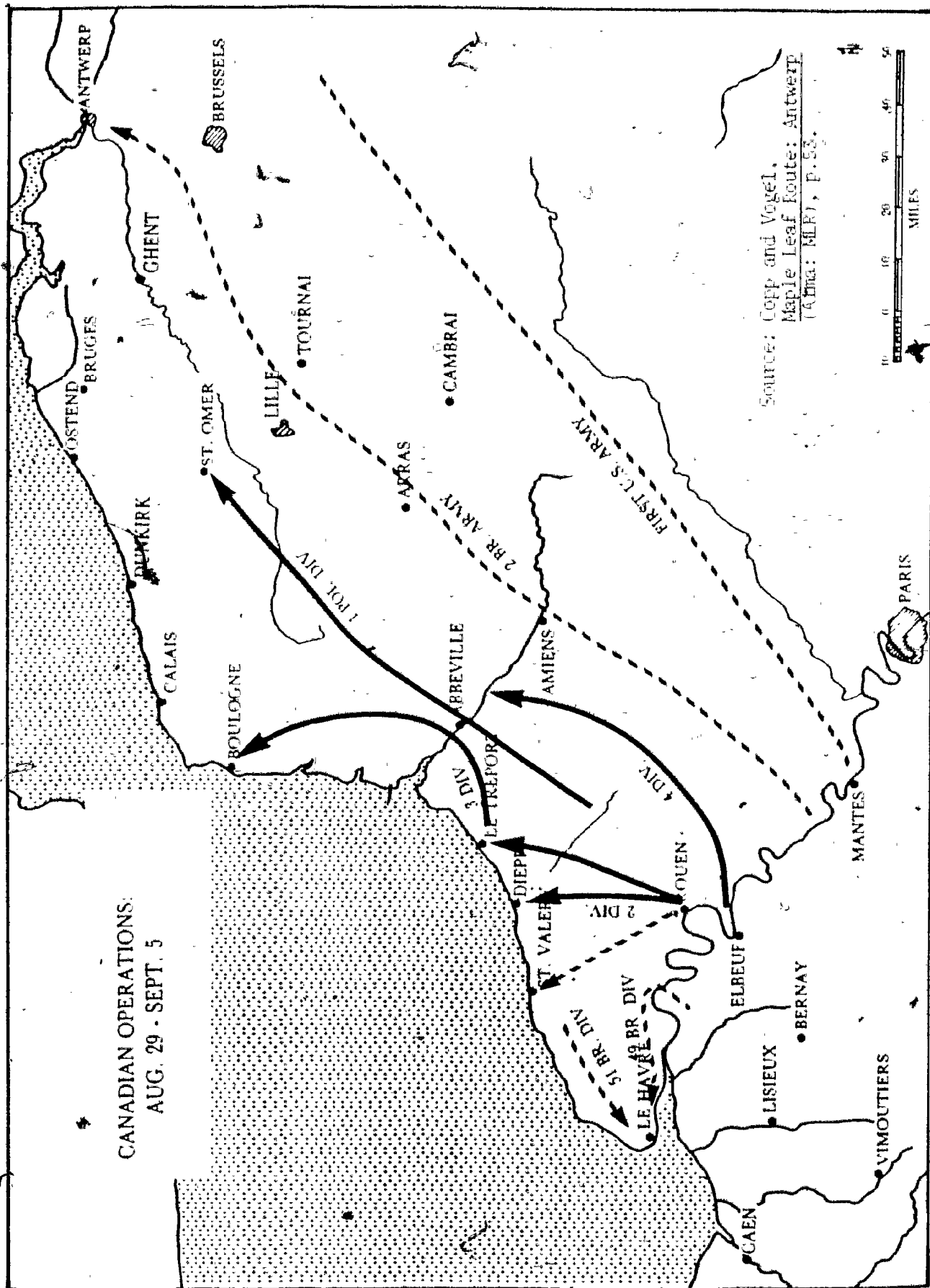
44 W.P. Leslie, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.

- 45 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 December 1983.
- 46 C.K. Crummer. Taped Interview. 13 June 1984.
- 47 "General Simonds Directive to Divisional Commanders." cited in Col. C.P. Stacey. "Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe 1944. Part V: Clearing the Channel Ports. 3 Sept. 44--6 Feb. 45" (Historical Section, Canadian Military Headquarters Report #184). p. 72.
- 48 Ibid., p. 73.
- 49 War Diary. L & W. 6 September 1944; J.C. Clement. Taped Interview. 31 October 1983.
- 50 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 171; War Diary. L & W. 6 September 1944.
- 51 Stacey. Report #184. p. 72; Paterson. Brigade History. p. 34.
- 52 Stacey. Report #184. p. 74.
- 53 War Diary. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada. (PAC 26-24 vol. 15. 005). 8 September 1944; Copp and Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp. p. 76; Stacey. Victory Campaign. pp. 326-7.
- 54 Copp and Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp. p. 70.
- 55 War Diary. A & S Highlanders. 8 September 1944.
- 56 Paterson. Brigade History. p. 35.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 War Diary. L & W. 9 September 1944; Rogers. Regimental History. p. 173.
- 59 C.K. Crummer. Taped Interview. 13 June 1984.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 K.A. Hipel. Taped Interview. 19 January 1983.
- 63 War Diary. 10 CIB. 9 September 1944.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 War Diary. A & S Highlanders. 9 September 1944.
- 66 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 173.
- 67 Paterson. Brigade History. p. 35.
- 68 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.

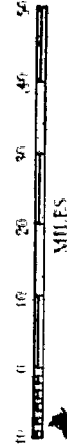
- 69 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 173.
- 70 J.E. Reeve. Taped Interview. 27 October 1983.
- 71 War Diary. L & W. 11 September 1944; Rogers; Regimental History. p. 174.
- 72 War Diary. L & W. 11 September 1944.
- 73 K.M. Dunton. "11 September 1944." (Personal Account: Typewritten).
- 74 Stacey. Report #184. p. 96.
- 75 Copp and Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp. p. 70.
- 76 Stacey. Report #184. p. 90.
- 77 Ibid.; p. 97.
- 78 Ibid.; p. 99.
- 79 "Monthly Field Returns." War Diary. L & W. September 1944.
- 80 Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 297.
- 81 "Monthly Field Returns." War Diary. L & W. September 1944.
- 82 War Diary. L & W. 12-13 September 1944.
- 83 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 176.
- 86 J.E. Reeve. Taped Interview. 27 October 1983.
- 87 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 88 Stacey. Report #184. p. 99.
- 89 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 177.
- 90 War Diary. L & W. 24 September 1944.
- 91 C.R. Brown. Taped Interview. 22 February 1984.
- 92 J.E. Reeve. Taped Interview. 27 October 1983.
- 93 T. Craigen. Taped Interview. 27 June 1984.
- 94 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.
- 95 War Diary. L & W. 27 September 1944.

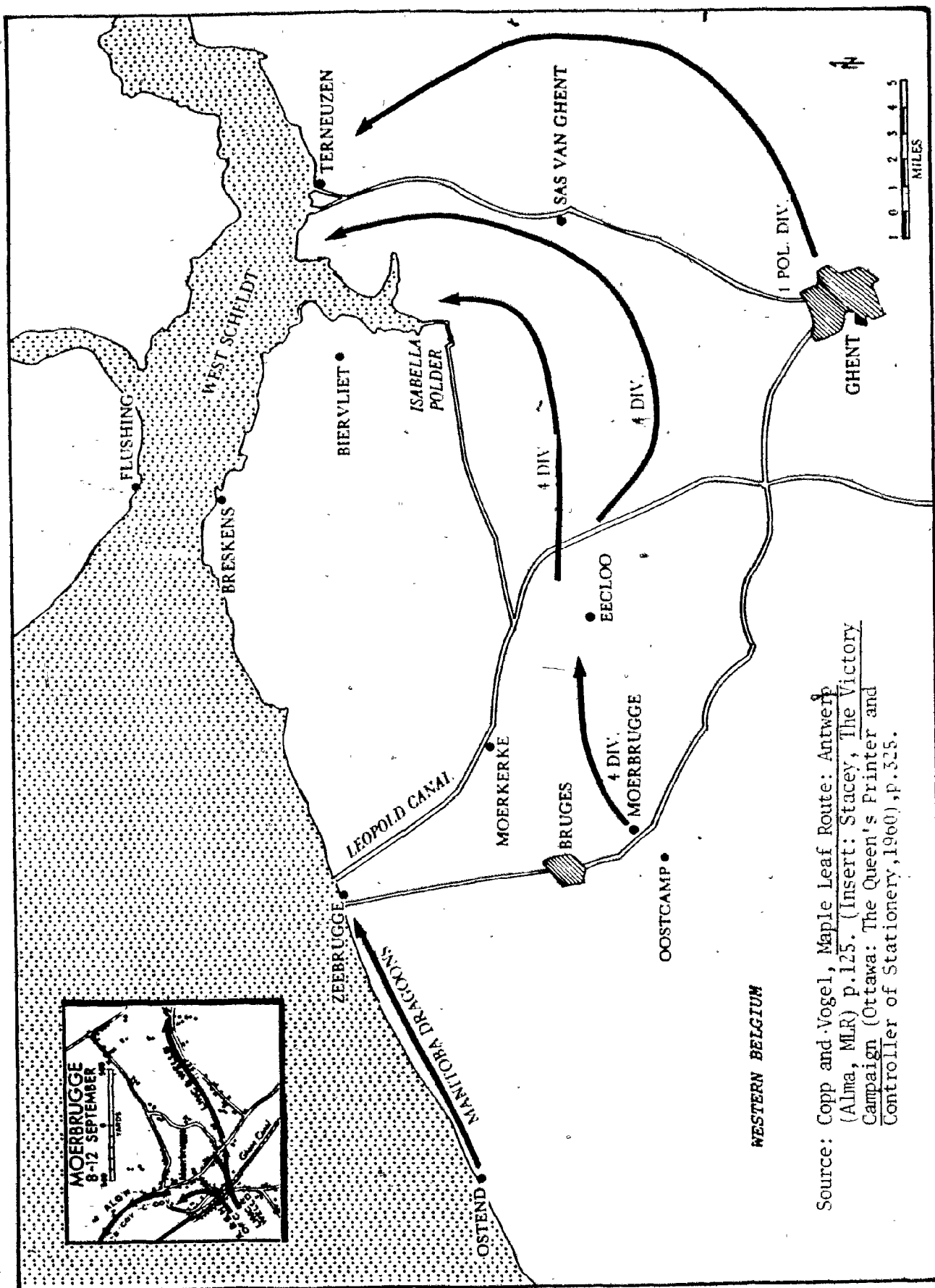
- 96 J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983.
- 97 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983; War Diary, L & W, 26-27 September 1944.
- 98 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 181.
- 99 T. Graigen, Taped Interview, 27 June 1984.
- 100 J.H. Barkwill, Taped Interview, 16 November 1983; D.W. Fowle, Taped Interview, 18 November 1983.
- 101 War Diary, L & W, 16 October 1944.

CANADIAN OPERATIONS:
AUG. 29 - SEPT. 5



Source: Copp and Vogel,
Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp
(Attn: MFR), p. 93.





Source: Copp and Vogel, Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp
 (Alma, MLR) p.125. (Insert: Stacey, The Victory
Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and
 Controller of Stationery, 1960), p.325.

CHAPTER IV: INTO HOLLAND

TOP SECRET M 532
16-10-44
Copy no. 3

21 Army Group GENERAL OPERATIONAL SITUATION AND DIRECTIVE

General Situation

1. The free use of the port of Antwerp is vital to the Allied cause, and we must be able to use the port soon. 2. Operations designed to open the port will therefore be given complete priority over all other offensive operations in 21 Army Group, without any qualification whatsoever. 3. The immediate task of opening up the approaches to the port of Antwerp is already being undertaken by Canadian Army and good progress has been made. The whole of the available offensive power of Second Army will now be brought to bear also....

First Canadian Army

4. Will concentrate all available resources on the operations designed to give us free use of the port of Antwerp. 5. The right wing of the Army will be pulled over towards Antwerp, so that its operations can exert a more direct influence on the battle for possession of the area Bergen op Zoom--Roosendaal--Antwerp. Possession of this area is necessary in order to enable us to operate freely westwards along the Beveland isthmus....

General

16 I must impress on Army Commanders that the early use of Antwerp is absolutely vital. The operations now ordered by me must be begun at the earliest possible moment; they must be pressed with the greatest energy and determination; and we must accept heavy casualties to get quick success....

B.L. Montgomery
Field-Marshal C-in-C 21 Army Group
(1)

Operation MARKET GARDEN had failed. Field-Marshal Montgomery had to concede that his plans for a thrust into the German heartland were impossible without the resources then only available from the port of Antwerp. The port had fallen to the Allies forty two days earlier but its approaches (bounded by Walcheren and South Beveland islands to the north and the mainland from which the 15th army had been escaping) were not yet cleared. The battle for the Scheldt had indeed begun in early October, but contrary to Monty's view that "good progress had been made", 3 Canadian Division was still being strongly opposed in the Breskens pocket while 2 Division had met ferocious resistance north of Antwerp.

As a result of Montgomery's directive, 4 Division was immediately ordered north of Antwerp where it would come under the command of I British Corps. Beginning 20 October, the Division was to become part of a four division push north into Holland where it would "be used as a hammer to loosen the German formations confronting the 2nd Division." (2)

The Regiment moved out of Maldegem on 17 October, following the CLUB route to Ghent, the LONDON route to Antwerp, then the MAPLE LEAF route north. (3) That night, the bulk of the Regiment stayed in Westmalle, 20 kilometres northeast of Antwerp while Swayze's D company was ordered to Maria ter Heide, the starting point of the Divisional attack (codenamed SUITCASE) to be launched two days hence. There Swayze's men met with the South Alberta Regiment which, together with the Algonquins, had been supporting 2 Division's eastern flank for the previous ten days. The next morning, a patrol of one platoon under Lt. W.K. Pugh and two troops of SAR tanks was sent north to capture prisoners so as to assess the strength of the opposition in the area. Major Swayze proudly recalls the tactics employed that morning; tactics which illustrated the vulnerability of the armour in such heavily wooded terrain:

We put the infantry...on the left and the tanks over on the

right and the infantry would go until they were fired on. As soon as they were fired on, they were to go to ground and then the tanks started to fire, giving covering fire and moving in as though they were going to rush through them. You couldn't get the tanks to go roaring through because there were anti-tank guns [in the woods]... I don't care how good the troops are. You get a bunch of tanks firing 75 mm. into your position, they won't move. We had one platoon rush in, pick out 14 prisoners and put them on the back of the tanks and got them out... We didn't lose a man. That was a classic. That's one of the situations where everything went the way it was supposed to...(4)

The SAR war diarist reported that the prisoners were a "mixed lot" of artillery and infantrymen who had been "dished out...without any bigger weapons than a MG, last war rifles and a few mortars."(5)

This was doubtless reassuring intelligence as the Division prepared its Brigade groups for a two-axis advance toward Esschen, a town some 15 kilometres north on the Dutch/Belgian border. Lieutenant-Colonel Cromb learned of the plan at a Brigade O-group on 18 October. The 10th Infantry Brigade, with the British Columbia Regiment's tanks attached, were to advance along the road leading from Maria ter Heide through the town of Achterbroek to Esschen. On the left flank, 4 Armoured Brigade, with the Argylls under their command, were to follow a railline which came up from Antwerp, passing through Esschen. To the left of the Divisional advance was the battle-weary 2 Division; to the right, the British 49th (West Riding) Division.(6)

On 19 October, the bulk of the Regiment moved to Maria ter Heide. Its immediate objective was to have been the dense woods to the east of the main Esschen road. As Swayze's patrols had found small prongs protruding from the soil there, Lt. Col. Cromb decided to avoid the dangerous German schumines. He chose instead to aid the BCR's whose responsibility was west of the highway, a Belgian military training site and airfield known as Camp de Brasschaet.(7) A water tower just south of the Camp offered an ideal view of the battlefield. There, the next days' plans were laid. With a combined force of armour and

infantry, the open country around the airfield was to be cleared first. The forces were to then turn east towards the highway where the Algonquins would be contacted. (8)

Friday October 20--Day One of Operation SUITCASE--was overcast and rainy. At 7:30 A.M., A company and a squadron of BCR tanks led the way across the start line under a wave of Typhoons, the gunner's smoke shells leading them to their targets. (9) Captain Herbert Owen Meredith Lambert led A company that morning. A California native in a Canadian unit, Lambert was a "real Jekyll and Hyde character," as one fellow company commander recalls: "He could be the most polished gentleman, and the next minute, he'd be a real dock walloper in the Merchant Marine." (10) That morning, Lambert's party was following a railline along the western edge of the airstrip from where they were supposed to turn east and attack towards a hangar and the highway. They didn't turn. B and C companies, still under McCutcheon and Dandy respectively, were following behind and saw Lambert's error. McCutcheon led his men to the hangars and, without armoured support, fought a very severe battle in which one counterattack was allegedly "driven off with the bayonet." (11) Dandy returned to the Battalion Headquarters to inform his Commanding Officer of Lambert's predicament. Major Swayze was also at the Headquarters, with his company in reserve. He recalls listening to the wireless conversation between Cromb and Lambert, who was then arguing with the squadron leader about their location. He recalls hearing Lambert reporting: "Hello Sunray. Am having an argument with iron horses [tanks] as to where we are." Swayze continues: "Tank people are well trained, they know where they are and I remember Cromb saying, 'Hello Sunray. Wherever iron horses says you are, you are.'" What Lambert did next does indeed sound "too Hollywoodian to be true" but as one simply explains "Lambert was that way." (12) Knowing he then had to head east, Lambert put his

company on an extended line with the tanks spaced between. They then turned and charged. This account of the move by John Dunlop illustrates how Lambert earned his flamboyant reputation:


It was open country, about 300 yards. Lambert never wore a tin hat, at least I never saw him wear a tin hat. He always wore a beret and at this time he had a big wool scarf around his neck. I think it was white. He was crazy: he was nice, but he was crazy.

And he got up there and he gave the order to get them going up in this direction and then turn right. And he turned the whole damn company around ten feet apart and walked over and started firing into this bush and they never lost a man, and they took about 50 or 60 prisoners. Guys are standing there wondering what the hell's going on. And Lambert [is] going across the line up and down, yelling "peanuts, popcorn. Get your peanuts here..." (13)

The airfield (and Lambert's reputation) were secured by the afternoon. The companies reorganized at the highway near Groote Heide and then moved north until darkness set in at 5:30 P.M. Patrols contacted the Algonquins at midnight. The Regiment suffered 28 casualties (5 fatal) this day.

Saturday 21 October was cloudy and cool. The previous day's rain had churned the sandy soil into mud, a chronic problem which would plague the armour in the coming days. In the early morning, the Algonquins had passed through the Lincs' position. Bomb and mine craters in the roadway kept the engineers busy and the advance was slow. Just before dusk, the Regiment reached Foxemaat, between Achterbroek and Kruisstraat, some 10 kilometres south of Esschen where it was to have spent the night. The Divisional Command had other ideas. By 5:30 P.M., the unit received new orders which would "place the emphasis on speed." (14) Esschen was to be taken by a two-Battalion attack with the Algonquins on the right and the Lincoln and Welland on the left. They would advance on foot as it was felt that the tanks and flails would only slow the operation. Brigadier Jefferson was determined to move the armour forward however, even if they were to sustain heavy losses along the way:

The flails stated that they could not advance along the road as the thrashing chains could not detonate mines buried beneath the hard, cobblestone (sic) surface, and therefore the tank itself



would be blown up. Brigadier Jefferson quietly thought for a minute; and then said, 'You will use flails. If the first tanks blows up, push it off to the side, and send another up, and keep on sending them up, until you reach Esschen by first light.' He looked at the tank commander and said, 'that goes for the tanks too.' (15)

The infantry's attack began at 10:00 P.M. with Dandy's C company leading toward the Roosendaal Canal north of Acterbroek. The Brigade war diarist recorded that "few reports of the program were available by midnight" but the unit's "Progress...went according to plan." (16) The Regiment met considerable opposition on its front. This was Lt. Dunlop's first action since recovering from wounds sustained at the Seine crossing. He remembers that night of October 21/22 very well as he was wounded a second time, by one of his own corporals:

In the middle of the night, Dandy and I sat over a map, and it was just sort of a farm trail that went up maybe two or three miles. So guess who was front man? Me. Dandy thought it would be a good baptism of fire. I hadn't been in for a while... Charlie Chernside was along... on the other side of the road. I led up when we got into this little town of Zandstratt... And I walked up and stepped on the cobblestone... and... a blast of machine gun fire came roaring across and it bounced off the pavement about 10 feet in front of me... [It was then when Dunlop was shot. Sergeant Rick Pirie continued the advance]... Rick got about 200 yards up that road and the Germans were alive and they just bored the hell out of him. They just laid him right on the road there, tore him all to pieces and two or three fellows with him... I'd have been there dead. Nobody would have known. We were expendable... (17)

Sergeant Pirie had won the Military Medal at Moerbrugge on 9 September. His death, along with the loss of Lt. Dunlop, marked the beginning of a serious depletion of leaders that would especially plague Dandy's company in the coming days.

A night time advance was dangerous though it sometimes paid unexpected dividends. This was the case later that night when Major Swayze, along with Sgt. Percy Howse and Pte. Jake Campus patrolled forward to what they thought was a deserted barn. As Swayze recalls:

I went over to the barn and opened the barn door and I think the biggest German to ever join the German army was standing there.

God, he looked about 8 feet tall. Then they started coming out and the first thing you know we had. I think it was 55 of them lined up against the barn. Fortunately, Howse could talk. I was so frightened, my tongue wouldn't move. (18)

The Algonquins had met less opposition through the night and were just south of the town by 4:00 A.M., 22 October. Their move into Esschen was delayed until 6:15 A.M. when the artillery supporting the Lincs' advance finally stopped "steadily falling on the town." (19) The Lincs and the Algonquins took Esschen by noon on the 22nd: "Complete surprise seemed to have been obtained." For the next day and a half, the unit stayed in Esschen under "continual enemy shelling and mortaring." (20) Although patrols were dispatched from the town, the stay in Esschen was a brief respite from the previous days actions.

Divisional intelligence summaries of the first stages of Operation SUITCASE were not surprisingly consistent with the Regiment's experiences. The enemy met up to that time were mostly reformed units of varied quality: "Enemy in varying strengths have held out in woods, fighting stubbornly to a point, and then giving up en masse." (21) This was certainly the case on 21 October when stretcher bearers were reported to have accepted the surrender of "fully armed enemy parties" while tending to casualties. As the Regimental war diary relates, "The PW were very cheerful about the matter and when ordered aboard a Jeep remarked: 'Is Goot, No'." (22) Few could quarrel with the final intelligence assessment of the enemy met up to that time: "The entire picture is one of remnants reinforcing remnants, inadequate reserves and indifferent morale." (23) The Regiment faced more difficult opposition in the coming days.

The bulk of the Regiment remained in Esschen on Monday 23 October while patrolling continued north and east of the town. Lambert's 8 platoon was ordered just north of the town where they were fired on from a pillbox camouflaged as a haystack. The scouts met similar resistance later in the

afternoon. Only six casualties were sustained this day, in action dramatically described by the Regimental war diarist: "The battalion in its customary spear-head position spent a very gruelling day frustrating the strong enemy attempts to blunt the tip of the spear." (24) The bloody action of the next two days would defy even the most eloquent of chroniclers.

Tuesday, 24 October was cold and dull as 4 Armoured Brigade launched their attack northwest of Esschen toward the town of Wousche Plantage. Initial reports were optimistic, suggesting that "surprise had been obtained." In fact, the advance had immediately become vulnerable to the mortars and guns which covered the approaches to the town. The Argylls lost two company commanders in their attack that morning. (25) By midday, Dandy's company was ordered through 8 platoon's position to reinforce the faltering Argyll attack. They were to "attack across open country to a wood 2000 yards away" in the direction of Wousche Plantage. Dandy's men were aided by one troop of BCR tanks, twice as many Crocodile flamethrowers and some extensive support from the mortarmen and gunners. (26) The enemy allowed Dandy's two leading platoons to move to within 500 yards of the woods near the town before opening up with 88 mm. gun fire. Lieutenant W.E. Edwards was leading the first platoon and had actually made it to the woods when a counterattack came in. He and ten others were immediately taken prisoner. Edwards had rejoined the Regiment just 3 hours before with a commission. (27) The rest of the company spent that afternoon under intense shell fire, unable to move. With the armour bogged down, Dandy called for reinforcements. Finally, at 4:00 P.M., he asked for permission to withdraw. Fifteen minutes later, an artillery smoke screen allowed the tattered company to retreat. (28)

The Regiment suffered 44 casualties that day: 9 were fatal. Although the casualty lists do not specify each man's company, as there were no other

companies or platoons listed in action that afternoon, it is clear that Dandy's company suffered the vast majority of these casualties. If he had started this day with a strength of over 100 all ranks, Dandy's company had been cut in half in a few hours. Two more lieutenants and a corporal were lost to Dandy that Tuesday afternoon; a day which he remembers as a "blood bath." (29)

The casualties for 25 October totalled 45, including the same number dead as the day before. On this day, the suffering was spread throughout the Regiment as its components were dispatched to aid both Brigade groups. While the Armoured Brigade continued to fight for the area around Wousche Plantage, the Infantry Brigade group headed 6 kilometres south to the border town of Huijbergen, which the SAR's had reached the day before. (30) From these points, the Division was to close on a new objective which had been disclosed in a Corps meeting that morning: the ancient coastal city of Bergen op Zoom. (31)

On this cloudy and cool Wednesday, Major McCutcheon and Captain Lambert's companies were concerned only with Wousche Plantage: a village which shared its name with a thick coniferous forest which bounded Bergen op Zoom from the east and southeast. Their two companies had been placed under the Canadian Grenadier Guards' command to relieve the Argylls; Sergeant Skelding's scouts were also in the area under the Lake Superior Regiment. (32) Few specific details of their battle for the town are available from the official sources. They do suggest that it was a battle of considerable intensity. Patrols out that morning captured one prisoner "who volunteered the information that 3 companies of the Herman Goering Infantry Regiment were then holding the area south of the objective." (33) This elite group of Germans would be far more difficult a foe than most of those met south of Esschen. The plan was organized before noon. Two Linc companies were "to attack into the village": a

statement which gives little idea of the problems these men faced. Considering that the Argylls had been so strongly resisted one day before, it is not surprising that the companies "suffered heavy casualties" once into the village. (34) It is clear that these two companies sustained a substantial proportion of the Regiment's casualties that day, especially as the German defenders managed to capture a Sherman tank and drive it into the village. As the Regimental history describes this incident: "The surprise-effect was considerable." (35) So too presumably were the resulting casualties.

The town was finally taken by 3:30 P.M., 25 October. Major McCutcheon's efforts that day earned him the Military Cross. Certainly, "extraordinary persistence and courage" had been demonstrated in this fight, although the weather had also played a role. The armour had bogged down in the saturated soil the day before, providing easy targets for the enemy artillery. The Argylls withdrew on the 24th because, "Finally, their tank support was virtually gone." (36) No mention is made of rain that night and the temperature had probably dropped enough to firm up the soil for the attack the next day. So it was that the Lake Superior war diarist could record an entry of this sort on 25 October: "At 1330 hours, 2 flame throwers...went out to support 'B' coy of the Lincs and Winks. After the first burst of flame, 26 Jerries came running to give themselves up." (37) Lambert and McCutcheon's men remained under the Armoured Brigade's command for the next days, assisting the Algonquins in their efforts to clear the eastern approaches to Bergen op Zoom.

The Infantry Brigade began to concentrate in the area near Huijbergen on this day. By the late afternoon, Swayze's company had been transferred under the SAR's command who were eager to act on information received from civilians that Bergen op Zoom was now "clear of enemy." Their C Squadron had been moving up a narrow sandy track through the woods toward Bergen when Swayze's

men were sent forward to clear "both sides of the road which was fairly thick of enemy infantry dug in." The operation went well initially: one troop commander claimed over sixty prisoners. (38) As night fell, the patrol was to within a few hundred yards of a road bend where the route turned toward the outskirts of Bergen. By 6:30 P.M., "C" squadron had lost four tanks and a reconnaissance car. They had been attacked from both the rear and the road bend ahead where either a 75 or 88 mm. gun was positioned. As the verges to the road were well mined, there was no where for the armour to go. The advance had stalled much to the frustration of the tanker's war diarist:

If the higher command had been quick enough to exploit this initial breakthrough made by C Squadron there would have been little difficulty in dislodging the enemy completely from this area and pushing on to Bergen op Zoom. (39)

Tactics like these would allow the threatened German 67th Corps at least two more days to evacuate north of the area. (40) Major Swayze's men and the remainder of C squadron spent two days and nights along this stretch of road. As Swayze recalls the situation they then faced, one can understand why he often caught himself thinking "When the hell are we going to get out of here?" He continues:

The military tactics of getting up there was to try to go all through the woods here, but that's where all the mines were. We had great difficulty and then we had to leapfrog forward about 50 yards at a time with the occasional 88 coming down the road here. We didn't go in the woods very far. I can tell you, with all the mines. I don't think we went 25 yards off the road... We brought up Percy Easser, the pioneer officer, with extra mine detectors. They were trying to clear the verges up here. They would keep shooting at us from forward. (41)

The services of Captain Easser's pioneer platoon were in demand during this period. As he recounts, many of these mines were difficult to disarm:

Some of these mines, these teller mines... ('Teller' is a German name for a dish) You could suspect that they might be booby trapped so it wasn't just a matter of... clearing the ground around it. You had to get it out. So the drill there was... [to] tie some kind of a rope around a part of it and move away back and pull on it... Sometimes, if you try to disarm it, they would have it... so if

you turned the disarming [mechanism, if it was]...set the wrong way. you could blow yourself up...I didn't have any casualties from that sort of thing.(42)

Throughout the night of the 25th, Swayze's men heard what they believed to be the enemy withdrawing through the woods to the north.(43) The Armoured Brigade cautiously pushed on the next day: the Algonquins finally took the stubbornly held brickworks south of Wousche Plantage and then moved west into the woods with the Argylls on their right flank.(44) As the SAR war diarist commented, this area was a tankman's nightmare:

During the days fighting new type mines have been discovered, whether or not they are improvised is not known but on explosion they are powerful enough to turn a Churchill tank over and damage the suspension to some considerable extent. The results may also cause the tank to burn.

The other type appears to be a ratchet mine which allows a certain amount of traffic to pass. the road is then thought to be clear. Finally one to many vehs [vehicles] cross over and sets the mine off.(45)

Percy Howse was then in charge of Swayze's 17 platoon. He well remembers these mines and their effects: "They claim that the actual mine was a naval shell. They were so powerful that they would roll a 40 ton tank right over...And of course, tanks, as soon as they are hit...start to burn. If you don't get out of them in 15 seconds, you've had it..."(46) Some still remember a Churchill tank that had struck a mine and turned over along the road to Bergen: a grim monument to the unenviable job the tankers sometimes faced.

On the morning of Friday, 27 October, the enemy retreated once more as "only slight opposition" was met in the woods south and east of Bergen op Zoom.(47) By the early afternoon, Swayze and Dandy's men were on the tanks moving towards the city, past the then-abandoned gun position at the head of the road. They pressed on ("with fear and trepidation" as one recalls) until they reached the outskirts of the city.(48) It was then late afternoon, about 5:00 P.M.; it was cold and pouring rain.

Colonels Cromb and Wotherspoon of the SAR's had to decide on what they should do next. Their main consideration centred on civilian reports that the enemy had withdrawn from Bergen and had dug in north of the Zoom river.(49) As the Brigade History records, the decision was made when Col. Wotherspoon turned to Col. Cromb and said, "Hell Bill, let's take the damned place." (50) The order was soon sent forward to the cold and wet men ahead. As Private Reeve of Swayze's company recalls: "It was a rainy, rainy night... Swayze said 'Listen. They're in there and they're nice and dry. We're out here and we're getting soaked. Are we going to stay out here and get soaked? No way.' So in we went." (51) Private Reeve's recollections are an excellent gauge of just how cold and tired these men must have been for the narrow, winding streets leading to the city's main square (Grote Markt) could have been held indefinitely if the enemy had so chosen.

The company commanders were certainly aware of their precarious position that night. Dandy's men were sent to the north of the city where the enemy were reportedly re-entering the town. Major Swayze was sent to the Grote Markt where he immediately decided to place the tanks at the head of each street branching from the square to the north. He suggested to their crews that they fire every fifteen minutes or so to keep the streets empty.(52) By dawn the next morning, the other rifle companies had rejoined the Regiment and had taken up positions with Dandy's men in the north of the town along the Zoom. By 10:00 A.M., Saturday 28 October, 1944, the flag of the Netherlands was once again flying atop the ancient town hall of Bergen op Zoom. By then, the Grote Markt was filled with not only military vehicles and personnel, but also with wildly grateful townfolk. As both the SAR's and the Lincs had decided to establish their headquarters in the Hotel de Draak which faced the square, it was probably difficult to maintain any semblance of military organization

through this day:

In spite of the occasional 88 shell from German guns on the other side of the canal [Zoom river], the men had a wonderful time relaxing from the rigors of war and cleaning up, not only themselves, but every available bit of liquor which the well-stocked town afforded. (53)

The celebrations continued as the Argylls prepared to cross the Zoom: a feature which they were led to believe "could be easily crossed on foot" as it was thought to be a shallow, narrow stream flowing through a deep ravine. The Germans were prepared for the assault, having blown two of the bridges across the feature and blocking the third with a concrete barricade. (54) Concrete encasements, known as dragon's teeth, were also spaced along the river bank where the ravine shallowed. The Argylls had no armoured support once across the Zoom. This first attack was quickly repulsed by heavy small arms, mortar and anti-tank fire. As their unit war diarist stoically put it: "The situation called for a new plan." (55)

The second proposed attack was to go in later that night. One Linc company was to create a diversion in the north east corner of the town, while an Argyll company swung to the west of the German resistance to cross the river. (56) Captain Lambert's A company was to put in the diversionary attack: a choice that would further heighten Lambert's already sizeable reputation.

The Regiment's officers first heard of this plan at an O-group held that evening in the lobby of the Hotel de Draak. One of those present that evening describes the scene:

There was a table in the middle of the room and there was a lamp on it. And those of us who went to the commanders' O-group were sitting around the outskirts in sort of a semi-darkness, and the Colonel was sitting at the table...with his maps. And Lambert came in late and he was half tight. There was no question about it... (57)

After receiving his orders, Lambert checked with the hotel owner's son to find out the best place to cross the Zoom. He then went to his company headquarters and told his men of the plan. Among them was Sergeant Charles Kipp, then in charge of the twenty men still left in 9th platoon. Forty years later, Kipp recalled that night when A company fought across the Zoom, against what the Regimental history described as "stiff opposition."

It must have been about 6 o'clock in the evening that a runner came down to where I was and told me Lambert wanted to see me. We were going to attack. Before we had been told there was nothing much to do, just to rest up a bit. So I went up to the company headquarters where he was and he explained what we were going to do, we were going to cross the Zoom into the factory [buildings immediately to the north of the crossing point]...

So we gathered the men all up and as soon as it was dark...we moved up along from wherever we were up into this railroad...the whole company was there. Then we got on top of the railroad track. That's where the Germans started to fire on us...They had three guns and they fired, centred them right where we were. The fire was so heavy, the men just couldn't get through...I know I got on top of the railroad track and laid down between the steel rails. And they had those guns firing there, and the bullets were just bouncing off those steel rails...I jumped up and went on over and Lambert was down in there [at the Zoom] and he was hollering 'Are you coming with me or am I going alone?' And we jumped in the canal and swam across...very few men got over through there. We ran across the field and we came to a high fence...around the factory...We had to help each other [over the fence]...That's when we counted the men and there were 13 of us...

We started to go through the factory and just as soon as we started to move, there were Germans in it and they started to shoot at us. We chased them up one alley and they chased us down the other alley [for] most of the night. We would chase them for a while and then they would turn around and chase us. We were just running all over and shooting everything we could see. All the light there was was from the muzzle of the guns. Eventually, they chased us back to the wall and we were...stuck in there. We could hear the Germans on the other side of the wall and they were calling us Canadian pigs, Canadian swine. We could hear them talking and we would yell back and forth to each other...we would dare them to come in: 'Come in over the wall...We're in here, Come and get us. We've got knives...Come in and see what our knives are like.' So they didn't come. (58)

The other attacks had stalled: Lambert's men were cut off. With no way of calling for support, Lambert ordered Sergeant Kipp to go back across the Zoom to alert Col. Cromb. Kipp swam back across into C company lines. He was then

taken to Battalion Headquarters where Cromb immediately ordered Dandy's and McCutcheon's men across the canal. Their attack was "only partly successful." (59)

The situation remained precarious on the morning of the 29th. The Argylls again attempted to outflank what they then knew to be "a fair-sized canal" which was some 20 feet wide and 6 feet deep. (60) Not one kilometre to the west, Major Swayze's company was preparing a crossing of its own to relieve Lambert's men. As Swayze recalls, the tactics he employed that morning were unusual but effective:

I took a tank man named Kitching and we crawled right up to the edge of the Zoom river and nothing seemed to be happening at all. So I had him take his tank and go behind the houses [to the south of the river] and knock down the garden walls... In the meantime, I had the company come up to the Ford garage [which was about 150 yards from the river]... We took an old barn door and pushed it down to the edge of the bank... so that the fellows could run down, hit this and jump across. It was just a ditch. When I went back, I said 'I want no artillery support at all until I give the order and then, I don't want you to fire just across the Zoom, I want you to fire 150-200 yards ahead.' I took the fellows out of the garage and we didn't run down the street, we ran in behind the houses where the tank had gone up. And we went down and across and in these factory buildings across there and then I called down the artillery 200 yards ahead.

What the Germans had done was pulled back and were waiting for the artillery barrage and when that was over, they were going to come up and hold the crossing. After our artillery quit there, they started coming... and we knocked them out like rabbits... we took about 14 prisoners. (61)

The bridgehead was slowly widened through the day as the Argylls, then the Algonquins met stiff resistance until 3:30 P.M., when "the situation began to firm up" after a "very successful RIGHT flanking movement." The estimated two Battalions of paratroopers were believed to have been either "wiped out" or given orders to retreat. (62) By that evening, the Engineers had cleared the bridge over the Zoom and the armour was soon brought over. (63) Only the Lincs "were still engaged in bitter fighting", still working to clear the factories which they had first occupied nearly 24 hours before. (64) By the morning of 30

October, the battle for Bergen op Zoom was over. Over the two days of fighting, the Regiment sustained 38 casualties, 11 of which were fatal. Captain Lambert was awarded the Military Cross for leading the attack across the Zoom on 28 October.

The companies were back in the town by noon the next day to enjoy their first real rest since leaving Maldégam nearly two weeks before. The evidence suggests that the Canadians in Bergen made the most of the next few days: movies were shown in the local Roxy theatre; meals and dances hosted by the citizenry allowed the men to become better acquainted with their appreciative hosts. Lieutenant-Colonel Cromb even penned a song about their newly adopted city which was richly received at an officer's Halloween banquet held at the Hotel de Draak. Even if one didn't fancy the more formal forms of entertainment available, there was still an awful lot of liquor to be had. The main source of it was found on the night of 28 October when Lambert's men fought into a distillery. As then Corporal Harry Lumsden of the carriers remembers, this building was the site of a far different battle some days later when he was ordered by his platoon commander to secure the building: "You couldn't stop anybody. They were coming in the doors, windows, everywhere; throwing cases out. I said, 'OK. One case per man only...' I don't think there was anybody sober." (65) The rest continued into 1 November. For Captain Dandy, Major Swayze and eight others, the next forty eight hours was spent in Brussels on leave. The almost constant fighting had taken its toll; Dandy slept for twenty four hours. (66)

The 4th Division's role in the Battle for the Scheldt was not yet complete. While the Lincs had pushed across the Zoom, the Algonquins had passed through the Argylls and taken up the chase to the town of Welburg, 10 kilometres to the north. There they were repelled by a concentration of

self-propelled guns. The rest of the Infantry Brigade was ordered in for support. By 5:00 P.M., 2 November, the Regiment had been given their role in the operation to capture Welburg and the adjacent city of Steenberg. They were to advance to the left of the Algonquins through the ruins of Moerstraten (then the Brigade Headquarters) on an axis which lay to the east of the heavily mined Bergen-Steenbergen road. The attack began at 6:00 P.M., supported by a squadron of Typhoons which provided a fiery beacon upon which the infantry could gauge their advance.(67)

That night, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment suffered 38 casualties, 6 fatal, in very intense fighting. The companies began reaching their objectives on the flat, featureless landscape south of Steenberg by 8:00 P.M., but not before suffering casualties from small arms and shell fire. Captain Dickie's D company had no sooner dug in at 10:00 P.M. when they "came under fire from an enemy SP [self-propelled] gun firing at point-blank range from their rear."(68) The roads (being "hardly better than paths at the best of times") prevented any fast deployment of either tanks or anti-tank weapons.(69) The infantry had little choice but to retreat out from what was clearly a well registered enemy target.(70)

During the night, the 17-pounders of the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment were finally brought forward to deal with these guns while reconnaissance parties were dispatched to maintain contact with both the enemy and the other companies. The defenders--survivors from the 6th Parachute Regiment reinforced by 2 Battalions from the Herman Goering Regiment--were again reluctant to give up ground without a fight.(71)

The next day, 3 November, was cold and rainy. The Linc's progress toward the main highway was slow, hampered by the flooding and continued stiff opposition. On the right, the Algonquins had captured Welberg by mid-morning,

allowing the Argylls, who had been waiting in reserve in Moerstraten, to push toward Steenberghe during the early afternoon. As dusk approached, the pressure from both flanks had forced the enemy into retreat. The Argylls met little resistance. By 9:30 A.M., 4 November, the Argylls reported that Steenberghe was clear of enemy. (72) The last remains of the 15th Army south of the Maas River were finally in full retreat. The battle of the Schelde was nearly over.

The Regiment's twenty two day involvement in the battle (between 17 October and 7 November, when the first major group of reinforcements arrived) cost it 258 men: 40 were killed. The rifle companies again suffered the greatest losses: the Regimental history reports that by the end of the battle for Steenberghe, no rifle company "had an effective strength of more than 30 men." (73) The structure of the Regiment was distorted further by the considerable pace at which its officer corps was replaced during this period: 11 officers, all lieutenants, became casualties. Two of them were killed and one became a prisoner of war. These losses represent nearly a third of the Regiment's normal officer strength and almost all of the lieutenants usually attached to the five companies that form its fighting arm. (74)

The battle of the Scheldt was over on 8 November when organized resistance on Walcheren Island ended. The German armies had once again been forced behind yet another defensive barrier, the Maas River; the last natural obstacle before Germany itself. While Allied planners prepared for a spring offensive, the now "thoroughly exhausted" Canadian Army began to take up positions along the river's south shore. (75)

On 9 November, the Regiment arrived in the area near the town of Vlijmen, just south of the Maas and west of the city of s'Hertogenbosch, some 75 kilometres east of Steenberghe. All then knew that the war would not be over

for Christmas, but as the Regimental history suggests, "There were few who did not prefer a slower pace with a modicum of comfort to speed with greater misery." The history continues to describe the area where the Regiment spent its 'winter on the Maas':

The events of the next two and a half months moved at a slower pace than those of the period of the break-through. The terrain over which the fighting was to take place was quite different from any experienced earlier. The Maas was swift, cold, and often clogged with ice. Small-arms and artillery fire passed from one distant bank to the other, and intelligence staffs farther back were forever curious about what lay on the other shore. Though the weather and the terrain were depressing, there were compensations: food was better and more regular; leaves, though never over-generous, could be had to Brussels or Antwerp; there were dances; and Dutch could always be learned from interesting teachers. From 9th to 24th November the Regiment remained based on Vlijmen under these conditions. (76)

The first week in this area was relatively quiet. Any patrols sent out remained on the south side of the Maas to maintain contact with the flanking units and the occasional German patrols which dared to venture across. (77) Behind the front, the men settled into their billets, an arrangement which often held added benefits, as one signaller recalls:

We didn't do as much patrolling as the riflemen. We had it good there really. We were attached to a miller's family, the town miller. And every night he would make up porridge for us. The only one I didn't like was barley. Every night there would be a different one. Every seventh night we would have to hit barley. We would eat it anyways. (78)

New men were also coming into the ranks during this time: the first of the Regiment's third generation. Theirs would not be an easy initiation for the bonds which drew the dwindling numbers of originals together were then much stronger. Through battle-weary eyes, many of these reinforcements were not only unproven, but also untrained. As one of the Regiment's original corporals comments: "You wouldn't believe, unless you were there, the experience that these guys were supposed to have and didn't..." (79)

In response to complaints that their training had been "wrong, or

inadequate." General Simonds, then GOC First Canadian Army, issued a memo in late October to all Commanders of Canadian Formations concerning the "Absorbition of Reinforcement Personnel." In it, Simonds was critical of the way in which reinforcements were attached to units, arguing that not "enough consideration [had been given] to the human aspects of the problem." Simonds stressed the importance of developing a soldier's place in his unit:

...when the reinforcement officer or soldier joins the unit with which he is going to fight, it is one of the great moments of his life - comparable with birth, marriage or death. The position of a new reinforcement joining a unit is quite different from that of a soldier who has served with a unit for considerable time and goes into battle beside officers and NCOs who have trained him and with men whom he knows. The reinforcement... comes as a stranger.... 3. Unless proper steps are taken within a unit, the reinforcement officer, or soldier, goes into action as an individual rather than as a member of a unit team.

Simonds recommended establishing a "unit reception school" so that reinforcements could be initiated over a period of four or five days before entering battle: "Except in extreme emergency, i.e. when it is a question of winning, or losing, a battle..."(80)

There would not have been time for a "unit reception school" while the Regiment fought toward Bergen op Zoom. As Major Dandy recalls, the immediate demands of a depleted company often had tragic consequences for the reinforcement:

The day after [24 October], I got ten reinforcements. Every one of those guys had at least two or three years service. Not one of them was a training infantryman. None of them had ever fired a Bren gun; most of them did not know how to load a rifle. They hadn't fired since they were in England; one guy was a shoemaker.... That was the 25th. By the morning of the 28th of October.... not one of those guys was still with us.... they were cannon fodder.... They were almost a liability to us.... They would give you away at night. They just didn't have a clue....

They didn't react. You could see them.... a section going across a field, they come under fire, you see a couple of guys still on their feet looking around.... They didn't stand long.... they usually got shot. You see the rest of the guys, the trained guys.... they hit the dirt and roll into a low spot, behind a mound or something and they're ready to fire.... You can't stand around wondering what to do very long. You don't live too long.(81)

The battlefield was the only 'unit reception school' many of these men knew.

By 11 November, the Regiment was once again up to its full complement. These new men would be the fortunate ones who were brought on strength at a time when they could learn from more experienced personnel. Doubtless many of these men had backgrounds similar to Pte. R. MacIntosh of Toronto. Having been turned down from the Air Force in 1942, MacIntosh joined the army after Christmas of that year. He spent the winter of 1943 in basic training in Simcoe; his advanced training was done during a three month stint at Camp Borden. By September, he was overseas working as a hospital orderly in Bramshot. Ten months later, he was remustered as an infantryman, spending the summer of 1944 at Aldershot. In the early fall, MacIntosh was in Yorkshire for a five week course which he recalls "made our basic and advanced training look like child's play." By early November, his draft had crossed to Dieppe. It was in a reinforcement depot in Antwerp where he first heard of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. On the 11 November 1944, Pte. MacIntosh was taken on strength, in 16 platoon of D company:

Some of us were amazed to find that they [the Regiment] came from St. Catharines. You always thought of regiments being in big centres, and St. Catharines to us was a long way away and we didn't think of it as a ... large centre of population.

We were received cordially. I won't say we were greeted with open arms because I think we had to prove ourselves. We were still pretty raw and we didn't know the ropes. But it was surprising the number of people who were quite prepared to take us under their wing and help us out, and to make sure that we didn't get into any pitfalls. (82)

The reinforcement problem was not simply a question of how well these men were received into their units for it is clear that many remustered infantrymen were still very poorly trained. A.E. "Bus" Hills recalls receiving a group of these unfortunate men:

In Steenberghe, I got 11 reinforcements and they knew nothing, and I mean nothing. We were just burying the dead from the action the night before... I finished the detail and I see this raggedy-ass mob hanging around by the company headquarters door. So I started

[to question them]: 'What do you know about the rifle?' 'It fires' [came the response]... So I went back into Jim [Swayze] and I said 'I refuse to take those people, sir. They have no training at all. What the hell are they doing up here?'

[Sergeant George Sims organized a strict training schedule for these men] Sims worked the hell out of them, 16 hours a day for 2 weeks. They came back in a hell of a lot better shape than when they left there. The idea of getting eleven the same time as I was burying the dead... got me. They were going to be dead the next action... That's when I refused to accept them. I'd just as soon fight short. (83)

For the originals, the reinforcement issue must have been another example of how the "higher ups" were insensitive to what actually happened in their sphere. Losing good soldiers and friends was bad enough, but to see some of their replacements come up with little training must have been particularly galling. Ultimately, such feelings had to be put aside for as one corporal from the first generation commented, "We had to get these guys into our way of doing things" although "you don't feel quite as secure when you've got too many new men in an outfit and not enough old guys to lead them." (84)

In mid-November, the Division issued orders for all units to organize intensive training programs. (85) This order coincided with the Regiment's first rotation out of the lines. For the first time, the entire unit was under one roof, in a seminary in the town of St. Michielsgestel. For two weeks, the daily training was balanced with an equally intensive schedule of movies, dances, bingo games and army shows. On 4 December, the unit went under the command of 4 Armoured Brigade. The bulk of the unit returned to Vlijmen the next day, leaving Major Dandy in charge of a children's Christmas party organized for 6 December, St. Nicholas' Day. As one recalls, it was a memorable gathering:

We had all the kids that we could find brought in for this party. We had apples... oranges, we had white bread... We had everything; turkey, you name it... We put a feast on for these kids; kids who had come through a war where food was pretty scarce. White bread was something that they had never seen. And an orange was so mysterious that they didn't know that they could eat it; they wanted to play catch with it, it was a ball... They didn't know what these

[to question them]: 'What do you know about the rifle?' 'It fires' [came the response]... So I went back into Jim [Swayze] and I said 'I refuse to take those people, sir. They have no training at all. What the hell are they doing up here?'

[Sergeant George Sims organized a strict training schedule for these men] Sims worked the hell out of them, 16 hours a day for 2 weeks. They came back in a hell of a lot better shape than when they left there. The idea of getting eleven the same time as I was burying the dead... got me. They were going to be dead the next action... That's when I refused to accept them. I'd just as soon fight short. (83)

For the originals, the reinforcement issue must have been another example of how the "higher ups" were insensitive to what actually happened in their sphere. Losing good soldiers and friends was bad enough, but to see some of their replacements come up with little training must have been particularly galling. Ultimately, such feelings had to be put aside for as one corporal from the first generation commented, "We had to get these guys into our way of doing things" although "you don't feel quite as secure when you've got too many new men in an outfit and not enough old guys to lead them." (84)

In mid-November, the Division issued orders for all units to organize intensive training programs. (85) This order coincided with the Regiment's first rotation out of the lines. For the first time, the entire unit was under one roof, in a seminary in the town of St. Michielsgestel. For two weeks, the daily training was balanced with an equally intensive schedule of movies, dances, bingo games and army shows. On 4 December, the unit went under the command of 4 Armoured Brigade. The bulk of the unit returned to Vlijmen the next day, leaving Major Dandy in charge of a children's Christmas party organized for 6 December, St. Nicholas' Day. As one recalls, it was a memorable gathering:

We had all the kids that we could find brought in for this party. We had apples... oranges, we had white bread... We had everything; turkey, you name it... We put a feast on for these kids: kids who had come through a war where food was pretty scarce. White bread was something that they had never seen. And an orange was so mysterious that they didn't know that they could eat it; they wanted to play catch with it, it was a ball... They didn't know what these

particular things were...and that seemed to us to be so strange because they were things that we were used to and we suddenly began to realize what war could do to people; that it could cut them off--children particularly--from the things that we had grown up with...That was one of the most interesting aspects of the war, was those kids...(86)

Such festivities must have been a welcome relief to life overlooking the Maas, especially since regular patrolling across the river had begun on the night of 16/17 November. In contrast to the raids in Belgium, these patrols were far more dangerous and less successful. That first night, three boats attempted to cross the river, their crews with orders to capture a prisoner. In the darkness, they became disoriented and made repeated crossings without finding anyone. One boat was swept downstream. Finally, a third crossing was attempted in which the lead boat had a cable in tow which was to be secured and used as a crossing guide. Upon reaching the north shore, the boat hit a trip wire. A mine killed one and wounded two more. Lieutenant C.E. Cartmel, the patrol leader, was one of those wounded; He "was unable to climb back into the boat and had to be towed back across the icy river clinging to the stern."(87)

Upon returning to the front in December, the patrol program was continued with no good result. On the night of 11/12 December, two patrols were sent out. One boat capsized with nine men of B company aboard: only one made it to shore alive.(88) Such losses were bitterly received by the Regiment for as one company commander grimly commented:

Somebody up there in Corps had the idea of keeping the troops active by raiding across the Maas river...and what a ridiculous situation that was. The Maas river is...swift and deep and wide...Put guys in canvas boats to go across there. The one night, we lost 8 fellows drowned. How do you write home and say your son is drowned farting around in a bloody boat trying to cross a river to do nothing? Ridiculous.(89)

As in Belgium, new troops were sent out on these patrols, yet as these recollections illustrate, their inexperience often put the entire operation in jeopardy. The first anecdote is told by Sgt. Leslie of the carrier platoon:

They went over one night and I went over as an observer... We started out and we got half way across and they started firing. I guess they had fixed lines so when they heard something, they would just fire... There were tracers and that's the thing that frightened us, to see these tracers... So we got... out into the middle and one of the fellows went a little bit haywire in the boat. He got scared and he started screaming and hollering. There was a little bit of confusion there, and the corporal finally got up... and said, "If you don't shut up, I'm going to hit you in the head with this oar." The current was quite strong, it's dark and again we start paddling... and finally we see the shore. [We] get the boat on shore and climb up... and we're back on our own side. In all the confusion, the boat got turned around and we didn't even know it. So we made an assault landing on our own side... (90)

Private MacIntosh recalls the night of 16/17 December when a party from D company attempted to cross:

We were to go across the Maas to see if we couldn't pick up a prisoner which was the favourite sport.... In this particular area, between the dyke and the river, there were large flat lands that were used for grazing cattle. And the cattle would munch contentedly on the grass out there. Nothing ever seemed to happen to them. I guess we had to drag this boat a good half mile across this and we left well after dark... To drag a boat across there and be quiet at the same time required powers far beyond us. Of course this was the first patrol that most of us had ever been on. You were jumpy, you were nervous. Maybe that's putting it too mildy; you were scared because we didn't know what we were getting into.

I don't know what happened on this particular one... but somebody suddenly shouted 'Duck'. Up ahead, we could see eerie white shapes: scared hell out of us. And of course, somebody panicked and started to shoot. It was a Sten gun. It turned out that the damn thing we were shooting at was a cow. What we didn't know was that one of the guys in shooting, hit... a couple of men: one was wounded and one died later. That sort of put an end to the patrol because they knew we were there. We gathered up the people that we could and took them back and they went out to try and retrieve the boat the next night. The Germans had gotten there and they were very nice about it. They left their calling card: they shot it full of holes. So it wasn't worth a damn for anything. (91)

Between 8 November and 20 December, when the unit once again moved south to St. Michielsgestel, the Regiment sustained 28 casualties of which 13 (nearly half) were fatal. They were all as a result of patrolling activity.

One prisoner of war was captured by the Regiment during this period, on 16 December. He had deserted from a patrol that had come across to the Canadian side the night before. (92)

The men were probably expecting a quiet and relaxed Christmas in the seminary; a welcome relief to the pressures of the front. Unfortunately, events occurring elsewhere were to not only disrupt the Regiment's Christmas celebrations; ultimately, they would lead to the destruction of the Regiment's third generation. The Ardennes offensive, spearheaded by Von Rundstedt's Army Group B, had begun on 16 December. As the attack continued, Allied forces along the Maas were ordered to be ready to move in the event of a supplementary attack from the north by forces from Army Group H. (93) On 23 December, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment were placed under the direct command of 1 British Corps and ordered southwest of Vlijmen to the town of Loon op Zand. Their task was "to hold Loon op Zand against possible attack from enemy paratroops and to guard the main road from that town to TILBURG." (94)

Christmas of 1944 was celebrated under a shadow of uncertainty. The Christmas dinner was held regardless, served by the officers as the tradition demanded. On New Year's morning, three enemy planes strated the area, causing some civilian, but no Regimental casualties. (95) That night, the sergeants held their New Year's dance in a local recreation hall. (96) By the 7th, the Regiment was again under the command of 4 Armoured Division. The Ardennes offensive was spent.

In the coming weeks, the routine was unchanged. The patrolling and daily training continued in the January cold. The buzzbombs overhead would soon become "so numerous and so constant as to pass practically unnoticed." (97) The newly organized basketball and swim teams as well as the first draws for

leaves to the U.K. must have been some assurance that the Regiment would not see action in January.

On 14 January, Lt. Col. Cromb left the Regiment for a thirty day leave for Canada. Major Swayze, who had been acting CO for the previous month while Cromb had organized the Divisional training school, continued in this role. Also on this day, a group of Royal Marine Commandoes were repelled from a barren island on the Maas river, where no more than two companies of German paratroopers had held off two previous attacks by the Poles. Immediately after the Commandoes withdrew, a new plan was proposed by I British Corps to take the island with Canadian troops. In less than two weeks time, the third generation of the Regiment would be the main force of this attack--codenamed ELEPHANT. In one day, their ranks would be decimated fighting for the island of Kapelsche Veer.

CHAPTER IV: NOTES

1. "Field Marshall Montgomery's Directive, 16 October 1944." (App. E). Col. C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. 3: The Victory Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960), pp. 655-6.

2 Ibid., p. 390.

3 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.105), 17 October 1944. It was on this trip that members of the Regiment remember seeing V2 rockets exploding near Antwerp. Then Acting Captain Martin was leading the convoy from the carrier platoon:

There was no prior noise, but just a terrific explosion and we thought it must have been a munition dump. We had heard nothing about this new weapon and didn't for a few days after. (Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.)

4 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982: War Diary, L & W, 18 October 1944.

5 War Diary, 29th Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, The South Alberta Regiment (PAC RG 24 C. 17 Vol. 14.295), 19 October 1944.

6 War Diary, 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade (PAC RG 24 Vol. 14.150), 18 October 1944; War Diary, L & W, 18 October 1944.

7 J.A. Dunlop, Taped Interview, 1 August 1984.

8 War Diary, L & W, 19 October 1944; Maj. R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954), p.195.

9 War Diary, 15th Field Regiment (PAC RG C. 17 Vol. 14.525), 20 October 1944; War Diary, L & W, 20 October 1944.

10 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

11 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 195.

12 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

13 J.A. Dunlop, Taped Interview, 1 August 1984.

14 War Diary, General Staff, 4 Canadian Armoured Division (PAC RG 24 Vol. 13.789), 21 October 1944.

15 Maj. R.A. Paterson, A Short History: The Tenth Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hilversum, Netherlands: De Jong & Co., 1945), p. 43.

16 War Diary, 10 CIB, 21-2 October 1944.

17 J.A. Dunlop, Taped Interview, 1 August 1984.

18 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 23 September 1984.

19 War Diary, 10 CIB, 22 October 1944. The infantry's rapid advance obviously created some problems with the artillery. The 15th Field's war diarist complained during this period that good support was difficult to provide when the 'front is too fluid.' Problems also arose when units were transferred to different commands, as this diary entry of 23 October illustrates: "Since coming under 1 British Corps the problems of target numbering have been intensified. This is another matter that should be co-ordinated on a much wider basis." (War Diary, 15th Field Regiment (PAC RG 24 C. 17 Vol. 14,525), 23 October 1944.)

As battery commander Major Clement recalls, such mix-ups led to some terrifying moments for the advancing troops and their FOO:

We made gun traces of suspected targets from where we were going to start all the way up to Esschen... And the OP's that went had a back pack... a number 8 set. But in the rush when we were making out these traces at Brigade Headquarters... the targets got a number and a couple of numbers got mixed. And the result was that short of Esschen... [the OP or Forward Observation Officer, Captain] Mogie called down for a target by number, and the shells landed right on the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, and inflicted some casualties. And Mogie at that time was beyond the usual range of the 8 set and I just faintly heard his order 'STOP AT 800.' And I knew what had happened... I called the guns at once and that was that. (J.C. Clement, Taped Interview, 31 October 1983.)

20 War Diary, 10 CIB, 22-3 October 1944.

21 "4 Canadian Armoured Division Intelligence Summary Number 23." War Diary, L & W, 23 October 1944, (App. 129), p. 1.

22 War Diary, L & W, 21 October 1944.

23 "4 CAD Int. Summary." p. 2.

24 War Diary, L & W, 21 October 1944.

25 War Diary, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,005) 25 October 1944.

26 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 199.

27 Ibid., p. 198.

28 War Diary, L & W, 24 October 1944; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 199.

29 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983.

The attack resulted in the award of the insignia of a Chevalier of the Order of Leopold II, and the Belgium Croix de Guerre, to Lieutenant C.H. Chirnside, who, in spite of painful wounds, walked all the way back to Battalion Headquarters in order that no information should be lost to the Commanding Officer. Only after he had reported did he seek medical attention. (Rogers, Regimental History, p. 198).

- 30 War Diary, S.A R. 25 October 1944.
- 31 War Diary, 4 CAD General Staff (Ref. 14), 25 October 1944.
- 32 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 199.
- 33 War Diary, Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,098), 25 October 1944.
- 34 War Diary, L & W, 25 October 1944.
- 35 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 199.
- 36 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 24 October 1944.
- 37 War Diary, L. Sup. (M), 25 October 1944.
- 38 War Diary, S A R, 25 October 1944.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 391.
- 41 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 23 September 1984.
- 42 P. Easser, Taped Interview, 10 July 1984.
- 43 War Diary, L & W, 25 October 1944.
- 44 War Diary, S A R, 26 October 1944; War Diary, The Algonquin Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,000), 26 October 1944.
- 45 War Diary, S A R, 26 October 1944.
- 46 R.P. Howse, Taped Interview, 16 September 1944.
- 47 War Diary, S A R, 27 October 1944.
- 48 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 23 September 1984.
- 49 War Diary, S A R, 26-7 October 1944.
- 50 Paterson, Brigade History, p. 46.
- 51 J.E. Reeve, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983.
- 52 War Diary, S A R, 27 October 1944; Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 53 "The Battle for Bergen-op-Zoom." (Bergen-op-Zoom: local account), p. 2.
- 54 War Diary, S A R, 28 October 1944; War Diary, 10 CIB, 28 October 1944; War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 28 October 1944.

55 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 28 October 1944.

56 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 200; War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 28 October 1944; War Diary, L & W, 28 October 1944.

57 Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 16 September 1984.

58 C.D. Kidd, Taped Interview, 16 September 1984.

59 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 201.

60 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 29 October 1944.

61 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

62 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 29 October 1944; War Diary, 4 C A D, 29 October 1944.

63 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 29 October 1944.

64 It was an unusual battlefield with its narrow alleyways and darkened halls. It was an environment which called upon the infantryman's keenest skills of alertness and discipline; skills which demanded the respect of one's foe. Perhaps this is an explanation for what happened to Sergeant Kipp this day. After Swayze's men had crossed over to reinforce Lambert's party, Kipp followed. As he recalls, he had just turned into a laneway between the factories when he was stopped by what he saw ahead:

I went around the corner and...one of our men was there. He was dead. And a group of Germans was standing there, maybe a half a dozen of them...I was quite shocked. I was facing the wrong way and the German had a schmeisser. He raised his schmeisser up and he got it right on me...He was going to shoot...there was nothing I could do. If he had shot like we did, from the hip, he [would have] had me. But he didn't. He raised his gun. That just gave me a minute to think...There were two or three Germans on stretchers behind him and I pointed back to them...And he lowered his gun and turned around. When he turned back to me, I had my gun on him. He was as shocked as I was that time.

We just stood there and looked at each other. It didn't even dawn on me to shoot. And he turned around and said something to his men. They trotted off down the alleyway and he still stood there. After his men had gone out on the road, we were still staring at each other, and he trotted off out through there and out the gate. When he got to the gate, he turned around and waved his hand at me. Whether I waved at him or not, I don't know, but I was glad to see him go. (C.D. Kipp, Taped Interview, 16 September 1984.)

65 H. Lumsden, Taped Interview, 16 September 1984.

66 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1984.

67 War Diary, 10 CIB, 1-2 November 1944.

68 War Diary, L & W, 2 November 1944.

- 69 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 2 November 1944.
- 70 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 201.
- 71 War Diary, 10 CIB, 3 November 1944.
- 72 War Diary, 10 CIB, 4 November 1944; War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 4 November 1944.
- 73 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 202.
- 74 "State of Officers," War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment, 31 October 1944.
- 75 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 426.
- 76 Rogers, Regimental History, pp. 211-2.
- 77 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland, 11 November 1944.
- 78 J.H. Barkwill, Taped Interview, 16 November 1983.
- 79 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.
- 80 "Absorption of Reinforcement Personnel." (28 October 1944), in War Diary, L & W, November 1944 (App. A), pp.1-2.
- 81 J.L. Dandy, Taped Interview, 13 January 1983.
- 82 R.S.J. MacIntosh, Taped Interview, 6 April 1984.
- 83 A.E. Hills, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.
- 84 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.
- 85 War Diary, 4 CAD, 23 November 1944.
- 86 R.S.J. MacIntosh, Taped Interview, 6 April 1984.
- 87 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 212; War Diary, L & W, 17 November 1944.
- 88 War Diary, L & W, 12 December 1944.
- 89 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 90 W.P. Leslie, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.
- 91 R.S.J. MacIntosh, Taped Interview, 6 April 1984.
- 92 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland, 16 December 1944.
- 93 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 443.
- 94 War Diary, L & W, 23 December 1944.

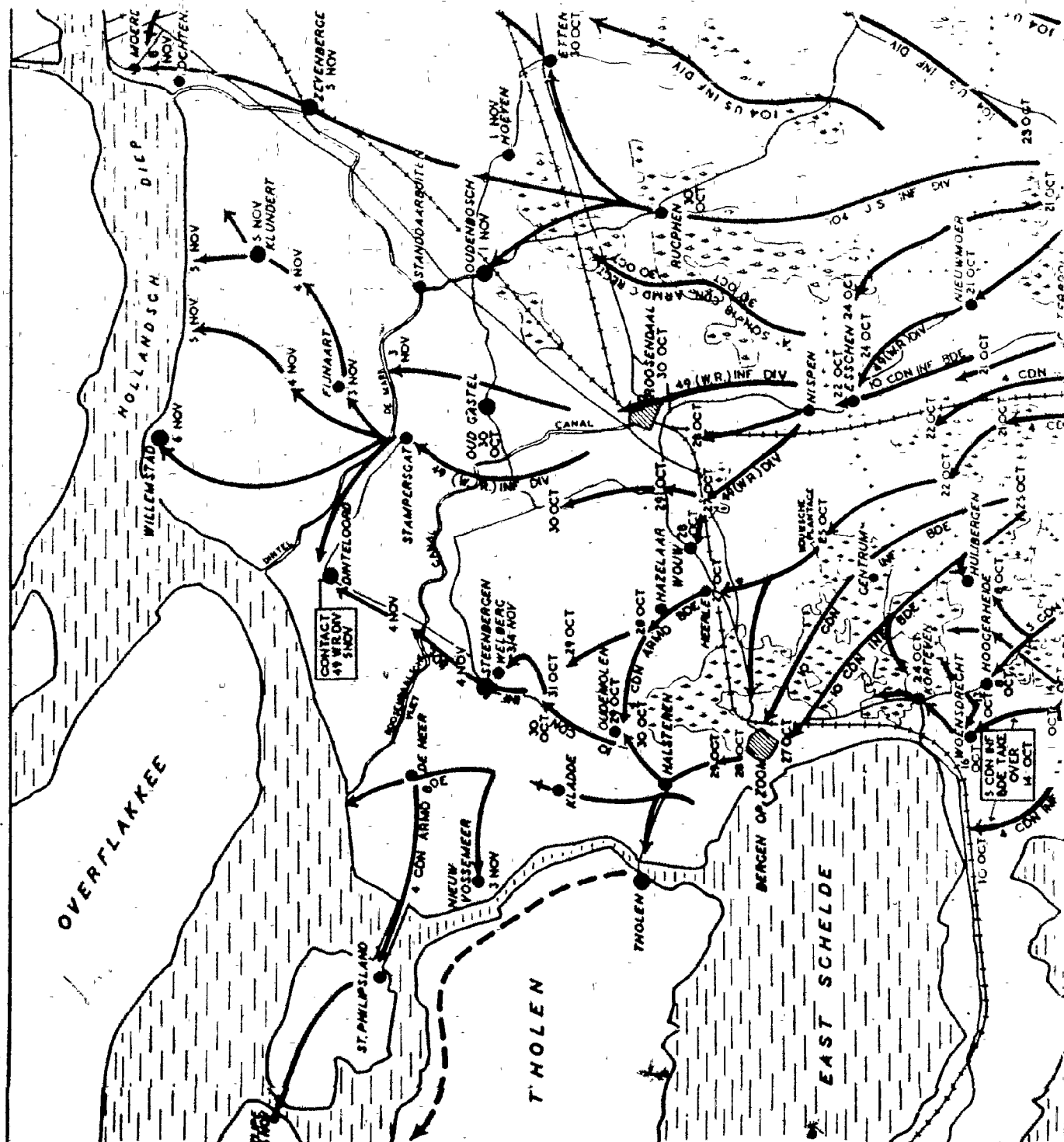
95 R.S.J. MacIntosh. Taped Interview. 6 April 1984.

96 War Diary. L & W. 1 January 1945.

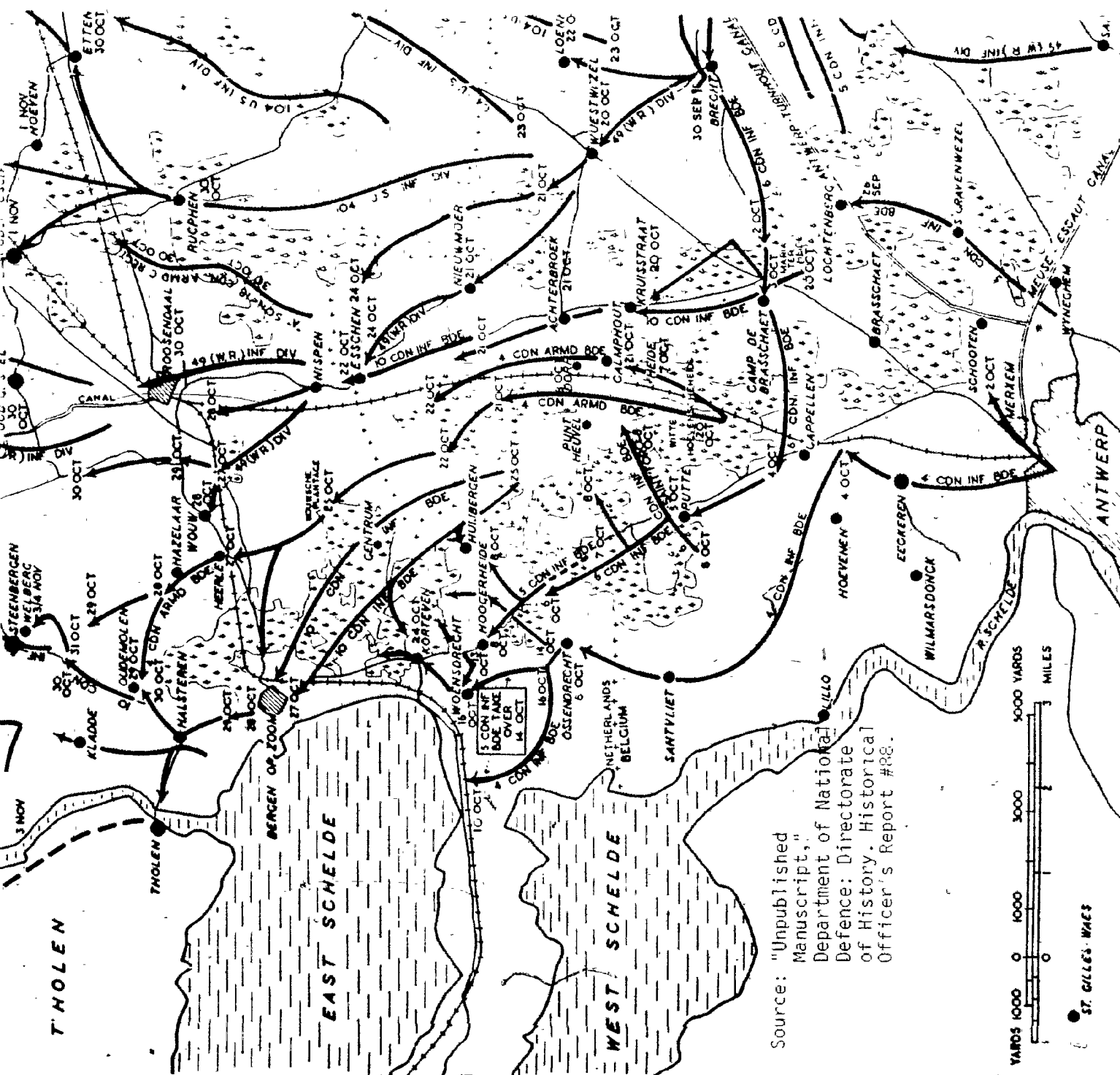
97 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 212.

98 War Diary. L & W. 14 January 1945.

OPERATIONS NORTH OF ANTWERP
BY 2 CDN INF DIV AND 4 CDN ARMD DIV
1 OCTOBER -- 6 NOVEMBER 1944



ANTWERP
 ARMD DIV
 R 1944



Source: "Unpublished Manuscript,"
 Department of National
 Defence: Directorate
 of History. Historical
 Officer's Report #88.



CHAPTER V: KAPELSCHE VEER

The final battle for Kapelsche Veer stands as an unusually clear example of the disparity between the theory and the reality of war. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment provided the principal infantry force for Operation ELEPHANT: a plan prepared by I British Corps and 4 Division which attempted to exploit the almost unlimited arsenal then available on this front. This small stronghold, then the only German outpost south of the Maas river, was to have been captured within hours.

Friday 26 January 1945--Day One of Operation ELEPHANT--was the Regiment's most costly day during its ten months in Northwest Europe. It lost 113 men that Friday: the beginning of a miserable battle of attrition that lasted for five days. To understand this, the most infamous episode in the Regiment's history, one must not only examine the extreme conditions its men endured: one must also analyse the circumstances and events which brought the Regiment to battle. In this way, much can be illustrated about both the "friction of war" and the often inflexible nature of the military hierarchy.

Kapelsche Veer is a ferry harbour set into the north shore of a long (10 kilometres) narrow island on the Maas river between the Dutch cities of Ramsdonksveer and s'Hertogenbosch. In late 1944, early 1945, a small garrison of German paratroopers surrounded the small inlet, manning a network of slit trenches and tunnels which surrounded two farm houses. No more than 2 kilometres separated the position from the south shore, yet substantial obstacles lay between. The Oude Massje, an offshoot of the Maas River proper, separated the mainland from the island. Like the surrounding area, the island was flat and treeless. In winter, the moisture-laden soil made movement difficult. Only the 7 metre high dykes which both bordered the island's

northern shore and ran through its centre at the widest point offered a stable, albeit narrow, path of advance.

The initial plan for Operation ELEPHANT seemed straightforward: the harbour of Kapelsche Veer was to be attacked from three sides simultaneously. The main effort was to be from the east where the island narrowed into a 5.5 kilometre-long strip which was no more than 300 metres wide. Captain Lambert's A company was to cross onto the island approximately 1.5 kilometres east of the objective in LVT's (Buffaloes) with two WASP flamethrowers in support. This company was to then advance along the northern dyke to "Clear the enemy along the island to the WEST as far as the house at M[ap] R[eference] 099497," which lay a few hundred metres south and west of the harbour itself. Once there, Lambert's men were to consolidate, so as "to allow C Coy to pass through." (1) Major Dandy's C company was to cross the Oude Massje onto the island at its most eastern point by way of a Class-24 bridge. With four WASP's in support, the company was to advance along the dyke almost 5 kilometres to the house that Lambert's men were to have taken. Their task was to "liquidate the enemy posn. [position] SOUTH of the harbour at KAPELSCH VEER." (2) Once done, they would then establish contact with the other forces that were to attack from the west and north.

The left effort of the attack was to consist of B company, then under Major Ed Brady, two WASP's and a five man carrying party from D company who were in reserve. At the appointed time, one troop of Buffaloes would ferry this force to the island at crossing 3. They were to then move north to the dyke junction 1.5 kilometres west of the harbour so as to "guard against enemy infiltration from the WEST." With this point firmly held, Brady's men were to then "push EAST along the dyke and est. [establish] contact with C Coy." (3)

The third force was to seal off the harbour from the north. Fifteen

four-man canoes were ordered for this operation. Their crews were to assemble at the island's most easterly point, paddle downstream five kilometres and land on both sides of the harbour. Once ashore, they were to "seize and hold these points [either side of the harbour] to prevent the enemy from reinforcing across the river." This force of some sixty men were to then "press SOUTH into the main posn [position]."(4)

The biggest problem for the infantry was concealment. Any movement on the dykes could be spotted easily from the German positions either to the north of the Maas or on the island itself. The solution was seen in covering the entire north bank of the river with smoke in the hope that this would obscure not only the advances along the northern dyke, but also the progress of the water-borne assault force. Over 30,000 25-pounder smoke rounds were dumped for this operation, as were 2000 50-pound smoke floats which could be pushed downriver.(5) As even a good smoke plan is limited by the prevailing winds, a contingency plan suggested that "If weather conditions are such that smoke has to be laid on the SOUTH bank of the River MAAS by the fd. regts. [field regiments] a 300 yard gap is to be left on either side of the objective as a safety-zone for the assault force."(6)

The artillery was to also "neutralize by concs. [concentrations] all known enemy posns. [positions] NORTH of the River MAAS from H hr. to H plus 20 hrs." The plan called for "NO arty [artillery] or mortar fire on the objective on D Day prior to H hr."(7) As little else was going on across this front during this time, a remarkable amount of artillery was made available from other sectors. Six field regiments of twenty four guns each; four medium regiments; and two heavy (155mm.) batteries were committed to the operation. Including tank support from two Divisional armoured regiments, over 300 guns were available. Three platoons from the 10th Canadian Independent Machine Gun

Company (New Brunswick Rangers) plus the 4.2" mortar platoons from both I British Corps and 2 Division were able to provide additional firepower. (8)

The planners were determined that they would not run short of ammunition. For the week prior to D-Day, literally hundreds of 3-ton lorries made their way along the narrow, saturated roadways of western Holland filled with ammunition for the operation. Over 46,000 rounds of 25-pounder high explosive shells were dumped as well as 13,000 rounds for the medium and heavy guns. Over 10,000 rounds of 4.2" and 3" mortar bombs were also available, as were 20,000 rounds of medium machine gun ammunition (MMG); the General Officer II Staff Duties of I British Corps supplied this last request although he did make the point that the Division was asking for more MMG ammunition than was dumped at the battle of El Alamein. (9)

The Regiment, still in Loon op Zand, had one week to prepare for Operation ELEPHANT. Each day, the forces (including the especially picked "Canoe Commandoes" as they were dubbed) practised attacks on dyke positions south of the river: while their company commanders surveyed crossing points. (10) The higher command showed their interest in the training, as Major Brady recalls a visit he received on Wednesday, 24 January, two days before the operation:

I remember being out training for this thing and we had put a facsimile of it on a dyke position... And I had the company out there. We were actually using phosphorous grenades to throw in the emplacements. I can still remember being out there with the 3 platoons lined up. And I saw this jeep coming across the field with the red flag flying... So I wasn't sure if it was Vokes but I knew it was somebody from staff... I said to the guys 'Run through this clearing operation. Yell like hell and fire every goddam thing you got. Throw a few grenades and they'll think its fine.' So he [Major-General Vokes] arrived about the time the first platoon went through and then the second one went through and then the third one went through... So he watched all of this and he said 'Well, I think that you've got things pretty well in hand here.' So then he talked to me for a few minutes and he turned around to leave. He'd gone maybe 50 yards and he suddenly stopped dead and he called to me and said 'Just a minute, there's something wrong here... You don't have fixed bayonets.'... I guess that was the only thing he could think of

just at the moment that I wasn't doing. And after all, you couldn't let a General drive on the scene and say everything was alright. He had to make some kind of criticism.(11)

On Thursday 25 January, each infantryman was issued a white snow suit. The final 0-group was held in the afternoon. That evening, the companies had moved off "in readiness to move into posn [position] before H-Hour."(12)

By 7:15 A.M., all the companies were reported on the move. On the eastern or right flank, Lambert's troops had successfully made their crossing in Buffaloes by 7:25 A.M., the time at which the artillery fire plan commenced. Unfortunately, one of their two WASP flamethrowers was lost into the Oude Massje during the crossing and they had some difficulty in getting the remaining WASP up from the shoreline onto the dyke itself.(13) Two miles further east, Dandy's men experienced similar difficulties. They had crossed onto the island without incident, but they could not get their four WASP's onto the dyke. Major Dandy recalls the problems involved:

I had these flamethrowers with me on the carriers but they couldn't get up the dyke...because when you go up a slope, the weight of the carriers with the WASP on the back would drag the carrier down. They would take a run at the thing and the tracks would just spin. I figured if I could get one up, I could tow the others up...A couple of guys got their feet run over by the damn things. Then I thought, "...maybe I can blow that damn tank off the back [of the carrier] with hand grenades. I backed the carrier up by this canal [Oude Massje] pulled the pin out of the hand grenade, and put it near the brackets and walked away. And it just dented the metal. So I couldn't get the carriers up.(14)

The problems worsened as the operation continued. With Dandy's men a few hundred yards behind, Lambert's company attacked the stronghold sometime between 8:08 and 8:30 A.M. The Brigade war diarist describes this initial and all-important attack: "This attack...met with very determined enemy resistance from well sited MGs [Machine Guns] and accurate mortar fire from the NORTH bank of the river and the Coy Commd was killed..."(15)

According to subsequent interrogation reports, approximately 120 men from

7

the 10th company, 17th Parachute Regiment of the 6th Parachute Division had manned this post for the previous eight days. Three platoons occupied a 2 kilometre long defensive perimeter that surrounded the harbour and the main stronghold. Each platoon had four light machine guns that fired on fixed arcs down the main approaches on the dyke. Further machine gun positions were dug into the forward slope of the dyke "very deeply" and were manned by two men at night. Although the original strength of the outpost had been depleted by casualties due to cold, one prisoner described their state of ammunition as "plentiful." Further, though the prisoner personally felt that holding the bridgehead was "pointless," his remaining colleagues expected no reinforcements, but had been ordered to hold the position "at all costs." (16)

An attack on such a defensive position was theoretically ideal for the unique capabilities of the flamethrower. Yet, it is unlikely that a WASP was used to any effect during the first days of ELEPHANT if the difficulties A and C companies experienced are any indication. The Brigade war diarist suggests that the same problems plagued those using the 'lifebuoy' flamethrower, so named because of the circular fuel tank which was strapped onto the infantryman's back. Twenty four of these were committed to the initial attack. As Major Brady recalls, they were also useless that first day:

...I had lifebuoy flamethrowers. I think I had ten. Lost every goddamn man; every one of them was killed. You can imagine what it was like. I think they weighed about 60 pounds. He's got army boots on with metal cleats on the heels filled with snow. He's walking on an angle...carrying this goddamn thing; trying to manoeuvre is almost impossible. And the minute they shot any flame...they were a target and every one of them got it. I always felt really badly about that...We asked for volunteers. I didn't want to take them in the first place, but they felt that's what we had to have so we took them. And I never used them again. (17)

Against this host of obstacles (including the smoke, which "despite its tremendous quantity, failed to give the proper support in the right spot at the right time") the initial attacks were disastrous. (18) Five of A company's

six officers were killed or wounded on the dyke that morning. Sergeant Gord Brittain was Lambert's mortar representative. He recalls that the the company "was having a hell of a time, they were pinned right down." He recalls Lambert sending him back to get Dandy's company to move up in support.(19) Dandy's men moved into the smoke and chaos sometime around 9:00 A.M. The intelligence message form from this period details the tenacity of the German defenders: "enemy mortaring was intense from far bank of river and enemy withheld fire until assaulting troops were within 30 yards of house...."(20) Jim Dandy recalls the action just before he was wounded:

[I] asked for a sitrep [situation report] and A company reported on [their objective]...I said 'I don't believe that' and we started to move through and A companies' guys started coming out choking with this damn smoke and we were coughing and I got in about where this objective was and I don't think there were any A company guys left in front of me. But I left the company back because I wanted to take a look at it...(21)

The battle continued until 10:00 A.M. as small arms fire and "the heaviest mortar barrage ever" experienced by the unit rained down on the assaulting forces who had dug into the dyke just east of the harbour.(22) At 9:45 A.M., the Germans counterattacked and the remaining members of the forward units abandoned their hastily dug slit trenches and moved back to C companies' trenches a few hundred yards east. By this time, all officers from both A and C companies were casualties. Even so, the remaining members of C company again attempted to advance onto the objective some 45 minutes later. By 11:00 A.M., both companies had lost too many men to reorganize. A half an hour later, an artillery FOO reported that all personnel from A and C companies had been evacuated from the island.(23) Major H.O.M. Lambert, MC did not return from this battle. Lieutenant Owen Borthwick, himself wounded, may have been the last person to see Lambert alive:

I remember when I got hit, tumbling down the side of the dyke and I literally landed beside [Lieutenant] Earl Hume and he was in terrible shape...The last thing I remember in the whole thing was

seeing Owen Lambert...walking up that dyke all by himself...I'm lying flat in the ice, looking up at him and he's waving a pistol...swearing, cursing a blue streak and he disappeared in the smoke...(24)

The waterborne force suffered similar misfortunes. Their advance was delayed when they discovered that their launching area was clogged with ice. They pushed on, pulling their craft over or through the flows on the river. Such an experience clearly had two important consequences: the assault force was frozen and demoralized as they waded into the icy waters; as well, their efforts seemed to have alerted the Germans on the north bank. Once out of the ice flows, the assault force was fired on and were forced to land just north of where A company had gone ashore minutes before.(25) They were only halfway to their objective, fighting for their very survival. Those who hadn't been drowned, shot or paralyzed by the cold climbed up onto the dyke and continued on. No more than fifteen other ranks and a few officers actually made the advance. They, like their colleagues in the rifle companies, were soon exposed to heavy fire on fixed lines along the dyke. With their weapons "frozen and useless", the few survivors of the water-borne assault party withdrew back onto the mainland.(26)

Although the forces on the right flank suffered devastating casualties under very intensive fire, these units were relieved and off the island by midday. Major Brady's B company was on the left flank; their relief didn't come until the early hours of the next morning. Brady's men had made a fairly quick initial advance north to the dyke junction:

Unfortunately, one of the difficulties we had was that there was really nothing to mark anything. You had to guess that you were at your junction. You knew that when you got to the dyke you couldn't go any further; once you went over the top, you were going to be in the Maas river...You had to trust that that was the place that you were supposed to be. And that's where I was supposed to establish a command post....We went in under this terrible smoke screen, and on top of that there was overcast skies and fog hanging over the ground and snow. The place was almost a blank wall; you could hardly see anything.(27)

With their first task completed by 8:00 A.M. two platoons began a slow, cautious advance east towards a spot not beyond grid line 09; approximately 800 metres from the harbour itself. The sources are unclear as to B companies' exact location between 8:00 and 9:00 A.M. The evidence indicates that the units' leading elements were advancing just as A company was making its initial attack from the east. This might explain the battalion war diary entry at 8:30 A.M. which states that "B coy on objective...[at grid line 09] and digging in. No opposition other than light SA [small arms] fire." (28) The enemy was probably too preoccupied with their eastern flank to bother with B companies' advance from the west. By 9:00 A.M. certainly, B companies' movements had been detected along the dyke position. Fighting was soon "heavy and confused" as an enemy counterattack killed both leading platoon commanders. Then Cpl. Howard Loughlin was with Lt. W.O. Fraser's forward platoon:

You couldn't see in front of you and the phosphorous [from the smoke] got into your lungs... Their slit trenches were all covered with snow. You couldn't tell where the fire was coming from... And talk about cold.

I saw... [Lt. Fraser] fall and I crawled over to him. His parka was all blood down here and I started to undo the parka... I had a hold of him in my arms. And he said 'They got me in the left arm too, Howard.' And then he died right there. I just laid him in the snow...

All of a sudden, this guy yelled and here's these grenades coming over the dyke. Where are you going to go in seven seconds? That was the third grenade that I had thrown at me, and the other two didn't go off... but this one sure as hell did. I just covered my head up... I waited for the damn thing to go off, it seemed like an eternity. It just felt like somebody had punched me... And then I went to stand up and I couldn't... (29)

Corporal Loughlin's company commander holds similar memories:

We started to move along the back of the dyke and again, it was almost impossible to tell how far you'd gone. I knew eventually we were to meet up with the company coming in from the right. But I also knew there were some emplacements... So we kept moving and then... they opened up on us both with mortars and machine guns... I started losing men hand over fist. They were just going down like ten pins. Unfortunately, you couldn't even see where the fire was coming from. So I thought, 'What the hell do I do? If I keep on

going. I'm just going to lose more and more men. I think the best job is to go back to the firm base that I had at the command post. They were dug in by now and it'll give these fellows...a chance to dig in. So we pulled back.(30)

By 10:00 A.M., all of A and C companies' officers were casualties and B company had withdrawn back to the dyke junction where it was threatened by attacks from both flanks. Snipers had appeared along the southern shore of the island during the morning, attempting to cut B companies' lines of communication. One platoon from Maj. R.T. Crawley's D company was ordered up to cover the dyke south of the junction. By noon, the already battle-weary survivors from B company had retreated from the northern dyke and had dug into the dyke south of the junction; the remainder of Crawley's men were positioned to B company's south.(31) Things were not going according to plan as the Brigade war diarist described the situation at midday:

The enemy was making every effort to cut in two our force which was spread along the dyke...and he made a number of efforts to land fresh troops in the area 090504 [the area of B company's most forward positions] from NORTH of the river. Almost all these attempts were frustrated by accurate air bursts by our artillery. Also, those Huns who did land were routed with heavy casualties by B coy.(32)

Such was to be the nature of the fighting on the island for the next five days.

The elaborate plans of Operation ELEPHANT were changed later that afternoon. One war diarist described the change thus: "The general plan was now to work up gradually from both East and West and literally dig out all the enemy that were firmed up on the bridgehead."(33) Throughout that first afternoon, B company fought off no less than three enemy counterattacks. By 5:00 P.M., a hot meal, blankets and some entrenching equipment were sent forward to the dyke junction. Delays in evacuating the day's casualties meant that if a soldier could be reached, their wounds had to be treated on the dyke: a grim proposition, as Ed Brady recalls:

I went forward with one party to see if we could pick up some of the casualties right along the dyke. We hadn't gone 75, 100 yards... when they just cut right down and we just hit the dyke and they went right down both sides of us with machine gun fire. I still don't know why they didn't get us, but they didn't. I said 'There's no use throwing any more guys out here. Anybody else... out here is just going to be a goner or badly wounded, so let's pull back....'

I had one bad situation that night... the first night. One of the fellows had his arm blown off. And they gave us these morphine syrettes... and of course its pitch black and you're on the side of the bloody dyke and you couldn't see what you were doing... They'd got the blood stopped. We'd put a tourniquet on the upper part of his arm... and I knew we had to get him out of there as quick as possible, but he was in terrible pain.... So I fumble around and my fingers are so frozen... All you were supposed to do was jab him in the chest and break [the syrette], squeeze it. Well, I can't tell you today whether I ever jabbed him. I knew I jabbed him in the chest with something... What a helpless feeling when your fingers are so dâmn cold that you can't feel a damn thing. You can't see anything and a guy is suffering and your trying to do something for him. Its just the most helpless feeling in the world... But he lived... We got him out that night. (34)

By 1:30 A.M. on the morning of the 27th, Brady's men had been relieved by Crawley's men who were to attack east along the dyke at first light. By 2:00 A.M., they had dug in along the northern dyke about 800 metres east of the junction. To their south, the remainder of A and C companies (which in the span of twenty four hours had been reduced from a total strength of around 200 to some 60 men) were dug in to protect their southern lines of communication. (35) As dawn approached, Crawley's company started towards the objective, but were met by small arms fire from the north and east. Brigade intelligence reported that their "advance continues slowly." (36)

Throughout this day, the enemy was determined to land troops west of the dyke junction to pincer the forward advancing companies. To counter this threat, the carrier platoon dismounted and went forward during the morning to protect D companies' western flank. As well, an artillery FOO was established 1 kilometre west of the dyke junction to observe any enemy crossings, and to

call down any required artillery.(37) By noon, no less than five such attempts were observed. As this typical intelligence report relates, they were made at a very high cost to the enemy:

[Closest time reference: 12:40 P.M.] The enemy made three attempts at crossing in general area...[1 kilometre west of the dyke junction] arty [artillery] and mortar fire was brought down...a number of the enemy were landed on the island. These were engaged by a patrol sent from our main pos'ns [positions] and were dealt with.(38)

Even if the enemy couldn't reinforce their bridgehead, the dangers to the advancing companies was still very great. As the Acting Commanding Officer, Jim Swayze remembers the problem:

Again, you're walking down a dyke. They just have to shoot in a straight line. And there's always the possibility--the fearful thing was--that they would come up from the north, from the water side and climb up the dyke and cut you off from behind. Not that I can recall that having been done but it was a constant threat.(39)

As the Brigade war diary suggests, this was a very real possibility. By the late morning, Crawley's men had advanced to within 300 metres of the harbour: "'D' coy's attack, however, was thwarted by persistent sniper and MG fire from some enemy who had managed to land in behind them and cas. [casualties] were heavy [heavy] on both sides."(40) By early afternoon, Crawley's company was reported to have secured and dug into this position.(41)

German crossing attempts continued but were stopped by well-directed airbursts. At 1:21 P.M., the enemy counterattacked along the dyke. This time, they were thrown back by the well-dug-in and grenade-throwing Lincs.(42) An hour later, perhaps in response to the counterattack, a flight of Spitfires dive-bombed enemy positions both on the island and to the north of the Maas. The stalemate continued.

Major Crawley's men had made considerable gains, especially when one considers that they had moved forward without the promised armoured support. The engineers had worked through the previous night to construct a bridge

across the Oude Massje at B companies' original crossing point. By 8:45 A.M., 27 January, the first Sherman had started across the bridge when one of its supporting piers capsized. Initial reports estimated that it would take "at least 5 hours to repair the bridge." (43) Throughout the day, the engineers 'gerry-rigged' a repair to the structure, dubbed 'the Mad Whore's Dream.' (44) A troop of SAR tanks crossed onto the island in the late evening of the 27th.

As dusk signalled the arrival of yet another cold night on the island, further preparations were made to maintain the forward positions. The LVT's were seldom still as they unloaded supplies onto the island and moved casualties out. A jug of rum was the only source of comfort in those cold slit-trenches: "It was a nightmare." (45) This night, an HF [Harassing Fire] program was laid on as it was hoped that the lethal combinations of artillery, mortar and medium machine guns would diminish the enemy's enthusiasm to reinforce the island under cover of darkness. (46)

By the morning of Sunday 28 January, the tanks had finally 'married up' with the infantry at the dyke junction. It was with a great deal of relief that the men first heard the low rumble of the 'iron horses' coming up the dyke toward them for they had just spent a very long night under very heavy mortar fire, alert to enemy crossings and counterattacks. (47) Armour had also landed at the extreme eastern end of the island. They too spent the night getting through the nearly 5 kilometres of mud and ice that separated their crossing from the positions that one company of the Argylls had held since 3:30 A.M. that morning. Enemy mortar crews on the north bank slowed the armour's progress. (48)

By 9:00 A.M., forces on both flanks were moving forward. The Brigade war diary details the action:

Later at 0915 hrs., the 3 tks on the right started to edge fwd and one got almost onto the objective, covered by the fire of the other two. Two hostile MG posns were destroyed in this effort.

Simultaneously, an infantry attack went in from the left and made some progress and from both flanks some PW were taken. Fighting continued on into the afternoon and by 1515 hrs the 2 forces were within sight of each other, though not in contact. Opposition by this time consisted chiefly of sniper fire and mortaring from the NORTH....[but] organized resistance on the island proper appeared to be broken.(49)

On the left, Maj. Crawley's men had only one Sherman in support, yet by 10:00 A.M., his leading troops were to the western edge of the harbour.(50) Major Crawley fell wounded during the intense fighting, as did two of his three platoon commanders, Lieutenants Davis and Jackson. By noon, one platoon from A company had gone forward under Captain Dickie to reinforce Crawley's company.(51) On the right, the Argylls had pushed onto the eastern house by midafternoon "under fierce opposition by the enemy." The units were then so close that the Lincs were actually pinned down by the Argyll's supporting tank fire.(52) At 3:05 P.M., Maj. Swayze went forward to the dyke junction. With field glasses, Swayze could actually make out the German defenders emerging from their bunkers west of the inlet.(53) Their tenacity led one Medical Officer to conclude upon an examination of PW's that they "had been heavily doped in order to withstand the nerve-wracking artillery barrages" which were "seldom silent for more than ten minutes at a time."(54)

As dusk approached, intelligence reports conveyed a confident, yet slightly cautious tone as the "Mopping up continued slowly." Although "snipers remain in the area of the objective," the report concluded that they were "being dealt with as speedily as possible."(55) At 4:05 P.M., the enemy was reported on the dyke about 1.5 kilometres west of the dyke junction; they were again trying to encircle the Linc's forward positions. Two hours later, a heavy concentration of mortar fire forced the forward troops into retreat.(56) For the next hour, until 7:00 P.M., their fate "remained obscured" as they dug in a few hundred metres west of the objective. Back at the dyke junction, the

Germans again infiltrated: some casualties were sustained and the forward positions were cut off.(57)-- Captain Dickie was reported missing that night.(58) The Argylls managed to stay on the objective until 10:00 P.M. when the Germans counterattacked, forcing them to retreat also.(59) Little had been gained after a day of significant and costly advances.

The attacks of Monday 29 January again illustrated the need for close armoured support against such a well-defended stronghold. The Argyll's C company attacked the houses before dawn "without tank support." They "suffered heavy casualties", although two of their men actually entered the cellar of the western house (codenamed "Raspberries"). Their attack was postponed "until the following morning, by which time the Engrs. were to have the tanks blocks cleared, so that the tanks might assist in the final Infantry attack."(60) On the left, the Lincs were reorganized into two forces under the Second in Command, Major McCutcheon: the left sector under Captain Martin guarded against any enemy infiltration to the west of the dyke junction; while forces under Lt. T.A. Winfield dug in east of the junction. As the tank that had previously aided D company's attack had bogged down at the dyke junction while being replenished with ammunition, the Regiment made no significant advances that day.(61)

It was about this time that Corporal Ken Hipel returned to battle. He had been wounded in western Belgium and had returned to the unit on 27 January with 128 other reinforcements.(62) Unlike most of the other reinforcements, Hipel had had considerable battle experience so he was in a unique position to comment both on the state of the battalion and the battle it was fighting:

When we came back up, we stopped in Loon op Zand where the company had been staying. We drew extra equipment like snow suits and I was fortunate to get a pair of rubber bottom and leather top boots which the rest of the boys didn't. I knew the store keeper. A lot of them just went in with the ordinary army boots, in the middle of winter.

I remember reporting and I had one man with me that had battle

experience. I think the other 38, there was 40 of us altogether, had no battle experience. We were supposed to be the reinforcements for C company... There was no officer around, there was no sergeants around, I think there was a corporal. He said, 'Report up to Maj. Swayze at command post up on the dyke.' So we found our way up there, nobody volunteered to show us the way: just keep going, you'll find it.' So we got up there and I reported to him and told him I had the reinforcements for C company. 'Well,' he says, 'things have been bad. Take them out there and you'll find some slit trenches and put them in and hold that section up there where the tanks are knocked out.'

So there's six inches of snow on the ground and colder than hell. So we get up there. We got one blanket. So we get in the slit trenches... But then it was real hell, because of the cold, and all those guys with no battle experience. The only time you could be fed was at night. In the day time, if you stuck your head out, it was 'Goodbye, Charlie.' (63)

Private Syd Elford of the transport company remembers giving one of these new men some advice during the battle:

He was just a young kid. I was getting ready to go. It was late in the evening and I had to go back to get a load of ammunition. And they always reported at the RAP [Regimental Aid Post]... And this young kid was coming up... and he came over to me and he said 'What's it like up there?' I said 'Its pretty quiet right now.' And just then Jerry let go with a bunch of shells... I said 'Don't worry about it. All you have got to do is keep your head down. Keep your head well buried and watch what the other guys are doing. Pick yourself an old timer and watch what he's doing.' I went down and got my ammunition. Two or three hours later I came back and reported to the RAP. Who's laying on the stretcher but the kid. He just waved at me and said 'Going home.' (64)

The morning of Tuesday 30 January broke under overcast skies and biting cold; sleet poured down throughout the day, providing an appropriately grim setting for the climax to Operation ELEPHANT. During the night, the enemy again attempted to reinforce their ever-diminishing bridgehead; again, these crossings "were successfully smashed by Art. and mortar fire." (65) The Argylls made two unsuccessful attacks on the objective during the morning; the Brigade war diarist commenting that "There was something of a stalemate during this morning on both flanks, with every movement on both sides bringing down heavy automatic fire." (66) Still more tanks had been ferried onto the eastern end of the island during the night but their progress was blocked by a reconnaissance

tank that had bogged down on the approach. This tank was cleared by midday, allowing one Sherman to move right onto the objective (though "the tanks's commander did NOT expect to be able to...get his tank out again"). It knocked out a machine gun position.(67) The Argylls attacked again in the afternoon but it was not until last light when their C company could report that they had finally taken the western stronghold, ("Raspberry") with the aid of no less than five SAR tanks.(68)

All that remained was for the two flanks to close together: at 11:30 P.M., a two man reconnaissance patrol from the Argylls skirted south of the objective and made contact with the Lincs' forward positions.(69) That night, the sleet turned to rain and by 4:00 A.M. 31 January both the forward positions and the dyke junction came under heavy mortaring and shelling. Under this cover, the few survivors of the 10th company, 17th Para Regiment must have retreated across the Maas. A party of 45 Lincs under Capt. Dunlop pushed over the final few hundred metres to clear the western portion of the objective. They found no enemy. By 9:00 A.M., the exhausted and cold forces met amongst the then silent, abandoned ruins surrounding the harbour.(70) After five days, the battle for Kapelsche Veer was over.

To the surviving men of the Regiment, Kapelsche Veer stands as a symbol of their toughness and grim determination: a fight that they stuck out not only through the bitter cold and wet, but also through severe initial losses, and the inevitable "friction of war" and cruel acts of fate which they, as seasoned soldiers, had then come to expect. Yet many feel that they were improperly committed to an action which was better left unfought. As Owen Borthwick, one who was wounded there, puts it:

We did it. We were told to do it. We did our job; it was costly.

dreadfully so. I think we lost people we should not have lost... But, I believe in this situation, it was a mistake. I guess that's pretty strong. I guess, now forty years after, it doesn't really matter all that much. But in retrospect, I would guess that it was ill-conceived. (7P)

If we want to understand why the Lincoln and Welland Regiment fought the way it did in the conditions just described, we must understand the decisions that were made by those who sent them there. Indeed, many of those decisions were ill-conceived as they were made by a military hierarchy that deemed a limited, stubborn, objective important. As a result, the planners worked in a climate which obscured the enemy's primary tactical advantages. The Regiment's initial losses were almost inevitable. The casualties suffered on the first day represent 62 percent of the Regiment's 183 casualties (50 fatal) suffered during the entire battle. This figure does not include a further 40 reported cases of frost bite and trench foot. These losses delayed the final capture of the island, thereby increasing the suffering endured in subsequent days; it also made the Regiment depend on the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to eventually secure the island, at a cost to them of 15 dead and 35 wounded. (72) Why was such an operation necessary? and: Why was Operation ELEPHANT conducted the way it was?

During this period of late 1944, early 1945, I British Corps under Sir John Crocker, was responsible for the defence of western Holland below the Maas River. In December, 1944, when the enemy launched their offensive through the Ardennes, there was considerable concern that portions of Army Group 'A' would attack south across the Maas through Breda to Antwerp, if and when the westward advancing Army Group 'B' met with success. Kapelsche Veer was to have been one of the divisional crossing points of the German 88th Corps. (73) With the failure of the Ardennes offensive, the chances of an assault from the north diminished considerably. The Canadian Official History suggests that by

4 January 1945, Canadian Army intelligence had concluded that the enemy "had probably changed his mind about an offensive operation over the Maas." (74)

Nevertheless, the bridgehead at Kapelsche Veer had been strengthened in the event of a crossing and on the night of 30-31 December, 1944 units from the 1st Polish Armoured Division were dispatched to capture it. Forty six casualties were sustained in this first unsuccessful attack. On 7 January, the 9th Polish Infantry Battalion renewed the attack. In a battle that would foreshadow future engagements, the Poles managed to clear the harbour area by noon, "but stubborn paratroops, dug in along the dyke nearby and aided by mortar fire, prevented further progress and again forced the Poles to retire." (75) Casualties were again reported to be heavy. (76)

Still another attack preceded Operation ELEPHANT: Operation Horse was conducted by the 47th Royal Marine Commando on 13-14 January, but they too were repulsed, suffering 49 casualties. (77) Corps orders for ELEPHANT were issued as soon as Horse failed; D-Day was to "be as soon as practicable, but the ruling factor in selecting the date is not to be speed, but that the operation is properly tied up." (78) So it was that Operation ELEPHANT was to commence on Friday 26 January, over three weeks after Canadian intelligence had concluded that an attack from the north of the Maas was not imminent.

The reasons for staging Operation ELEPHANT are partly found in the events leading up to the attack. Three failed attempts to take a seemingly minor objective on an otherwise inactive front may have been embarrassing to some. Major H.F. Wood, a staff officer with 4 Division at the time of the attack and author of an article on the operation, suggests that the question of Allied prestige was the prime reason to capture the objective:

To have permitted this garrison to exist unmolested on the south bank might have engendered in the troops of 1st British Corps a belief in the superiority of the German soldier. After the unsuccessful attempts to drive them out, the liquidation of this sore spot became unavoidable. (79)

The 1 British Corps and First Canadian Army felt that this bridgehead was a 'thorn in its side,' which had "acquired a certain symbolic significance." (80) Of course, such reasoning is beyond the understanding of the man at the 'sharp end', for as one simply states, "I don't think that anybody really knew whether the damn place ever existed." (81)

The Canadian Official History suggests a more practical reason to capture the island. As it fronted the sector then held by the 1st Polish Armoured Division, a unit plagued with poorly trained reinforcements that had just recently been fighting on the German side, Stacey suggests that "To have left an active German bridgehead on the front of this formation in such circumstances would have been foolish." (82) Indeed, as a 1 British Corps Operation Instruction from 20 January suggests, the general area north of the Maas was "an ever present threat to 1 Corps area" as limited paratroop attacks could conceivably disrupt lines of communication. (83)

Whatever the reasons for Operation ELEPHANT, there is little doubt that the island's alleged strategic importance kept the plans for its capture well beyond the reach of the Regiment slated to do the job. Even though the Regiment knew of and rehearsed for ELEPHANT days in advance, its commanders clearly had less control over the plan than would otherwise have been the case. First British Corps, in its secret directive of 14 January to 4 Division, outlined only the general parameters of the operation that would be called ELEPHANT. Two days later, a more detailed instruction was sent to 10 Infantry Brigade by the Division; its plan was completed three days later. On 20 January, 1945, the Regiment's provisional operation order was completed: the Regiment's only such order during its entire ten months in action. (84) The Regiment was responsible for the details of the operation, such as certain aspects of supply and the specific locations of formations, but there was very

little it could have changed as the operation was passed through the Divisional and Brigade headquarters. As then acting commanding officer, Maj. Swayze remarked: "You only demand so much...you only do what you're told but this thing was laid out--'Take this..'"(85)

The Regiment was at the mercy of those who had not learned anything from the previous attempts to take the island. To expect to surprise an enemy who had repelled three attacks in as many weeks over the type of terrain they then defended was clearly an absurd suggestion. Nevertheless, Corps planners felt this to be the most prudent course, suggesting that the Division introduce "some new element or method into Operation ELEPHANT so that surprise can still be achieved."(86) This element was chosen by the then newly appointed GOC of 4 Division, Major-General Christopher Vokes: such were the origins of the waterborne assault force. The use of such a daring tactic is interesting when one considers the reluctance with which the Division took on the task. The Divisional war diary entry of 14 January conveys a very pessimistic tone about the upcoming operation:

The division is proud, of course, to have the reputation of being a pinch hitter, but the pleasure, if NOT the distinction is a dubious one.(87)

This feeling was passed down to the Brigade two days later in their operational instructions. One paragraph in the order discussing the nature of the artillery requirements obviously had an impact on the Brigade war diarist as it is found in his entry for 17 January:

When considering the bombardment of the bridgehead position it should be borne in mind that the extraordinarily good fdworks [fieldworks] of the German grn [garrison] are practically impervious to neutralization or destruction.(88)

Such a statement was certainly a realistic appraisal, but by then the Corps and Divisional planners had already decided on the form of attack. In light of what was then known about the island, one can only imagine the morale of those

assigned to the operation.

In an interview given years later, Vokes remembered that he too was reluctant to take on the operation. In the same interview, he made an amazing admission about the decision to use the water borne assault force:

The initial effort to reduce the German position had been made by the 1st Polish Armoured Division at the end of December. A second attempt, by the 47th Royal Marine Commando, also failed, and then, for some reason, they wanted us to have a go at it. I was told to do it. As far as I was concerned, the Germans could have stayed there for the rest of the war. They were doing no harm. ... I thought that the action was a great waste of young lives. But I had to do it--you can't just say no when an order comes down from army headquarters.

It was bitterly cold, and the weather spoiled my effort to take the German position with a minimum of losses. When the action was first suggested to me, I said I would take it on, very reluctantly, if they could provide me with twenty-eight Peterborough canoes, because I had visions of sending the troops down the river in those silent craft under the cover of darkness. For a while I thought that by asking for the canoes, I might have turned the whole thing off. Well, it wasn't. The canoes were provided--flown in specially from Canada--and I had to go ahead.(89)

Vokes seems to imply that the idea for the canoe assault force arose not from purely tactical considerations, but rather, as a ploy to demonstrate to I British Corps that the success of the operation would depend on special tactics that would be far too hazardous for those involved.

The idea of the water assault must have meshed with the planner's blind desire to surprise the enemy. The Canadians took over the Poles' positions south of the island just one day before the operation so no prior reconnaissance of the island could have been made.(90) One can only speculate whether such measures would have illuminated many of the problems that arose on that first day and which plagued the operation throughout: the soft terrain which made armoured advances so difficult; or the ice on the river itself, a situation that was also reported in divisional war diaries as late as 23 January, just three days before D-Day.(91)

As soon as the operation was completed, requests were made through the

same channels that planned the operation for a postmortem to find out what went wrong. The Brigade produced a document ("Lessons from Op 'Elephant'") which, other than suggesting the obvious deficiencies of the excessive smoke and supporting flamethrower plans, confirmed the tactics employed after the first day: suggesting that "This plan, although slow, was successful and was not costly in manpower." (92) The main lessons suggested by the Brigade were in stark contrast to the principles which guided the planners of the operation just weeks before. The authors felt that "Ops. of this kind must be conducted at a very slow pace. Objectives should be very limited and must be completely mopped-up and consolidated before the succeeding effort commences." Small sections of no more than five or six men were thought to be the best number to make an advance along such a dyke under good visibility so that direct fire weapons--the tank being "the ideal direct fire weapon for this type of action"--could be used against the fixed machine gun lines. The Brigade felt that smoke could be used but only if "very carefully controlled" during the initial approach; mortars and artillery could also be applied to aid in advance. (93)

The lessons that 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade learned from the final battle for Kapelsche Veer merely confirmed the tactics that were being taught and retaught to Allied troops during this period: infantry, with the close support of artillery and tanks, could, through "attacks with limited objectives" successfully (although slowly) overrun even the most well defended position. The planners' desire to surprise the enemy with "new elements" went against the most basic tactical military doctrines.

Once this report was completed, Major-General Vokes made a number of additional comments about the operation which were submitted to the Corps as a supplementary to the Brigade report. Clearly, Vokes was in an awkward

position: at once, he was obliged to agree with the Brigade's condemnation of tactics he had endorsed: while defending them even though they had failed so completely that first day. Ultimately, Voke's comments reflect command's sometimes all-too-simplified view of the battlefield. Vokes did agree that small units advancing by "a series of short consolidated bounds" ("In other words, the application of fire and mov [movement] to a high degree") was essential in such conditions. Vokes also made the valid point that the higher proportion of officers and NCO's that were sent on the initial assault upon a suggestion by the 47th Royal Marine Commando resulted only in a higher proportion of casualties in those ranks.(94)

Vokes' criticism of the initial attack on the right flank, when C company allegedly followed up too fast and went onto what was then an already crowded objective, is far too simplistic. In his view, this overcrowding was the reason the assault failed.(95) As Jim Dandy suggested, the delays in advancing up the dyke, the blinding smoke and the communication failures prevented him from assessing the situation before him. These conditions--combined with the well defended German positions that made the forward dyke area such a killing ground--were no fault of the infantry.

Vokes went on to defend the use of the waterborne assault force, an aspect of the operation which the Brigade very diplomatically chose not to examine. Vokes suggested that if it was not for three factors: the "vagaries of wind and weather" which prevented a proper smoke screening; a full moon which uncovered the assault team's preparations; as well as "severe icing conditions," the water force would have fulfilled its tasks.(96) Such statements only expose the futile nature of the waterborne and indeed, the entire initial assault. These factors (save the local wind conditions) were all observable before the operation began, as were the conditions which

plagued the land borne assault. Vokes was forced to defend what was then obvious to everyone involved in Operation ELEPHANT: the tactics of the first day were the result of some very serious misconceptions that developed from an increasingly urgent need to capture a stubborn, German stronghold. The result was the employment of tactics that were inappropriately based on surprise and speed, rather than the less spectacular, though better tested principles that eventually took the island.

For the men of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, the battle for Kapelsche Veer was yet another example of the "friction of war." They not only faced it in the cold of their slit trenches and in the tenaciousness of their foe, they also faced the "friction of war" from those who committed them to Operation ELEPHANT.

CHAPTER V: NOTES

1 "Provisional Operation Order for Operation 'Elephant'." in War Diary. Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.105). 20 January 1945. p. 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.. p. 2.

4 Ibid.. p. 2.

5 Maj. H.F. Wood. "Operation Elephant: The Battle for Kapelsche Veer." Canadian Army Journal 3 (September 1949). 10.

6 "Op. Order Op. Elephant." 20 January 1945. p. 2.

7 Ibid.

8 Wood. "Operation Elephant." p. 10.

9 Ibid.

10 War Diary. L & W. 20 January 1945.

11 E.J. Brady. Taped Interview. 20 June 1984.

12 War Diary. L & W. 25 January 1945.

13 War Diary. 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade (PAC RG 24 Vol. 14. 156). 26 January 1945.

14 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.

15 War Diary. 10 CIB. 26 January 1945. The times mentioned are rough approximations based on entries from the Brigade Intelligence Reports and the War Diaries. These sources are sometimes contradictory. in which case the times used will be from the Brigade Message Forms.

16 "Brigade Intelligence Message Form." War Diary. L & W. 2:00 P.M. 27 January 1945.

17 Brady. Taped Interview. 20 June 1984.

18 War Diary. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15.005). 26 January 1945.

19 G.H. Brittain. Taped Interview. 26 June 1984.

20 "Message Form." 9:30 P.M. 26 January 1945.

21 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.

22 War Diary. A & S Highlanders. 26 January 1945.

23 War Diary. L & W. 26 January 1945.

24 C.O. Borthwick. Taped Interview. 11 April 1984. Although it seems unlikely that he survived that morning (his grave is in the Bergen op Zoom Canadian Military Cemetery) there are those who still insist that Lambert wasn't killed. Toronto Daily Star correspondent John Clare doubtless did much to perpetuate his reputation.

Well, they took Kapelscheveer yesterday after five hellish days of mud and blood and aching weariness on the death-swept flats. And last night in "X" company they were not talking about the success of the operation. Quietly and diffidently--and sometimes angrily and obscenely, the way men talk when they are moved--they were talking about the mad major. Only he isn't a mad major any more. He's a sort of immortal major. (John Clare. "Hope to Hear 'Mad Major' Cry 'Peanuts' Again." Toronto Daily Star. Thursday 1 February 1945, p. 3.)

25 War Diary. 10 CIB. 26 January 1945.

26 "Message Form." 9:30 P.M. 26 January 1945.

27 E.J. Brady. Taped Interview. 20 June 1984.

28 War Diary. L & W. 26 January 1945.

29 H. Loughlin. Taped Interview. 3 July 1984.

30 E.J. Brady. Taped Interview. 20 June 1984.

31 War Diary. L & W. 26 January 1945; Maj. R.L. Rogers. History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954), p. 225.

32 War Diary. 10 CIB. 26 January 1945.

33 War Diary. A & S Highlanders. 26 January 1945.

34 E.J. Brady. Taped Interview. 20 June 1984.

35 War Diary. 10 CIB. 27 January 1945.

36 "Message Form." 9:30 P.M. 27 January 1945.

37 War Diary. L & W. 27 January 1945.

38 "Message Form." 9:30 P.M. 27 January 1945.

39 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 21 April 1984.

40 War Diary. 10 CIB. 27 January 1947.

41 "Message Form." 9:30 P.M. January 1945.

42 War Diary. L & W. 27 January 1945.

43 War Diary. 10 CIB. 27 January 1945.

44 Maj. R.A. Paterson, A Short History: The Tenth Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hilversum, Netherlands: De Jong & Co., 1945), p. 55.

45 Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.

46 War Diary, L & W, 27 January 1945.

47 "Message Form," 8:30 A.M. 28 January 1945.

48 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 28 January 1945; "Message Form," 8:30 A.M. 28 January 1945.

49 War Diary, 10 CIB, 28 January 1945.

50 "Message Form," 7:30 P.M. 28 January 1945.

51 War Diary, L & W, 28 January 1945.

52 "Message Form," 7:30 P.M. 28 January 1945.

53 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 21 April 1984.

54 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 28 January 1945.

55 "Message Form," 7:30 P.M. 28 January 1945.

56 War Diary, L & W, 28 January 1945.

57 War Diary, 10 CIB, 28 January 1945.

58 Correspondent John Clare interviewed Lance-Corporal Hy Page after the battle. His account most certainly describes the death of Capt. Dickie:

We went in with a tank and when we got there, the Germans lay down in their deep slit trenches and dugouts. We got one out and he was killed when he tried to fight it out. Then they started to mortar us, and we had to pull out. Our captain was taken prisoner and a sniper got the tank officer. The captain objected to the way the German guard they had put over him was poking him in the ribs with a bayonet and he smacked him. The Germans shot him," said Page. (John Clare, "Hold 'Firm Base' Like Holding Tiger by Tail," Toronto Daily Star, Saturday 3 February 1945, p. 5)

59 War Diary, 10 CIB, 28 January 1945.

60 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 29 January 1945.

61 War Diary, L & W, 29 January 1945.

62 Ibid., 27 January 1945.

63 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

64 S.C. Elford, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.

65 War Diary, A & S Highlanders, 30 January 1945.

- 66 War Diary. 10 CIB. 30 January 1945.
- 67 War Diary. A & S Highlanders. 30 January 1945.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 War Diary. L & W. 31 January 1945.
- 71 C.O. Borthwick. Taped Interview. 11 April 1984.
- 72 Lt.-Col. H.M. Jackson ed., The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada [Princess Louise's] 1928--1953 (Montreal: Industrial School for the Deaf, 1953). p. 167.
- 73 Col. C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War vol. 3: The Victory Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960). pp. 446-7, 450.
- 74 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 448.
- 75 Ibid., p. 452.
- 76 "4 Canadian Armoured Division Situation Report." War Diary. Lincoln and Welland Regiment. 10:00 A.M. 8 January 1945.
- 77 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 452.
- 78 "1 BR CORPS MEMO TO 4 CAD: Op Elephant" (PAC RG 24 Vol. 10.493 File 249 C. 4 C. 7). 14 January 1945.
- 79 Wood, "Operation Elephant." p. 9.
- 80 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 454.
- 81 Major Brady was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his role in Operation ELEPHANT.
- 82 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 455.
- 83 "1 Corps Operations Instruction No. 33." (PAC RG 24 Vol. 10.943 File 249 C. 4 (D12)). 20 January 1945.
- 84 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 451.
- 85 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 86 "1 BRT CORPS MEMO." 14 January 1945.
- 87 War Diary. 4 Canadian Armoured Division General Staff (PAC RG 24 Vol. 13.790). 14 January 1945.
- 88 War Diary. 10 CIB. 17 January 1945.

89 Chris Vokes, quoted in David Kaufman ed., A Liberation Album: Canadians in the Netherlands 1944-45 (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd., 1980), pp.67-70.

90 War Diary, 10 CIB, 17 January 1945.

91 War Diary, 4 CAD, 23 January 1945.

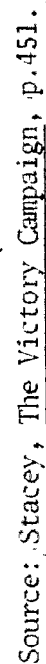
92 Brig. J.C. Jefferson, "Lessons Learned from Op 'Elephant'," (PAC RG 24 Vol. 10.944 Folder 249 C. 4 (D 29)), 7 February 1945.

93 Ibid., pp. 2-3

94 Maj.-Gen. Chris Vokes, "Comments to 10 CIB re: Op. Elephant," (PAC RG 24 Vol. 10.943 File 249 C. 4 (D 7)), 1 February 1945. (Handwritten)

95 Maj.-Gen. Chris Vokes, "Lessons--Op. Elephant," (PAC RG 24 Vol. 10.914 Folder 249 C. 4 (D 29)), 10 February 1945.

96 Ibid.



Source: Stacey, The Victory Campaign, p.451.

CHAPTER VI: THE RHINELAND

The History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment suggests that "Kapelsche Veer was treated as a dividing point: everything was 'Before Kapelsche Veer' or 'After Kapelsche Veer.'" (1) Jim Swayze agrees: "It was a turning point in that we had so many casualties. It was a different Regiment afterwards." (2) Even so, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment 'After Kapelsche Veer' suffered no less significant losses during the final three months of the War. In many ways, those that fought in the Rhineland in February and March, and then north into Germany in April were a part of the Regiment's "lost generation." It sustained nearly 600 casualties by War's end.

The Regiment's role in the battle for the Rhineland was short, but intense. Between 1 February and 20 March, the Regiment sustained 213 casualties, 77 percent of which (164) were suffered on only three days of fighting. It was a battle characterized by climatic and geographical extremes, as well as a determined, well-prepared enemy.

Through the first three weeks of February, 1945, 4 Armoured Division remained under I British Corps which was still "strung out along the Maas." (3) The Lincoln and Welland Regiment spent this time in Loon op Zand, recovering and rebuilding, an increasingly difficult process. The severity of the losses suffered at Kapelsche Veer coupled with the months already spent in action affected the ever-dwindling numbers of originals still attached. John Martin recalls a haunting conversation he had had with Captain Dickie prior to 26 January:

The night before Kapelsche Veer, Dickie and I were talking and I remember at that particular stage, he and I were the only two officers, combatant officers in the Battalion left that had not been killed or wounded. Dick told me that night that this was to be the last one for him; that he could not take it any longer. When this

was over he was going to ask the Brigadier to be sent home. Would you believe it, he got killed and that left me. We got up to the Hochwald and by that time, these odds were really getting to me....(4)

Others still suffered the physical effects of their time on the island. Corporal Hipel had returned to the unit at the height of the battle and had sustained one of the Regiment's many cases of frost bite. Afterwards, he slept with his feet packed in snow: a remedy suggested by his well-meaning but misinformed colleagues. For a week, Hipel could not put his boots on (the Medical Officer told him he was lucky he didn't lose his toes or feet). Nevertheless, the combination of the nagging cold, his thawing feet and the memory of the battle just fought diminished his enthusiasm to go on:

At night they brought up the food. One night they brought up the rum ration. Well, a few of the boys got a little high because they hadn't been eating good. It was quite a schmozzle. I think if they had had a road across the Atlantic, I'd have walked home that night. That's the only time when I felt I had had enough of it.(5)

Doubtless many would have followed the corporal home during that time.

These were days marked not only by "rest and reorganization" but also by visits and acknowledgements from higher command. On the morning of 1 February, Major General Vokes spoke to the remaining officers of the Regiment. As he had already relieved Major Swayze of his command, it is clear that his were not words of praise.(6) In following days, Major Swayze received Lieutenant-General Crerar as well as a note of congratulations from Corps Commander Crocker "for the outstanding showing of the unit on Operation 'Elephant'".(7) Clearly, his command of the Regiment during the battle for Kapelsche Veer was viewed sympathetically by the highest echelons of the Canadian Army. His immediate replacement was Major M.R. Dare, formerly of 4 Armoured Brigade.

The bulk of the fourth generation arrived in the first days of February. Among them were men from the Regiment's earlier generations who had been

drafted back into the unit. Private John Reeve had caught diptheria some months before. As he recalls: "It was a kind of hard getting back into it again. Coming up, I really got scared when I heard the guns...from being out of it for a while." (8) Major Crummer was also recalled to the unit from England after being wounded in September. He and Major Baldwin, who had been wounded a day later, were brought back on 7 February to take over rifle companies. Crummer's feelings were mixed upon returning to the Regiment:

Going back in was one of the severe trials, mentally, to myself. 'Oh Christ, do I have to endure that again? I'm not going to make it this time...' I think of all my buddies who had dropped by the side the first time they were in. 'You're going to take another run at it, you damn fool.' But you do it and it was a joy for me to see my buddies up there that had been sticking it out. Johnny had a little graver hair; Junior [Dunlop] was the...same happy-go-lucky character that he was. [They were] sticking it out, goddamn good soldiers. [I have] great admiration for them... (9)

Majors Crummer and Baldwin arrived in Loon op Zand with 32 reinforcements. One of them was Lt. Col. Rowan C. Coleman MC; the second commanding officer Major Crummer had 'escorted' to the front. Like Lt.-Col. Cromb, Coleman was a former member of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; unlike Cromb, Coleman is a short, unassuming man: one private of a stature similar to Coleman's recalls being reprimanded for not saluting him as he passed by that first day. (10) Yet, Coleman was to gain a substantial reputation for his aggressive leadership and conduct in battle:

This Coleman was a real daredevil type, all guts. And he had his command post a way up. And they were having their orders group there. And the shells were coming down and you won't believe this...but the house was...[swaying]...I was petrified to look. The walls were coming in. I thought, 'Holy smokes, I'll never get out of this one.' (11)

Coleman himself remembers the circumstances which brought him to command the Lincoln and Welland Regiment:

It was obviously a period of intense reorganization [for the Regiment] I was sent for by the Brigade commander, Jim Jefferson and he told me...what the situation was. I was given no advance notice on what was happening or which Regiment I was to join when I was

ordered out of England into Brussels. It was rather amusing. I just sat there in a hotel and no one knew where I was supposed to go...

Jim Jefferson gave me a week to get the Regiment back on its feet. Thank God, the great Mike Dare was already there...and he was of course a taskmaster at organization. My task was made infinitely lighter by the fact that he had already started. But the ultimate decisions fell on me. I hitched in as fast as I could. [1] went through a period of interviewing the survivors, that is down to the rank of company sergeant major, just to see what was left. And at the same time, we had 17 brand new officers sent up as reinforcements and they all had to be sorted out to see what calibre they were...That was the situation when I arrived and it lasted for a week and then we were put back into the order of battle.(12)

A training schedule began the day Coleman arrived in Loon op Zand. Through the next weeks, the companies worked through the usual exercises which focused on individual infantry skills (i.e. small arms firing, field exercises and route marches) as well as the tactics of the basic fighting unit.

Infantry cum tank training was also organized on a company level during this time. Over the past months, the experienced infantryman had learned to appreciate both the importance and limitations of their colleagues in the tank corps. The Divisional training school (the "Udenhout Military Academe" as it was then known) offered a two week course to both officers and NCO's (and those who aspired to these ranks) dealing with the intricacies of armoured coordination; a topic on which a former head of the school comments:

You can't move the tanks without infantry support. They won't move. You see pictures in Hollywood of [tanks] going all over the place; they don't. They're very timorous of going anywhere. You get one German behind a clump of trees with a bazooka and that's it. You can't get the tanks to go down a road without the infantry to clear the bridges...[etc.] The other danger is you can't have the infantry getting too close to the tanks because the tanks draw fire. They don't want to be close. For example, if you moved a tank out in the middle of the street, and you stood on the sidewalk beside it and then fired off that 75 mm. gun...the blast would tear your eardrums out and probably kill you so that the infantry have got to know these things, and not go merrily roaring along. There are so many factors to it, but I think that the main idea of infantry working with tanks is that both sides get to know each other.(13)

The relationship between the tankman and the foot soldier seems to have been a paradoxical one. One NCO typifies this attitude when he says that the South Alberta Regiment was "a hell of a good tank regiment: one of the best. We more or less had a code of ethics: if our boys were hit, they'd do anything possible to cover us while we retrieved them, and vice versa.... We got along pretty good with the BCR's too." Once out of action, the tankmen were avoided, as the same NCO explains:

We used to hate it if we were moving up and they came through us or stopped beside us because they drew the 88 fire. You never knew if they [the enemy] were using an AP [armoured piercing] or a shrapnel shell, in case they had the turret open. We used to curse them and tell them to move out of our way. (14)

On the foggy morning of 18 February, the Regiment moved to Waalwijk some 10 kilometres northwest of Loon op Zand where the Argylls had been keeping watch across the Maas. Two days later, operation Schultz was launched--the Regiment's last patrol over the Maas. Thirty six all ranks, headed by Lt. P. Hedley were dispatched to capture a prisoner. The patrol followed a then familiar pattern: upon crossing, the patrol "encountered stiffening resistance" from both machine guns and mortars "and were unable to capture a PW." Thirty five men returned three hours later: four of them were wounded. Private B.R. Barwick was taken prisoner, having been with the Regiment for only two weeks, since 6 February. (15)

That afternoon, Lt. Col. Coleman attended an Armoured Brigade O-group in which the upcoming operation--codenamed BLOCKBUSTER--was outlined. Operation BLOCKBUSTER was a continuation of Operation VERITABLE which had begun on 8 February. VERITABLE had been designed to overcome the three German defensive lines built in the 30 kilometres between the Maas and Rhine rivers east of Nijmegen. Each line consisted of a series of trenches, anti-tank ditches and wire belts which ran between fortified villages and farmhouses. The most

easterly line lay west of the Dutch-German border: its northern half faced the rolling, wooded area southeast of Nijmegen; it then angled south following the western bank of the Maas as far as Gennepe. The second line lay a further 6 kilometres eastward, running through the centre of the Reichswald forest. This was the West Wall or, as it was known by the Allies, the Siegfried Line. It protected the German cities of Cleve and Goch. The third line was 19 kilometres east of the Siegfried Line. It fronted the rolling and sparsely wooded country beyond the Reichswald forest. These positions stretched south from the Rhine river at Rees, past the western edge of the Hochwald forest and the woods just south, the Balberger Wald. These entrenchments were built on a forward slope which afforded its occupants a view of both the valley to the northwest and the plateau which ran between the towns of Calcar and Udem. This was the Hochwald Layback; the Germans respectfully called it the Schlieffen position. Beyond these defenses is the city of Xanten, then the Rhine itself. (16)

Still more obstacles confronted Horrock's XXX British Corps as VERITABLE began. A heavy snowfall coupled with an early thaw produced severe flooding south of the Rhine and seas of mud on the higher ground. One chronicler suggests that these conditions were "comparable only with the most hideous weeks on the Somme and Passchendaele. (17) VERITABLE "had gone slowly" as a result. Goch, located at the southeast corner of the Reichswald Forest, was captured on the 21st in the final attack of the XXX Corps. Two of the three German defensive lines had been breached, but the approaches above the Hochwald Layback were still in the enemy's possession.

Plans to continue the offensive were organized the same day Goch fell in a conference of Corps and Divisional commanders headed by General Crerar. While the XXXth Corps struck south of Goch to meet with the Ninth U.S. Army,

II Canadian Corps would be committed toward the Hochwald Layback in "an all-out effort" so as to "exploit to Xanten." For this operation, General Simond's II Corps was comprised of 2 and 3 Canadian Infantry Divisions (both of which had fought in VERITABLE) as well as 11 British and 4 Canadian Armoured Divisions. The infantry divisions would attack first to secure the northern half of the ridge overlooking the Hochwald Layback. The 4th Division's Armoured Brigade group (Tiger Group) was to follow through to expand the bridgehead. The Corps' efforts would then focus on the heavily fortified town of Udem, while 11 Armoured Division attacked south of the town to secure the southern extreme of the ridge. Corps Commander Simonds was determined to maintain the momentum of the advance, deciding to take the most direct route to Xanten. The 4th Division's Infantry Brigade (Lion Force) were to then go down the ridge and across the flats toward a 300 metre wide gap between the Hochwald Forest and the Balberger Wald. Here they were to capture a railline which ran toward Xanten. With the track removed, the line would be the traffic route for the push to the Rhine. (18) This was the plan, but as the Regimental history suggests "the following two weeks were to witness an amazing succession of altered situations and altered plans" as well as severe losses. (19)

On 22 February, the Regimental convoy moved east through s'Hertogenbosch, Grave, Nijmegen and across the border into Cleve which had then been "Caenned almost into oblivion" as the Canadian Official history put it. (20) The Regiment spent that night south of Cleve in an area which was "literally jammed with troops and masses of equipment" being readied for the operation. (21) Although these days before 26 February--D-Day--were "comparatively quiet" when seen against the battle then being fought by XXX Corps to the south, they were still hectic: the Regiment moved twice on the

23rd. To add to the confusion, anti-tank guns and Crocodile flamethrowers were placed under Regimental command while A and C companies were released to the British Columbia Regiment. One private recalls the scene before D-Day:

[The concentration area] was a sodden field alright: it was mud. It was late winter rains and it was, I'll swear... a ploughed field. They had unloaded all kinds of supplies in that particular area: it was a staging area. They had fields full of crates of hard tack, bully beef, canned food, things of that sort... They loaded us onto troop carriers that were sort of tanks... and most of us... were suffering from diarrhoea. That was basically because we had found some of the canned apricots and had gotten into them and it was disastrous, let me tell you. They loaded us into these things and they took us on and dropped us off someplace in the dark in a barn and told us to sleep there for the night and we just dropped wherever we could. The next morning I woke up and I had dropped in a cow stall and I was covered with crap... You were dead tired, you didn't know where the hell you were. (22)

It was only on 25 February that the Regimental war diarist could draw a clear picture of 4 Division's role in the operation. The Lincs and Argylls had both been placed under Brigadier Moncel's ~~Armoured~~ Tiger Group which had been divided into five forces. Each was given a specific responsibility during the subsequent phases of the operation. The initial assault toward the Calcar-Udem ridge was to be made by "Jerry" and "Snuff" forces; the former on the left. These groups were composed of one tank regiment less one squadron supported by two infantry companies mounted in two dozen 'kangaroos': flail tanks spearheaded the advance. "Cole" and "Jock" forces were to follow up to secure the positions with their anti-tank guns and flamethrowers. "Smith" force was to then push on towards the high ground north of Udem. The Infantry Brigade, led by the Algonquins, was to then seize the Hochwald Gap. (23) Rowan Coleman recalls his reaction to the plan:

I... remember my irritation at the time and the irritation of all my fellow commanders. Here we are being divided up into little segments... Yes, it was complicated, unnecessarily complicated from the standpoint of a commander...

I found myself half way up the wall... I had been a company commander with the British in Africa: a company commander and second in command of the Patricia's [Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry]; and a commanding officer of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment.

And to me, all that had gone before was fairly straightforward. When I got this show here, I thought 'Good God, how mixed up can you get?' I was really wild with impatience and anger as anybody who was with me will attest. (24)

The night of the 25th offered but a small sampling of the problems that would be met in the coming days. The final moves to the start lines were made in an icy rain which once again turned the ground into mud. "Jerry" and "Snuff" Forces reached their assembly area in time, although their convoy was halted to allow the three Forces following to catch up through the quagmire. (25) BLOCKBUSTER began as Tiger Force struggled with its stranded vehicles. At 4:30 A.M., 2 and 3 Divisions went in under a curtain of artificial moonlight put up after a 45 minute artillery barrage. As the dawn broke, Tiger Force prepared to push through 2 Division, even though not all of the latter's objectives had been taken. "Jerry" and "Snuff" Forces moved forward at 9:00 A.M. For the first few hours, their progress was slowed by both the mud and isolated groups armed with Panzerfausts which "accounted for several Canadian tanks." (26) Major Crummer's C company and Major Baldwin's A company were a part of "Jerry" Force that day. Corporal Hipel well remembers this advance. It was his last:

I remember stopping and asking this new lieutenant who had no battle experience where the hell the rest of the companies were. We were losing Shermans: they were running over mines; blowing tracks; getting stuck. I said, 'We'd better stop until we got communications.' He had the radio. He says, 'I lost radio contact, but we've got to take the crossroads.' Well, I said, 'if that's your wish, we'll push on.' So we head up to the crossroads, and by the time we get there, we've got one lousy Sherman left. And the Rams [armoured vehicles] we were in, the heaviest armour we had on them was a 50 calibre [machine gun].

There was a hedge. So we dug part of the platoon along the hedge. We kept the Rams in the back and the Sherman started moving around and they knocked it out. So there we were, sitting ducks, with no heavy armour.

Then they started counterattacking. I had the driver from one of the Rams who had never had battle experience in one of the next slit trenches. When they started machine gunning, he stands up to see what's going on, which is only reasonable, and he got a burst across the chest. (27)

Hipel was shot through the jaw soon after in very intense fighting. His company commander, Major Crummer has a somewhat different recollection of this day: a further illustration of the infantryman's myopic view of his environment:

We fanned out for the advance across the countryside which was absolutely gorgeous...Every damned house had about a half a dozen paratroopers in it. Every house seemed to be fortified and a tank of course, could just take a house out like that in no time...Put several armour piercing right through the basement window and an HE [high explosive] following it and its all over...It was mostly fire power that did it there, until we got to...a little group of buildings in a little town. I don't remember the town too well because the whole little valley on that side was covered in smoke...We were still in our Kangaroos. I remember advancing, the whole company as all the companies did, down the forward slope into the smoke...And everything was being blown sky high. We were sitting right on top of the German before he could get his wits about him...(28)

Later that afternoon, "Jerry" and "Snuff" Forces were reported on their objectives near Todtenhugel, overlooking the Hochwald forest. "Cole" and "Jock" Forces met "little opposition" as they followed behind to secure the position.(29) One counterattack was later launched but was beaten off by Martin's B company; Martin was slightly wounded in the fighting. By nightfall, only Baldwin's A company was still attached elsewhere as the Brigade forces were dismantled; Tiger Force's job was done. By midnight, 26 February, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry were taking over their positions.(30)

The Regiment suffered 35 casualties (8 fatal) on the first day of Operation BLOCKBUSTER. When compared with the Regiment's experience exactly one month before--the first day of Operation "ELEPHANT"--26 February had gone fairly well. This was the fourth generation's first day at the "sharp end". Private Macintosh recalls this day as he moved up with "Cole" Force:

The 2nd Division had fought up through there and we were passing on up towards the front and crossing the fields and that was where I had seen my first dead man. He was a 2nd Division man...I can remember him sitting there and he must have been dead a day or two

because his face was beginning to take on a grimace. It was dehydrating and shrivelling up and he had also, if I remember correctly, been hit by a flamethrower and he was not a pretty sight. I think that was really the time I realized that somebody could be killed. I had seen death really for the first time and gazed on it in broad daylight. As we moved up, we saw other corpses here and there... Up until then, for a lot of us, we were segregated from it in that there was a river between us and the enemy. So the enemy... was still far away and this was the first time that we were beginning to see them...

We arrived... in a village of sorts... and we dug in along a fence row and spent the night there and of course there was shelling going on constantly... and there were snipers in the area. One of the lads that was with us had marched ahead and a sniper had taken a bead on him [and] shot at him and led him just a little bit too much. But [it] creased his chin and he carried a permanent scar across his chin for the rest of his life....

We were in the centre of it. We saw... German civilians out on the road trying to get out of the battle's way... The most ludicrous thing I can remember (it was ludicrous at the time and when I think back on it, it wasn't as funny as it seemed) was a little grandmother coming along the road and dressed... [in a] blouse... and all she had on down below was a pair of pink bloomers. They seemed to be about four sizes too big for her.... We began to realize that war had passed by not very long ago, because the houses were still burning, there were still corpses around, animals were dead in the field... So we were beginning to realize that war wasn't the thing that we had started out with when we joined up. There was more to it: people shot at you, and in shooting at you, people got killed... It was an initiation into it... there was sort of a build-up to it... (31)

The Regiment saw no action on Day Two of BLOCKBUSTER, although it suffered 11 casualties from "light mortaring" (32) The unit was then back under the command of the Infantry Brigade, which was responsible for the push to the Hochwald. Tiger Group's good fortune had continued through most of the most previous night when "Smith" Force successfully captured the heights north of Udem in an operation described as "an armoured classic" by the Lake Superior's war diarist. (33) Lion Force, the Infantry Brigade group, was not to share the same luck. The Algonquins and SAR's made the initial assault on the early morning of the 27th, but their misfortune began even before the startline was reached. The Brigade war diarist explains:

Due to really terrible ground conditions and the masses of t/c [traffic] of 3 Divisions piled up on the only useable rd, the difficulties of marrying up the Alg R rifle coys with the 29 Recce

tk's [SAR's] and getting them moving were almost insurmountable. Officers of these units, incl the COs, worked for hrs untying t/c jams, pushing vehs into ditches to clear single tracks through one at a time. Many tks became bogged and when its inf [infantry] riders were then loaded onto the tks, coy and pl org [platoon organization] of necessity broke down. (34)

By 4:30 A.M., this force (without more than 4 platoons which had been stuck in the mud) finally moved out of Kirsell, north of Udem, which was then under a blanket of enemy artillery fire. By midmorning, with the cover of darkness lost, Lion Force had gone into the valley toward the Hochwald Layback. It immediately came under intense fire: one tank trap of 88 mm. guns immediately claimed all 9 tanks and 12 of the 13 carriers attached to one arm of the advance. (35) With 2 Division stalled to the north, 3 Division still fighting back in Udem while 11 British Division's southeastern push had been "slower than expected". Lion Force met strong resistance from three sides. (36) Any "movement was impossible" across the fire swept valley floor. (37) The enemy's artillery fire was well prepared and in ample supply as the Algonquins' official history describes:

From a vast ring, which virtually encircled our thrust, he was able to bring down fire from hundreds of guns, and many, many mortars, some of them the fifteen barrel variety. From across the Rhine, far to the north, his heavier calibre artillery could also deliver a deadly weight of metal. This last proved to be one of the most disconcerting things about the fight for the gap. One expected fire to come from the front, or even from a flank, but when it came in over one's shoulder, it was unsettling, to say the least. (38)

Even while under such an intense barrage, the leading elements of the Algonquin SAR force advanced "practically into the forest fringe" at the western edge of the gap. (39) By the late evening of the 27th, the Argylls had fought across the valley but its "leading troops had progressed no farther than the fwd Algonquin positions." The attack into the gap had been stalled. (40)

New orders were distributed that night to reorganize the ground forces

under a hastily arranged fire plan. At 2:00 A.M., 28 February, the Argylls continued their advance toward a lateral road which marked the eastern edge of the gap. The Lincs were to then advance to the southwestern edge of this clearing to capture the railway and the Tuschen Wald, the woods to the south.(41)

Little information was received that night as the Argylls advanced "into the gap behind a heavy artillery barrage fired into the darkness." (42) By the early morning, the Brigade had received reports of their success at two map references, gained against "considerable opposition" which continued throughout the day.(43) The Argyll's B company was then in a particularly tenuous position along the north edge of the gap just before the lateral road. The first counterattack they met came in at 6:45 A.M.; they incurred heavy casualties and their lines of communication were cut.(44)

The Regiment's preparations to follow on were as confused as the reports they were receiving of the battle ahead. The soft ground had again slowed the tanks advance so that the Regiment "was without Sp Arms of any kinds with the exception of two FOO's tks." (45) Then Lt. Col. Coleman remembers that "...every tank was stuck. You couldn't even dig them out. The only tracked vehicle that could run properly was the old gun carrier which the pioneer platoon had resurrected and put together again. It was light." (46) By 11:00 A.M., when the unit's orders were issued, two troops of tanks were forward: one troop having been "borrowed" from the Argylls. The Regiment's Commanding Officer recalls the conditions under which his orders were made that morning:

I spent the whole morning there, when I could see what was happening. The Argylls had been pushed back and had withdrawn and this shell fire was coming down. I didn't move and I told the wireless operator that I was out to lunch if anybody called. I wasn't going to take any calls. This poor guy, He had a terrible time all morning answering calls and telling them that I wasn't available. They were coming from higher and higher authority. He was only a few yards away from me. He said, 'Sir, I just have to tell you this.'...He said, 'Super Colossal Sunray wants to talk to

you.' So I said I guess I better answer that one...It was Guy Simonds himself on the blower. I recognized the unmistakable English accent...I remember being mildly amused and outraged at his breaking security. He said, 'Rowan...is there anything you can do down there?' I said, 'Well, I don't think so sir.' It was a stalemate for the time being. We were under murderous fire...He said, 'You must do something to relieve the pressure down there.' (47)

The Regiment had two objectives, as the war diary comments: "It was appreciated that the Lincoln and Welland Regiment would have to make a two prong attack with two coys. one on each side of the gap, to take the A&SHofC fourth objective...while the remaining two coys would go fwd along the rly and would secure the regiment's objectives." (48) Presumably, the Lincs were to come to the aid of the Argyll's B company which was still cut off. (49)

The Lincs' attack went in at midday on the 28th with both B company, then under Capt. W.H. Barkman, and Crummer's C company in the 'lead. The shelling had gone on all morning and was "pretty rough" as Major Crummer recalls. When the companies moved into the woods at the gap's western edge, "the skies closed in, as far as shelling was concerned." Major Crummer continues to recount what it was like under what Montgomery later described as the heaviest "...volume of fire from enemy weapons... which had been met so far by British troops in the campaign:" (50)

We were in the middle of it, standing, trying to push forward. Well, we didn't stand long. We went to ground damn fast. You just lose everything. You can't do anything about that...You really hunker down and pray to God that you come out of it all right, because you can't do anything for anyone, really. You look around and see if anybody's wounded and help them, but I didn't see anybody. They were all pretty well experienced and had found rat holes or something like that... I think at that point, I was buried a couple of times and got out of it. [The area was] mud, just mud... I remember hearing the shelling and then after a while I didn't hear anything, but I saw it...I remember the huge explosions all over the damn place. At that time I crawled under a tank to get away from some fire and I could sense the tank settling down in the mud, so I got the hell out of there... [There was] no cover. Trees are no cover, especially in shelling because you get limbs and you get shrapnel coming down on you...We didn't get any further than that. (51)

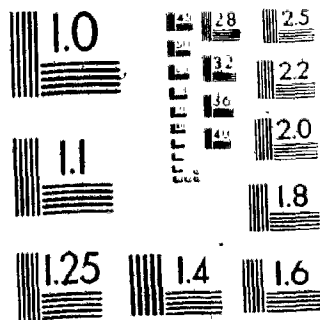
The after effects of the barrage are recalled by one Argyll who was caught in the area. He remembers "the black haze that hung over the place after the shelling stopped, and the feeling you had of being absolutely dazed and in a stupor; while a sudden, unreal quiet descended, broken only by the feeble cries of the wounded." (52)

Any further advance was clearly impossible. In the words of the Algonquins historian, "the projected assault withered and died." (53) The Lincs' war diarist was more explicit: "Hycas suffered [49 in total] and the attack disorganized, forcing the coys to retire to their dug-in posn [to the west of the gap]." (54) The hard-pressed Argylls were not relieved until nightfall when elements from both Brigades moved into the gap.

The Lincolns were relieved by 6 Brigade's South Saskatchewan Regiment in the early morning of 1 March and ordered back to some farm houses in the valley east of Udem. (55) There they regrouped. The previous three days had cost the Regiment 85 casualties; a further 8 wounded on 1 March illustrated just how close they still were to the front. The strength of almost one full rifle company was gone, along with 3 rifle company commanders. Captain C.D. Muir left the anti-tank platoon to take Major Baldwin's A company after he was wounded on the 28th. Captain Barkman was also wounded on this day after only 2 days in command of B company. He was replaced by Captain Hicks, formerly of the mortar platoon. Major Crummer was left out of battle after the 28th and was replaced by Captain Easser of the pioneer platoon.

The Regiment remained in the area around Udem for five days with the bulk of the Division, which had just demonstrated the "little chance of armour breaking through to the east." (56) The last days of February found 11 British Division continuing southeast towards the defenses which lay before the Balberger Wald; 3 Division pushed into the woods to aid the British advance.

3 3
OF / DE



The 2nd Division maintained their push into the forest north of the gap. On 2 March, the progress on the flanks prompted the launching of yet another 4 Armoured ~~Brigade~~ attack through the gap to capture the objectives which had been denied not three days before. Again the muddy approaches delayed the attack until after dawn. It failed. As 10 Infantry Brigade was divided into battle groups this day, and as some reconnaissance was made for a concentration area for the Lincoln's Chubb Force to the west of the gap (so as to exploit the Armoured Brigade's success) it seems clear that not all of those in command were convinced that the Hochwald Gap was nothing but a deathtrap for an armoured advance. (57) This assault into the gap was a curious and costly decision in light of the losses which had been suffered there so recently. From a strategic perspective, the action merely "involved finding the weakest place, and then concentrating force at that point." The Algonquins suffered 87 casualties in the gap that day; the Lake Superior's lost 57. (58)

By 3 March, the Corps turned its attentions to its southern flank where 3 Division was reported to have been "making considerable progress...clearing the wood [the Balberger Wald]." (59) That morning, the Regiment received orders which would send the Division's battle groups through this formation and onto Veen, a town 3 kilometres south of Xanten. (These towns formed a defensive line which protected the last main lateral road across the shrinking German bridgehead. (60) The final tasks of 11 Canadian Corps in the battle of the Rhineland were to capture the towns of Xanten and Veen.

On this day, 3 Division's advance above Sonsbeck, a village some 5.6 kilometres west of Veen was "slow and steady." (61) Three days went by before Sonsbeck was captured by 7 Brigade; it met "only moderate resistance." The German High Command had ordered the evacuation of the Rhineland bridgehead

that very day, Tuesday 6 March, 1945. (62) By 8:00 A.M. on that cloudy and cool morning, the Regiment moved across the valley east of Udem for the final time. An hour later, its men and supporting tanks were concentrated in an orchard north of Sonsbeck where they awaited the start of the Argyll's and SAR's advance along the Sonsbeck-Veen road. (63) In the midafternoon, the Chubb force was to be ready "to move quietly forward, on short notice on the success of the A&SH of C and the 29 Cdn Armd Recce Reg't at VEEN" as "the enemy was not believed to be numerous" in this area. (64)

The next morning, the appreciation of the situation around Veen had changed dramatically. The Argylls and SAR's had started toward Veen but "Progress was slow due to very bad going for the tanks." (65) Cratered roads forced the infantry to continue on foot. They were within two kilometres of Veen when they came under fire from both the town ahead as well as from the houses and woods to the north. With no armoured support and no cover, there was little to do except "sit and endure it", as the Argyll History grimly concluded. (66) At night fall, elements of their B company moved into the town and were immediately "dominated by German fire from three sides." Thirty two were taken prisoner that night by the Parachute Army Assault Battalion, some of the best reserves of General Schlemm's First Parachute Army. (67)

Plans for a Brigade strength attack on Veen--codenamed BASHER--were distributed that morning. Two battle groups (Chubb Force and another made up of Algonquins and SAR tanks) were to attack on either side of the Sonsbeck road. Two companies from each battalion would lead the assault under smoke and a barrage provided by six artillery regiments (144 guns), while mortars and the New Brunswick Rangers' machine guns covered the northern flank. (68)

The startline was crossed at 4:00 P.M., 7 March. Chubb Force was on the right, approaching Veen from the southwest with Major Brady's D company

Leading, followed by Captain Hick's B company. The first objective was reached within two hours: Brady's men were reported to be about two kilometres south of the town centre by 5:45 P.M., having met "hv MG and mortar fire" which had caused some casualties.(69) Another two hours passed before Hick's and Easser's companies were reported on their first positions, less than a kilometre to the east of Brady's men. Their advance was delayed when Easser's communications failed, forcing him to link up with Hick's men. With these three companies established just south of Veen, Captain Muir's A company worked up the right flank towards a crossroads about two kilometres east of the town. Their progress was described as "slow but the tks were still in sp. [support] despite very hv going." Twenty seven enemy were captured in this advance.(70)

The situation south of Veen seemed to be relatively good that evening: all of the initial objectives had been reached at a cost of only 16 casualties to the Regiment. Unfortunately, this was only because the enemy's attentions were focussed to the northeast where the Algonquins and SAR's had by then suffered "enormously heavy" casualties.(71) While the Algonquins could do little except "hang on for dear life" through the rainy night of 7-8 March, Brady's men passed through Hick's position to capture a road junction on the town's southern outskirts. They "met strong enemy resistance" which knocked out a number of BCR tanks. Brady withdrew to his original position before midnight.(72) This was to have been the second phase of the plan. Easser's C company was to have then passed through this position to capture another road junction at the eastern edge of the town, where Muir's men would have been met.(73) Without the southern crossroads secured, Easser's men skirted the town entirely, taking a "direct route across country" towards its objective.(74) By morning, the Brigade reported this company "to be somewhat

short" of the crossroads, although the Regimental diarist writes that they "succeeded in getting on their objectives" although they were forced to "withdraw slightly to bring artillery to bear." (75) Clearly, they had a tenuous hold on the position: "There had been many tank casualties [on this flank] through bogging and enemy fire and the force was much depleted." (76) An almost constant wall of machine gun, mortar, shell and rocket fire kept the infantry deep in their trenches, cut off from the armour.

At 9:00 A.M., Thursday 8 March, Lt. Col. Coleman went forward to the positions held by Brady and Hick's men to coordinate another assault toward Veen. At 12:30 P.M., Brady's men went in on the left; Hick's on the right. They met ferocious opposition for both companies were forced back within a half an hour of moving out. In that time, four of the supporting tanks had been hit and knocked out. (77) Hick's lead platoon was pinned down and unable to retreat so the men took cover in a house adjacent to an enemy position. Upon returning to their company lines after dark, they reported sighting two Sherman tanks which had been overrun and manned by the enemy--the second time in the Regiment's experience that this had been done. (78)

The Regiment made no further assaults this day. That night, tank routes were cleared for a projected attack by the Argylls at first light on the 9th. To the east, Easser's and Muir's companies began patrolling to mop up their positions. (79) By midmorning, the Argylls had passed through the Linc's positions and found Veen almost deserted after the Algonquins had used their Crocodile flamethrowers to considerable effect. (80) The enemy was in full retreat.

For the next day and a half, the Brigade swept the area west of Veen for any scattered enemy pockets. The Regimental war diary does make mention of "strong resistance" in some locations, although the Regiment suffered only 7

casualties on 9-10 March. At 7:00 A.M., 10 March, Brady's company contacted elements of 2 Division which had captured Xanten to the north. At 10:00 A.M., "The 4 Cdn Armd Div area was clear of enemy." (81)

The Regiment moved back to Holland two days later, 12 March, arriving in the town of Best, north of Eindhoven early the next morning. There it reorganized until the end of the month, when the final push into Germany would begin.

Operations BLOCKBUSTER and BASHER were 10 Infantry Brigade's most costly operations during its time in Northwest Europe. Between 26 February and 10 March, the Algonquin Regiment lost 293 all ranks; the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada lost 260; while the Lincoln and Welland Regiment lost 201 all ranks. (82) These 754 casualties represent the strength of nearly one complete infantry battalion, or over sixty percent of the Brigade's total infantry strength.

The battle for the Rhineland had been a memorable beginning for the Regiment's new CO, Lt. Col. Coleman, MC:

I suppose the casualties are some indication...of the state of the Regiment. I came out of it...thinking in light of all my past experience, it was the worst period that I had ever had in the war. And I said so. I remember telling people that. I said, kind of jokingly, "I never thought I was coming to this kind of a witch's cauldron after Italy, Sicily and Africa. They were straightforward." I've always said that was the worst period I ever went through personally and I think a lot of other people felt that way too. (83)

One could suggest that the Lincoln and Welland Regiment had a significantly easier time in the Rhineland than its sister Regiments. Yet, this does not provide any insight into the intensity of the period. In the battle for Veen, the Regiment suffered losses which are second only to its first day at Kapelsche Veer. On Thursday 8 March 1945, the Regiment lost 80 all ranks: 20 were killed, 55 wounded while 5 were listed as battle casualties.

CHAPTER VI: NOTES

1 Maj. R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954), p. 230.

2 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.

3 Col. C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. 3: The Victory Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960), p. 464.

4 Lt. Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.

5 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

6 John Martin remembers that Vokes "seemed to be obsessed with the idea that no soldier should have to put up with having his feet frozen. He claimed that we should have known all about that in basic training, but it was clear he had never spent five days on the top of a dyke." (Lt. Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984.)

7 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,106), 2-3 February 1945.

8 J.E. Reeve, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983.

9 C.K. Crummer, Taped Interview, 13 June 1984.

10 J.H. Barkwill, Taped Interview, 16 November 1983.

11 K.M. Dunton, Taped Interview, 11 July 1984.

12 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.

13 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, December 1982.

14 K.A. Hipel, Taped Interview, 19 January 1983.

15 War Diary, L & W, 20 February 1945; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 245.

16 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 460-4.

17 Peter Allen, One More River: The Rhine Crossings of 1945 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. xiii.

18 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 491-2.

19 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 239.

20 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 479.

21 War Diary. 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade (PAC RG 24, Vol. 14,156). 22 February 1945.

22 R.S.J. MacIntosh. Taped Interview: 6 April 1984. On this day, Major McCutcheon gave up his command of B company: a force he had commanded almost continuously since the Regiment's second day south of Caen. As one of his colleagues commented, 'Slasher' McCutcheon defied the odds of the infantryman: "The only way they got him out of the thing was that he was too old to walk. And why he survived, I don't know because somebody should have shot him. He was daring to the point that he shouldn't have stayed alive." Captain Martin stepped into the command of B company. (J.A. Dunlop. Taped Interview. 1 August 1984.)

23 War Diary. L & W. 25 February 1945: Rogers. Regimental History. p. 245: Stacey. Victory Campaign. pp. 492-3.

24 Brig. R.C. Coleman. Taped Interview. 22 February 1985.

25 Lt. Col. H.M. Jackson. ed., The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada [Princess Louise's] 1928--1953 (Montreal: Industrial School for the Deaf, 1953). p. 174.

26 Stacey. Victory Campaign. pp. 497-501.

27 K.A. Hipel. Taped Interview. 19 January 1983.

28 C.K. Crummer. Taped Interview. 13 June 1984.

29 War Diary. L & W. February 29, 1945.

30 The Regimental History records that the RHLI relieved the Regiment at 11:00 P.M., 26 February, "but [the Lincs] remained there for lack of a better concentration area." (p. 240) Rowan Coleman recalls the reason why the Regiment was not able to move that night: "We were attacked and here we had this ludicrous spectacle of two infantry battalions stuck in one place. So I just stayed. It was not a case of not being able to find a suitable staging area, we just couldn't get out. It was indicative of the confusion of the whole operation...No one had expected this sudden enemy activity. The Lincs were to march out, but the firing started so the Lincs stayed." (Brig. R.C. Coleman. Taped Interview. 22 February 1985)

31 R.S.J. MacIntosh. Taped Interview. 6 April 1984.

32 War Diary. L & W. 27 February 1945.

33 Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 501.

34 War Diary. 10 CIB. 27 February 1945.

35 Maj. G.L. Cassidy. Warpath: The Story of the Algonquin Regiment 1939--1945 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press. 1948). pp. 256, 259-60.

36 War Diary. 10 CIB. 27 February 1945: Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 504.

37 War Diary. 10 CIB. 27 February 1945.

38 Cassidy, Warpath, p. 260.
In the first week of March 1945, Canadian Army Intelligence estimated that the 1st Parachute Army had 717 mortars and 1054 guns at their disposal. (Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 507.)

39 Cassidy, Warpath, p. 260.

40 War Diary, 10 CIB, 27 February 1945.

41 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 505-7.

42 Ibid., p. 507.

43 War Diary, 10 CIB, 28 February 1945.

44 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 179.

45 War Diary, L & W, 28 February 1945.

46 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.

47 Ibid.

48 War Diary, L & W, 28 February 1945.

49 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 181.

50 Field-Marshal B.L. Montgomery quoted in Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 507.

51 C.K. Crummer, Taped Interview, 13 June 1984.

52 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 182.

53 Cassidy, Warpath, p. 261.

54 War Diary, L & W, 28 February 1945.

55 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 24.

56 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 510-11.

57 War Diary, 10 CIB, 3 March 1945.

58 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 513; War Diary, 10 CIB, 2 March 1945.

59 War Diary, 10 CIB, 3 March 1945.

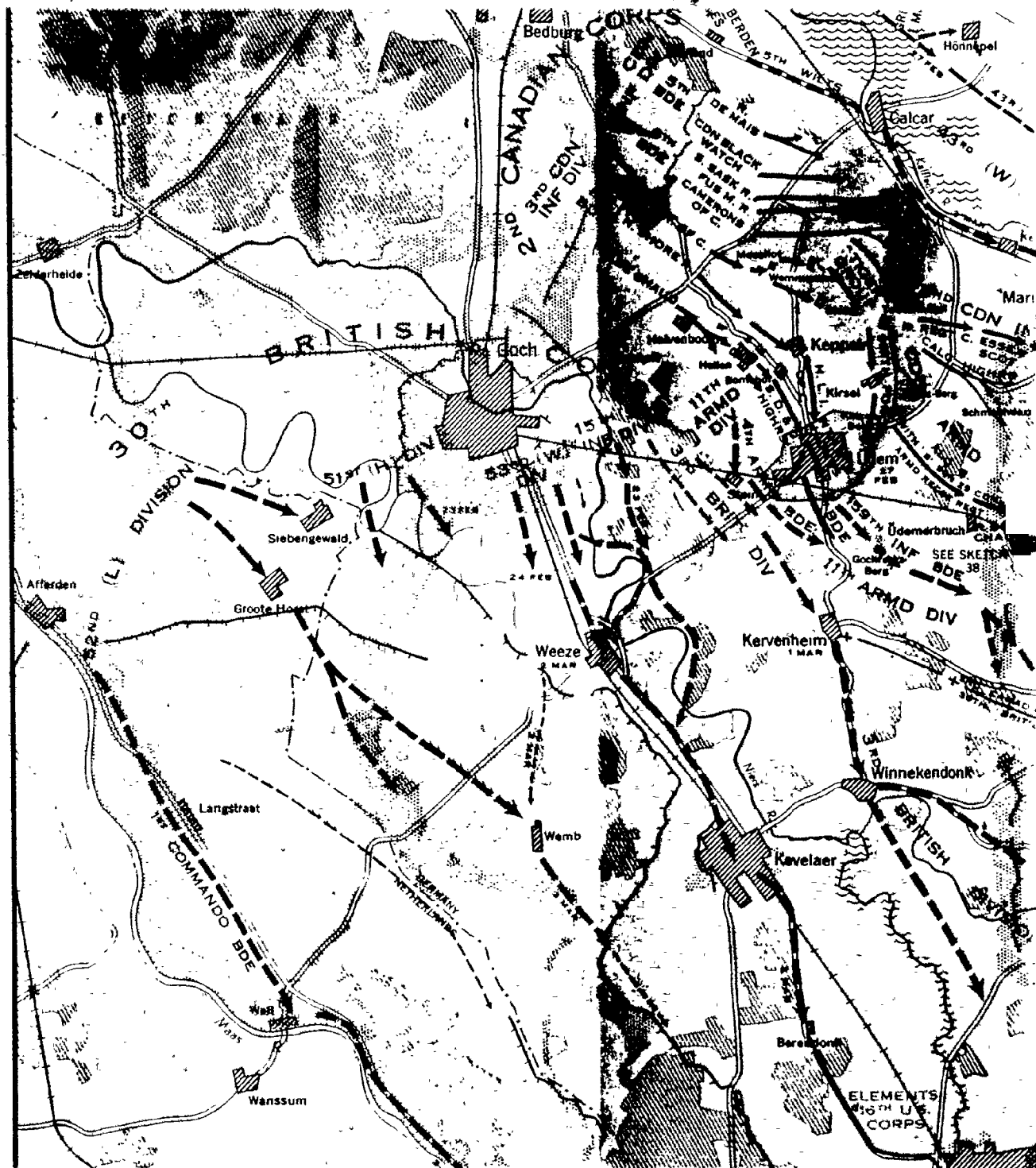
60 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 516.

61 War Diary, 10 CIB, 3 March 1945.

62 Stacey, Victory Campaign, pp. 516, 519.

63 War Diary, L & W, 6 March 1945; Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 520.

- 64 War Diary, L & W, 6 March 1945; Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 519.
- 65 War Diary, 10 CIB, 6 March 1945.
- 66 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 185.
- 67 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 185; Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 510.
- 68 War Diary, L & W, 7 March 1945; Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 520.
- 69 War Diary, L & W, 7 March 1945.
- 70 War Diary, 10 CIB, 7 March 1945.
- 71 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 520; Cassidy, Warpath, p. 282.
- 72 War Diary, L & W, 7 March 1945.
- 73 War Diary, 10 CIB, 7 March 1945; War Diary, L & W, 7 March 1945.
- 74 War Diary, L & W, 7 March 1945.
- 75 War Diary, 10 CIB, 8 March 1945; War Diary, L & W, 8 March 1945.
- 76 War Diary, 10 CIB, 8 March 1945.
- 77 War Diary, L & W, 8 March 1945.
- 78 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 242; War Diary, L & W, 8 March 1945.
- 79 War Diary, L & W, 8 March 1945.
- 80 Cassidy, Warpath, p. 284.
- 81 War Diary, L & W, 10 March 1945.
- 82 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 521.
- 83 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.



Source: Stacey, The Victory Campaign

THE RHINELAND

OPERATION "BLOCKBUSTER"

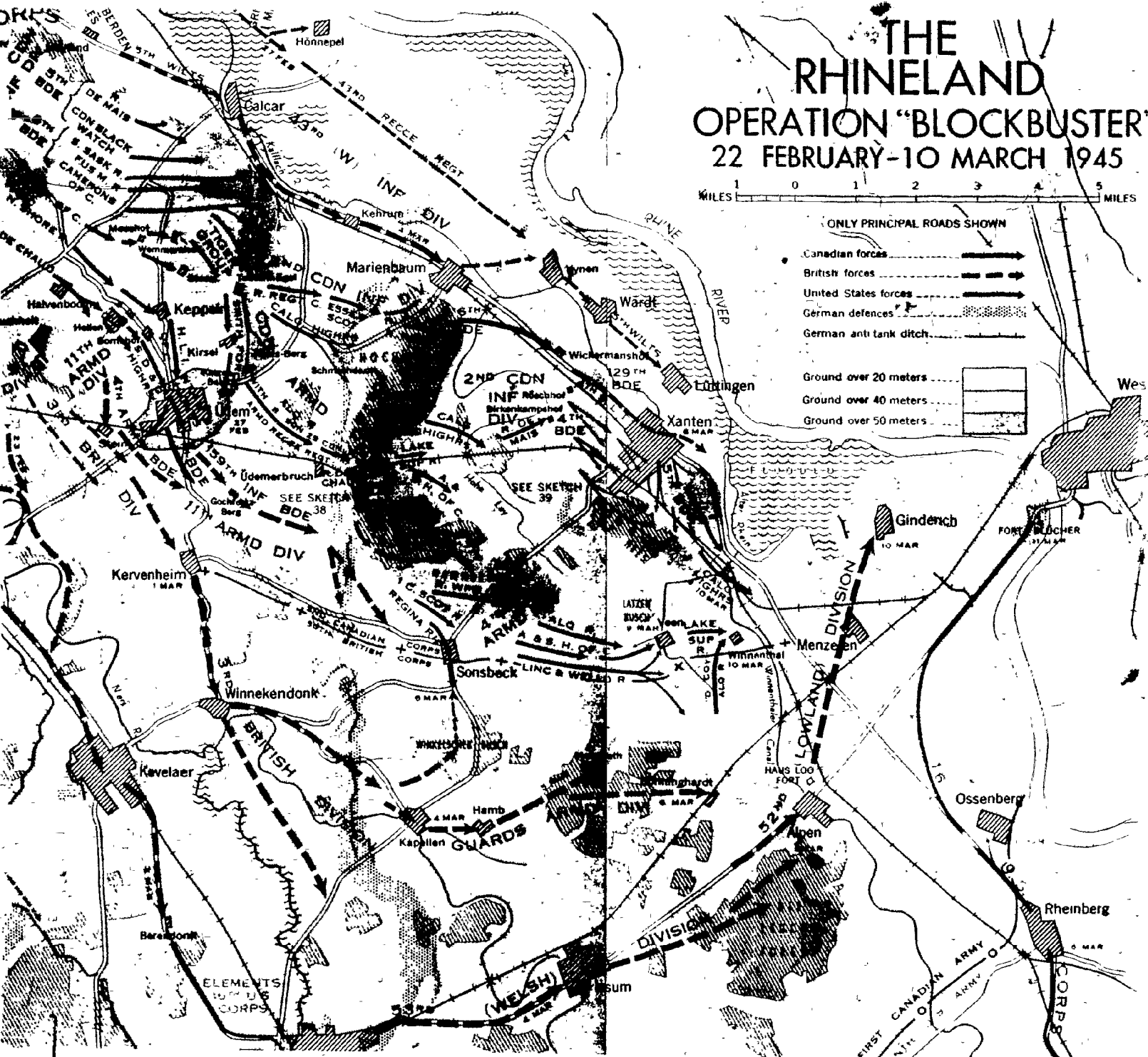
22 FEBRUARY-10 MARCH 1945

1 0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES

ONLY PRINCIPAL ROADS SHOWN

- Canadian forces
- British forces
- United States forces
- German defences
- German anti tank ditch

- Ground over 20 meters
- Ground over 40 meters
- Ground over 50 meters



CHAPTER VII: INTO GERMANY

"My dear General, the German is whipped. We've got him. He is all through."

-Prime Minister Churchill to General Eisenhower
upon the Allied crossings of the
Rhine River. 24 March 1945.(1)

The last days. You kept getting this news from home...the BBC or we used to get a little paper, the Maple Leaf. And they'd say, it was practically over--sporadic fighting and there were only pockets to be cleaned up. Some of them goddamn pockets were pretty rough.

-Don Fowle, Signaller,
Lincoln and Welland Regiment.(2)

The last week of March 1945 found the Allies firmly established on the east side of the Rhine River. The American First Army had forced a crossing at Remagen earlier in the month. On 23-24 March, the Second British and Ninth American Armies formed a bridgehead east of Nijmegen (Operations PLUNDER and VARSITY). Four days later, Field-Marshal Montgomery declared: "We have won the Battle of the Rhine." (3) The push into the heart of Germany could begin. General Crerar's First Canadian Army formed the left flank of British Second Armies' northern push to the Elbe. For the first time, First Canadian Army was truly Canadian: Lieutenant-General Foulke's I Canadian Corps (which had just arrived from Italy) moved into Western Holland while Simonds' II Corps pushed out of the Rhine bridgehead to clear northern Holland and northwestern Germany.

Reports of the approaching victory must have been a mixed blessing for those who fought through April and early May of 1945. Operation HAYMAKER, II Canadian Corps' northern advance, employed flexible tactics which depended even more on the initiatives of the basic fighting unit. As one officer from

the Regiment recalls. "I think company commanders were doing more as individuals at the end... And I think they were working more on their own." The Regiment's Commanding Officer concurs: "I should say that it was sort of a company commander's war. I was just an ornament around the place giving orders."(4)

The terrain and the enemy dictated the need for these sorts of tactics. The country surrounding the Ems River along the Dutch-German border is flat, boggy and intersected by numerous canals and streams which formed considerable barriers to a broader advance. The enemy defending this corner of their homeland were frequently formed in isolated groups, unaware of the general collapse occurring around them. Some were highly trained, tenacious fighters; others were seen as "old men and vicious little boys and yet some of them weren't vicious. They were poor little boys, sixteen, seventeen year olds, frightened to death."(5)

The impending victory was clouded at the "sharp end" as the campaign drove into an unfriendly country against an unpredictable foe. One lieutenant describes the fighting during those last days:

It went on 24 hours a day...whereas with a main attack, you would put it in, it would be over...This would be...day and night and all the time you were pecking away at them...Let's put it this way. I can't remember hardly a night when we didn't go out and set trip flares out around the position for patrols coming in...You didn't relax at any time...We never really pushed anything back. We just infiltrated and you had to watch that they weren't doing the same thing back.(6)

This fighting must have been particularly frightening for those who came on strength in March and April. As many of these new men were the first conscripts the Regiment received, their very appearance caused friction within the unit. As one company commander suggests: "People never realized how grim that was...particularly between the old guard and the new guard." A private, commenting on the state of the Regiment as it was in March 1945, concurs: "We

were really running low on experienced men. What struck me as so odd was that there was a little bit of animosity...when the new guys came up." (7) As in previous generations, those brought up during a rest period were the most fortunate: in Best, "an energetic training programme was carried out" for two weeks. (8) As the Regiment's establishment never dropped below 750 during this final period, it is clear that there were no shortages of men. During March and April, the Regiment had significant numbers of surplus tradesmen on strength: as of 28 April, the Regiment had 74 Driver Mechanics on strength, 32 more than the normal working establishment; 18 clerks were also on strength, 6 more than was usually required. (9) These were support staff, not infantrymen. As the Regiment sustained 369 casualties (71 fatal) between 30 March and 5 May 1945, several reinforcement drafts were taken on during April. Though there is always the danger of overgeneralizing, the impression gained from the time is that these drafts were largely composed of inadequately trained men. Owen Patterson came into the Regiment as a lieutenant in March. He readily admits that his time in action did not make him a "fully qualified professional." Even so, his assessment of those he led is noteworthy:

We did have some problems with reinforcements coming up. I know myself, I got two that...turned out to be Jehovah Witnesses and they refused to go in at the last minute. I...got the impression that we were getting to the bottom of the barrel as far as replacements went. I really don't feel that if the war had gone another six months or ten months, or a year we might have had an awful lot of trouble. (10)

One of the original company commanders holds similar views:

In my company at that point [near the end] everybody hated me. They were all frightened of me...You get these guys that are about as enthusiastic about what they were doing...and all that I could think of were the good guys that we'd lost...And they didn't want to do anything. (11)

The fear shared by all was best expressed by Major Swayze, who took command of A company in April: "There was an awareness of it winding down and there was a feeling too of 'Let's not get killed in the last two weeks.'"(12)

On 28 March, while the Regiment trained in Best, Lt. Col. Coleman and his intelligence officer Lt. P.M. Hedley learned of the plans for Operation HAYMAKER. Once again, the Regiment would be attached to Brigadier Moncel's Armoured Brigade, then known as Tiger Force. With the Infantry Brigade (Lion Force) leading, the Division was to cross the Rhine into the already congested bridgehead to pass through 2 and 3 Infantry Divisions. It would then to attack to the northwest, recrossing the border near Terborg. Beyond the border, at Raarlo, the Forces would break off to seize separate objectives along the "next natural defence line", the Twenthe Canal.(13) Brigadier Jefferson's Lion Force would move north to Lochem where two bridges offered a means to establish a bridgehead. Tiger Force would then seize the towns of Belden and Hengelo, located north of the canal, some 20-25 kilometres northeast of Lochem.(14)

In the few remaining days of March, the Regiment prepared for its role in HAYMAKER: an operation which its planners emphasized would very much depend on both the flexibility and mobility of its components. Steps were taken to cut the number of Regimental vehicles "to a minimum." Assault boats, bicycles and six ram flamethrowers were supplied to both the Lincs and the Lake Superior Regiment, who were slated to make Tiger Force's initial canal assaults. The Forces were also to be prepared to switch objectives in case Lion Force met heavy opposition in their push to the Twenthe.(15)

The Regimental convoy (then 97 vehicles in size) pulled out of Best, its final rest area before war's end, on 30 March. Through that morning, the

lines of traffic moved along "Maple Leaf Up", switching to "Ruby Up" at Nijmegen. By noon, the Regiment had once again reached Cleve, which still reeked with a "terrible smell of rotting bodies under the ruins." (16) The convoy followed "Club Black Up" to the Blackfriar's Bridge at Rees, making an uneventful crossing of the Rhine the next evening.

While the Regiment spent a cold and drizzly Easter Sunday/April Fool's Day in the open country between Rees and Emmerich, its CO learned of some encouraging developments taking place to the north. Reports from the leading elements of Lion Force suggested "that resistance had collapsed and that apart from blown bridges and craters which were even now being fixed, we [the Force] would have an unopposed advance at least as far as the high ground [overlooking Lochem and the canal]. (17) Intelligence received in the early afternoon detailed the progress made by 43 British Wessex Division on the right flank which was reported fighting in Hengelo and Lochem. (18)

As two of 4 Division's objectives were already under attack, it was important to exploit the situation. By midnight, Lion Force was moving north toward Ruurlo, which it reached by first light, 2 April. By then, Brigade reports suggested that Lochem was "...almost clear." A small force was sent forward to see whether the two bridges there were still intact. They were, but as a group of tanks and infantry approached, "the Brs [Bridges] were blown in their faces." (19) The opportunity to seize a bridgehead had been lost.

Moncel's Tiger Force arrived in Ruurlo by midday, 2 April, after Lion Force had moved forward to relieve the British in Lochem. With Hengelo already engaged by the British, Moncel's Force was ordered to take Delden and then move toward Borne, north of Hengelo. The Lincolns were to make the initial attack across the canal south of Delden while the Lake Superiors and two troops of GGFG tanks "were to give cover and diversionary fire [from the

west] and investigate the possibilities of getting a br across the canal." The Regimental war diary reported that "The attack was to go in at first light" on 4 April. An hour and a half after the original orders were received, H-Hr was changed to 7:00 P.M. that day: the Regiment had eight hours to prepare their assault crossing.(20)

The need for this change was found in the situation then unfolding further west. Brigadier Jefferson's Lion Force would have met fierce resistance from an estimated 300 enemy troops on the north bank: Tiger Force's crossing at Delden could bypass this resistance. The orders to attack earlier were doubtless prompted by 2 Division's 4 Brigade which had established the first bridgehead across the Twenthe at Almen the previous night.(21) One dent in the defensive line had to be followed quickly by another.

At 12:30 P.M. 3 April, Lt. Col. Coleman outlined the details of the assault to his company commanders who then went forward to view the crossing points themselves. Two companies were to make the initial assault at points 600 metres apart. Major Swayze's A company and Major Dunlop's C company were to cross first. Major T. Lawson's D company or Major Martin's B company were to pass through whoever was the most successful to capture a road junction just south of the town itself.(22) Rowan Coleman recalls the logistical problems faced and overcome that afternoon:

I would like to say that I've never been so grateful for the cooperation and efficiency of everyone. We were all scattered all over hell's half acre, scattered columns making moves toward the Twenthe canal. And suddenly we were told we had to get down to a crossing...Here was where wireless certainly paid off. I was able to communicate with everybody and give them all their jobs over the air and they got going...Everything just got together beautifully, like a jigsaw puzzle...I think it was beautifully done, nobody has any particular credit over anybody else. The guys really went to work...(23)

By 4:46 P.M., the Brigade was informed "that the companies were moving to forward areas." (24) The crossing commenced at 7:00 P.M. Each company employed seven assault boats, using tactics which were then fairly routine for the experienced infantryman:

It was all learned by doing over there. The difficulty is to get down to the edge of the canal first, win the side that you're going across, and then get across before they could rise up on the other side. So what we evolved...[were] two things: First, a crew goes down with machine guns and take the side of the canal [from] where you're going to take off. Then...the fellows that took the boats down there were not the fellows that were going across. You would be surprised how much more enthusiasm they had. If they have to get in themselves, they'll fall in ditches and break the boats...But if the reserve company takes the boat down and puts them there, then the fellows that are going to go across come roaring across, get in the boats and start. It works better. Then after the barrage has lifted, with the machine guns firing...you don't have the Germans rising up on the other side, particularly if you've got one man in the front of the boat who does nothing except keep firing...(25)

Within fifty minutes of H-hour, Swayze's men were reported on their objectives and Lawsons' company was ordered through. (26) Further to the east, C company "had a lot of trouble" according to John Dunlop. Despite covering fire, he recalls losing at least four men during the crossing. Once over, Dunlop's men dug in over a 200 metre front around a number of farm houses which were no more than 40 metres from the canal bank. By 9:00 P.M.--two hours after H-hour--Dunlop's company had "consolidated their position" but had met "very heavy opposition." (27) The Germans had started counterattacking from the woods to the north. Lance Sergeant J.M. "Johnny" McEachern's men held the company's right flank near a small farm house. About 150 metres east was large, barn-like residence where the company's headquarters was holed up. Seeing this position under attack, McEachern ordered his Bren gunner, Pte. Clifford Challice and his second across what was then a fire swept field to give support. Some time later, these men returned to McEachern's then-threatened positions. Challice had reached the doorway of the house when a stick grenade

(a "potato masher") exploded beside him, breaking his left arm. As the platoon's .30 calibre machine gun had jammed, Challice's Bren was the only automatic weapon at the position. Holding it with his good arm, Challice stood at a window watching the fields to the east, waiting for counterrattacks which came throughout the night. While his wounded buddies reloaded the Bren magazines, Challice organized and held the company's flank.

I wasn't brave. I was mad. A soldier should never get mad, but I don't fight good unless I get mad... Things were so confused that nobody was in charge really. Everybody was hurt. Johnny was hurt, I was hurt. There was only one man who wasn't hurt and the Germans were coming in here from all directions. For a couple of hours, it was just a matter of shooting anything that moved... (28)

By the late evening, C company was in a desperate situation. Major Dunlop had few options. As he recalls, the course he chose was the most desperate, but also the most effective:

We got surrounded. I talked to Alec Sweeton who was my 2IC... and we didn't know what the hell we were going to do. I had a map there with all the artillery positions on it. So we decided that we would call artillery down on our own positions and see what happened. And we did. And it worked marvelous. We were inside, they were outside. Blew the Germans all to rat shit. (29)

Private Challice remembers when Major Dunlop called the artillery down onto their position:

This house was... destroyed pretty well. The roof was all blown off. It was in good shape when we started across but it didn't last long. They poured the mortars right in here. The whole bush here was full of Germans and we couldn't get at them. But the main thing was that we had to stop them from coming in behind us.

The mortars and shells that poured in here was absolutely unreal. Major Dunlop, at about 11 o'clock at night, men were getting so scarce that he called in mortars and they dropped the mortars right in here on both sides of the house and the house and all back in behind us, to hold the Germans back...

We had to have a lot of help from God to hold that place for eight hours... The only thing that saved us was Major Dunlop pulling down the mortars on our own positions. That helped. (30)

At times, the enemy almost overran Challice's position:

The Germans got right into the house. We had killed four and taken two prisoner. They were outside, tossing in hand grenades... So I had one Mills bomb left, a 36 grenade. They had a cotter pin

through the [mechanism]. We spread them a little bit so they wouldn't pull out on the fence. I couldn't get it out, so I put it in my teeth and pulled it out with my teeth...I let the spoon fly and counted to four and just dropped it out the window. There were two or three wounded Germans out there all night, crying...(31)


The noise of the battle was not only punctuated by the cries of enemy wounded. Lance Sergeant McEachern had been caught in the open when the barrage had been ordered down on his position. He lay no more than forty metres from his comrades:

Johnny McEachern screamed all night. It was terrible to hear him scream, but I just could not help him. That is one reason why I do not like to make friends in war, because you can get yourself killed. It was a terrible thing to sit there all night and listen to that man calling to you to help him. And you cannot do it. You have to protect the company.(32)

Incredibly, though he lost an arm and a leg, Lance Sergeant McEachern survived that night.

Some distance to the south, three men sat in a darkened room in the Regiment's tactical headquarters. They said nothing as reports from the bridgehead came through. Major Martin was waiting to receive orders from Lt. Col. Coleman who sat at the wireless. The Brigadier was the third man in the room. Coleman remembers that night well, especially when Dunlop's men were in danger of being overrun:

Our commander was the redoubtable "Rapid" Robert Moncel for whom I had great respect and admiration. He was a different type of commander... I remember Moncel sat with me for about four or five hours. He sat slightly behind me. I could feel his eyes on the back of my neck. I don't think he said a word to me for the entire time he was there...He never said a damn word. If you want to have the high command around, that's the type you want...I remember Junior, as we called him, screaming. And I had John [Martin] in hand and that's when I could feel Moncel's eyes boring into the back of my neck. And he was wondering 'What's he going to do?' Is he going to yield...or is he going to hold that company until its perhaps of more use?' I was sweating blood.(33)



Two hours after Dunlop had called down the artillery, Martin's company was ordered through Dunlop's position to both advance towards Delden and "to relieve the situation in front of C Coy." By then, the positions held by both leading companies were described as "firm" although Dunlop's men were "still having difficulties." By 7:45 A.M. 4 April, reports suggested that Martin's men had "met very little opposition." A fighting patrol from both Majors Lawson's and Martin's companies moved into the town that morning and took 34 prisoners.(34) To the west of the Linc's bridgehead, the Lake Superiors had found a bridging site at a set of canal locks. By morning, the Brigade's armour had started across the Twenthe canal to marry up with the Regiment and to widen the bridgehead toward Almelo.(35) Brigadier Moncel finally left the Regimental Headquarters in the early morning of 4 April, but not before telling Lt. Col. Coleman that this had been a "real picture-perfect battle." As Coleman has since remarked: "Coming from him, that was high praise. He meant the way everybody had conducted themselves." (36) Headquarters was moved into Delden before noon while most of the Regiment received the heartfelt thanks of its citizens: "It was one gigantic celebration." (37)

Private Challice did not partake in the festivities held that day as he was one of the Regiment's 67 casualties suffered during the battle. He spent the next year in hospital, having collapsed that morning from "exhaustion and shock" brought on by his serious shrapnel wounds.(38) Nevertheless, Challice has fond memories of his role in the battle: "It was a damn good fight." He held no animosity toward his foe: he shared a cigarette with a German soldier in the ambulance that morning:

Delden was worth every cent. It was a happy battle...To me, it was one of the best battles of the war because we obtained our objective and held it...In all honesty, there was no way we should have held that house. We should have been all wiped out completely. C company would have ceased to exist that night.(39)

Private Clifford Challice was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his role in the battle for Delden.

By the early afternoon of 4 April, Coleman had received word that the Regiment would remain in Delden for the next three days, acting as a "firm base" for 4 Division, elements of which were soon to be pushing toward the German border. During those next days, patrol programs dealt with a "German defensive system" trapped between the Canadian Infantry Divisions to the west and 4 Division to the east.(40) A branch canal west of Delden which ran north between Almelo and Wierden provided a buffer behind which the enemy (some 3-5,000 of them by civilian estimates) retreated to the north.(41) The forward companies kept watch through these days "under sporadic mortar and MG fire from the west side of the canal," waiting "for an expected counter-attack which did not materialize."(42)

German rearguard tactics helped evacuate this area around Almelo which was the German's administrative centre for North Holland. On the day the Lincs entered Delden, a section of men from Major Martin's company were dispatched north of the town to investigate a castle which Lt. Col. Coleman considered a suitable base for the Armoured Brigade. Harry Smethurst and Donald Ross were among the group taken to the castle by a young woman from the town:

There was a moat around the castle and the bridge was up. Then we put a burst of machine gun fire in the moat and the door opened in the castle and two men walked down side by side, lowered the gate and a lady appeared in the centre of the door and we advanced up toward her. We sort of spread out because we didn't know what was in the castle. Then...she had us come in and I went up these stairs. She gave me a key and said there was a German officer there. She hadn't seen him for a few days. So I opened the door carefully...and sure enough, there he was lying on the floor. He had shot himself, probably shot his wife and daughter first. The daughter was in the arms of the mother, and it was just a baby about a year old.(43)

The castle had been the headquarters of Reichkommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, Hitler's political chief in the Netherlands. He had since fled, leaving one of his staff officers (probably his adjutant) to choose his family's fate.

On the night of Saturday 7 April, the Regimental convoy moved off towards Germany to "catch up" with the Division's Armoured Brigade. "Rapid" Robert Moncel's forces had made "excellent progress" into Germany on a "hell-for-leather" advance designed to cut the enemy's escape route from the Netherlands.(44) The Regiment's trek was difficult as its war diarist comments: "The traffic on the rd was very hy and in many places the rd surface was broken making progress very slow. Many halts were made while the RCE [Royal Canadian Engineers] repaired the rds ahead."(45) After a number of detours, the Regiment arrived at a concentration area near Meppen on the Ems river on 8 April. That afternoon, the Argylls crossed the river and fought into the town.

The next Divisional objectives were disclosed that afternoon. The ultimate goal was Oldenburg, eighty kilometres from Meppen. It would be reached in three stages with the towns of Sogel and Friesoythe as the Division's intermediate objectives. The tactics to be employed were best explained in the Regimental war diary entry of this day: "The gen plan was for the Lake Sup R (M) to pass through the A&SH ofC to examine and pick out a route or routes to OLDENBURG...The Linc & Welld R following the Lake Sup R (M) would mop up any pockets of resistance by-passed by them. It was felt that in view of the pressure of the drive, the enemy would be forced to withdraw in some disorder, therefore opposition would be lt."(46) The need for such flexible tactics was soon discovered. At 11:30 P.M. 8 April, the Regiment moved off. Within the hour it was told to remain on the west side of the Ems river. "Road blocks and mines" had forced the Lake Superiors to move north to

Latham, before attacking into Sogel. By 3:00 P.M. the next day, the Lake Superiors had cleared Sogel and had continued further east toward the town of Werlte where a road block stalled their progress into the town.

The Lines moved into Sogel at noon on 9 April; Martin's company took some casualties clearing the southern half of the town. Through the afternoon and evening, the Regiment was "held in readiness" to reinforce the best course of advance: either toward the town of Lorup to the northeast or east to Werlte. At 7:30 P.M., Swayze's company moved toward Werlte to link up with the Lake Superiors but they too reached a road block where they came under small arms fire. Later that night, orders were issued to attack Werlte at first light. Wednesday 10 April. Major Brady's and Martin's men led the convoy out of Sogel that morning. They had one squadron of GGFG tanks as well as one medium artillery regiment supporting their advance. Swayze's men were left in reserve on Sogel's outskirts while Dunlop's C company remained in Sogel as a garrison force. The leading companies were within four kilometres of Werlte when they were met by an estimated 150 men dug in with Bazookas, machine guns and 20 mm. Anti-Aircraft guns. According to the Regimental history, "a short, sharp skirmish [ensued] in which "B" company routed the enemy," who were later seen running back toward Werlte.(47) The companies again moved off until they reached a woods which bordered the town. Here, Lt.Col. Coleman came forward to "tee up the attack": Brady's men were committed north of the main road; Martin's men to the south. By 10:00 A.M., "The coys upon entering the woods came under hy MG fire pinning them down temporarily, but with the help of the Carriers and Atk Pls. the adv. continued."(48) Private MacIntosh was in Brady's company on this, his last day in battle:

I can remember the morning well. We came up the road...in trucks so far and then we got off and we marched...It was a pea-soup fog. It was thick and we were marching up and we started to cross a ploughed field. And we hadn't got very far...when suddenly, it was almost as if somebody had pushed a button and the curtain went up.

The fog lifted and the sun came out, just burned it off... Here we are in the middle of a ploughed field going towards a bush. We got so far out and somebody opened up from the bush with a machine gun and we hit the ground... I can remember thinking to myself, "If I can get my bloody head below ground, I'll be safe." I didn't give a damn about my ass sticking up... We were pinned down for thirty to forty minutes, until finally the GGFG came up and started to shell the bush. They had been reluctant to come up earlier... afraid they were going to get stuck in the field with their tanks. My God, we didn't give a damn. 'Get the tanks up'. We had casualties....

There were six fellows in our section and four of them were killed that morning. The guys on either side of me were both killed. [A] chap by the name of "Moose" [was] on my right... He was shot down through the shoulder and actually bled to death, he drowned in his blood... They came back and got him two or three days later and he was black. (49)

MacIntosh's mention of the armour's "reluctance" to move up is noteworthy since his commanding officer had to personally "go back to urge on the tanks." Brady found the supporting troop down the road, their crews arguing with their commander who had pulled his tanks out, fearing that anti-tank weapons were in the woods ahead. As Brady recalls, "I was so goddam mad, I couldn't see." Eventually, Brady's men received armoured support and pushed into the woods--without Major Brady. He was accidentally shot by one of his own men. His replacement, Sergeant Staszuk was soon shot through the eye and C.S.M. Brown was forced to assume command. Private MacIntosh recalls that "We were in an awful mess." (50) The company pushed on toward Werlte.

Some miles to the west, Lt. Col. Coleman was enjoying "one of the compensations of being a CO." for as he jokingly explains: "Once you've given the orders and committed the troops to the attack, you can put your feet up more or less until something disastrous happens." His rest was shortlived:

It was a beautiful sunny day and I was dangling my legs over the edge of my tank. The attack had started. I could hear the firing going on up the road. Suddenly I saw an ambulance jeep coming from the front, going like hell. And it screamed to a halt beside me and... sitting in it was a thoroughly angry Brady. And he had a leg wound, blood pouring from it. (51)

The ambulance pushed on but, much to Coleman's surprise, it returned a half an hour later with the news that Sogel had been attacked by paratroopers and German civilians. Dunlop's men, along with the Divisional engineers, ambulance unit workers and lorry drivers held off the attackers. Later, the engineers destroyed a number of houses in the town "as a reprisal and a warning" to the civilian population.(52)

Throughout the rest of this day, the bulk of the Regiment fought into Werlte, having "succeeded in getting a foot-hold on the outer edge" of the town before midday. By the late afternoon, the companies slowly worked "beyond the centre of the town" as the enemy retreated east.(53) Tactical headquarters was later moved into a town hotel where the CO heard "the constant crackle of gun fire" through the night. The job of clearing the town ("the worst...most uncomfortable kind of fighting" in Lt. Col. Coleman's view) continued into the next day.(54) Werlte cost the Regiment 46 men.

On Thursday 11 April, operations were planned to push toward Lindern and Osterlindern, southeast of Werlte. Dunlop's men had been relieved in Sogel and had helped finish clearing the town. As he remembers, any major move towards Lindern would have been met with considerable opposition:

Johnny Martin's company was streetfighting in Werlte and we took over one side of the street and John took over the other and we went through the town and cleaned out what was left. There would be pockets maybe every third house, you'd run into a bunch of them wanting to fight. We got to the far end of Werlte and from there on...was a gradual hill that went down. The buildings quit and it was farming country and it went down maybe a third of a mile...to a little river bed with a bunch of bush behind it. And I looked through the glasses at that and could see that there were Jerries in there wandering around, dozens of them.(55)

Dunlop's observations were confirmed when reconnaissance tanks were sent east to see if a bridge outside of Werlte was still intact. The lead tank was knocked out under "very hy MG and Atk gun fire" which also pinned down the patrols sent into the area.(56) Later that night, aerial reconnaissance

confirmed that the bridge had been blown. The attack toward Lindern was cancelled.

On Friday 12 April, two companies moved north to garrison Lorup, a town previously held by the Governor General's Foot Guards (GGFGs). Their tanks had moved on to support the Lake Superiors in their attack on Friesoythe, the Division's second objective. The Regiment followed behind the Divisional vanguard, clearing the towns south of Friesoythe. The bulk of the unit passed through Lorup and moved into Neuarenburg that afternoon. The Brigade then ordered the Regiment southeast "to go as close to MARKHAUSEN...as possible." Road blocks again delayed the advance so Markhausen was not reached until before dawn, 13 April. Although the war diary reports that "the Battalion was to pass quickly through the town back on to the main axis," snipers and the "Numerous road blocks and mines...encountered on the streets of the village" again slowed the advance.(57) At 9:40 A.M., the route through Markhausen was finally clear. Major Martin's men led the Regiment east toward the town of Mittelsten-Thule where they found that the bridge leading into the town over the River Soeste had been destroyed. As his men prepared to cross into the town, a surprise attack proved to Martin that the strain of battle was beginning to have an effect:

We had not been engaged in battle for a spell and even as an experienced soldier, I found it was easy to be lax. We came to a stream, very deep in one part and the vehicles would not go through it. I stopped to open up a map which had been in my pocket and one of the guys yelled to me to get down and I just dove for the ground. Machine guns opened and right across that open stretch of water there were two Germans dug in not twenty feet away. I dove into the ditch and the next thing two or three of my guys had charged across that stream and killed the Germans. That's how people get killed--just one relaxation of your discipline and you've had it. The Colonel heard about it and said something about me being pretty careless. [He] sent me back to echelon for a day or two and told me to relax.(58)

Major Lawson's D company formed the initial bridgehead across the Soeste where they soon found another crossing farther north which allowed the other companies to follow through.

The fighting proceeded slowly against small-arms fire, sniping, and occasional shelling. The country, being very close, was ideal for these tactics on the part of the enemy: the poor, bridgeless, cratered roads prevented the Division from using its advantage in heavy weapons. (59)

As patrols went through the town in the afternoon and evening, Dunlop's and Swayze's companies worked to cut the main road leading north. Middleton-Thule or "Tittlemouse" as it was by then known was evacuated by the enemy in the early morning of 14 April: at 2:15 A.M., artillery was brought down on areas where Dunlop's men "reported a by movement of by vehs moving out of the town." (60)

Later that morning, the Regiment moved onto the main road six kilometres south of Friesoythe: a town which the Lake Superiors had failed to capture on 12-13 April. Rowan Coleman recalls the slow advance made by his men that day:

That road up to Friesoythe was just a series of chopped trees, loped off and lying across the road. [There were] some panzerfausts and of course the armour [was] just completely stuck while the pioneers came forward and chopped out the trees...and the engineers removed the mines. We in the infantry dealt with whatever weapons fire was bothering us. (61)

The rumble of the guns through the morning was evidence that the Argyll's attack on Friesoythe was well underway. The town was in Canadian hands by that afternoon after an otherwise brilliant operation which was marred by the death of the Argyll's Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. F.E. Wigle. (62) The Lincs contacted the Lake Superiors south of the town by 2:30 P.M. Together, they were to find a route to the high ground east of Friesoythe in the town of Altenoythe. With the bridge into the town destroyed, Swayze's and Lawson's men met only "slight opposition" as they started along a secondary road east of Friesoythe. Three hours later, when Martin's men followed behind, the road was

impassable.(63) The boggy subsoil had given way under the weight of the supporting armour:

The terrain was still wet and flat and in many places were peat bogs, over which not even light carriers could make much progress. If loaded to any extent, parked vehicles gradually sank until at last they had to be bodily pulled out by half-track vehicles, which themselves as often as not became bogged in turn. It was out of the question even to think of employing tanks anywhere away from a metalled roadway in such conditions.(64)

The companies reached their objectives late that evening even though the road over which they had travelled had since disappeared. The engineers worked throughout the night but were unable to repair the bridging south of Friesoythe. Another route north was eventually found by the Regiment's scout officer, Lt. Hughes.

The next morning (15 April) both of the Division's Brigadiers briefed Lt. Col. Coleman on their next objective: the Kusten Canal, a 30 metre-wide waterway running east-west which lay some 9 kilometres north of Friesoythe. In the words of the Canadian Official History, Divisional Commander Vokes "felt that by throwing the full weight of his division across the Kusten Canal he would be able to break through, push on to the lake called the Zwischenahner Meer, and attack Oldenburg over better ground."(65) Brigadier Jetterson's 10 Brigade provided the assault force: the Algonquins would form the initial bridgehead which would be reinforced later by the Argylls and Lincs.

For the next three days, until 18 April, the bulk of the Regiment cleared the towns of Kronsberg, Bosel and Osterloh on the Division's right flank while Major Lawson's D company was attached to the SAR's for operations further east.(66) The tactics employed and the obstacles met during these days were becoming routine: company detachments faced "slight opposition" although road blocks and craters often slowed the armour. Rowan Coleman recalls some of the tactical developments during this time:

I remember in one of these towns...I felt that the poor old mortars hadn't had much of a go...We were being delayed by scattered people in a small village and we were...parked outside. And we were deployed, all companies in position...So for lack of moving targets, I just told Alby Hicks [Capt. H.L. Hicks] to keep firing his mortars wherever he wanted. And they fired for two solid days. I remember paying the mortar platoon a visit and you never heard such happiness in your life. They were all singing and dancing and the mortar cases were piled to the ceiling...But they were doing a great job...They must have really put the wind out of whoever was left in there. But that was the type of thing. You just sort of sit....

They introduced searchlights and this changed the complexion of things entirely...I remember telling Moncel...[that] we prefer to fight at night...I think most of us find that with these searchlight[s]...we can move better. They were very effective. So the daytime was spent... resting and then we would move at night. I remember very distinctly that night fighting was for us.(67)

In the days between 12 and 18 April, the Regiment lost 20 men, casualties which reflected the fluid nature of the battlefield:

There was a lot of petty fighting, sniping this type of thing that was going on....It was costing us people everyday. And I think that type of thing ran it up more than a mass attack where a lot of people died. This was more a case of losing one here and two there.(68)

On 18 April, the Regiment was ordered across the Kusten Canal to strengthen the Algonquin's and Argyll's fragile bridgehead. Lieutenant Colonel Coleman received his orders from General Vokes himself, whose grim determination was imparted on his battalion commander:

Chris Vokes sent for me...I remember [the crossing point]...was an extreme scene of desolation, the whole place was a mess...The typical World War I battle field...He said "You are going to go across." And I remember very distinctly, he took me by the chest...He said in his fierce way, "If you don't get across, I'll throw you right in the canal."(69)

A hurried orders group was held not two and a half hours before the crossings commenced. Dunlop's company would cross first and head east toward a railline which ran north. Captain G.T. Moore, who had assumed command of A company, would pass through toward a lateral road a thousand metres north of the canal while B company under Captain A.S. Graydon advanced up the main road

a thousand metres west of the railline.(70)

Dunlop's company was ferried across the canal at 10:30 P.M. that night; Moore's company along with men, weapons and carriers from the support company were rafted over soon after. This party reported from the railline an hour later against "very strong opposition from SA, MG, and Shell fire." (71) Major Dunlop recalls that mines were also a problem:

We went across the Kusten Canal and down the north shore...until we came to a railroad that...crossed the canal and went north. I came up to there and there were more schumines there...One of our guys stepped on a schumine and it took the bottom of his leg off. They were loading him on a jeep and I went over to him and said "Tough luck, soldier." He said "Not as tough as you think. I came up to fight for you, sir and I never fired a shot. I'm sorry." He was sorry that he never had his chance to fight.(72)

As Dunlop's men fought to secure the railline, the enemy counterattacked the Algonquins' forward positions to the northwest, driving them back to the canal: "The situation in the bridgehead was serious." By 3:35 A.M. 19 April, Dunlop's men had secured the railline. Moore's men were to then push north "by stealth or any other means possible." By morning, Moore's men "were unable to move" against the opposition from their right flank. Soon after, Graydon's B company, which had crossed before dawn "to await further orders," was sent north along the main road to seize a crossroads "as quickly as possible." The company reached its objective by midmorning; taking four hours to advance less than a kilometre.(73)

The remainder of the day was spent defending and strengthening this still small bridgehead. Bridging across the canal was finally completed that morning. Rocket equipped Typhoon aircraft "were very active on the Bde front and were very effective" this day, as were the mortar and gun crews on the ground. At 2:00 P.M., a PIAT team knocked out a 20 mm. Oerlikon gun "that had been bothering" Graydon's position only 200 metres away. The enemy attacked this position two hours later, but soon retreated after suffering heavy

casualties under the defensive artillery and tank fire. Further east, Captain Moore's men made some progress up the railline against "heavy opposition," suffering two casualties while taking four prisoners. As dusk fell, contact patrols were sent out every three hours while Graydon's and Moore's companies moved slowly forward. Another counterattack was launched against Graydon's company before midnight. It too "was dispersed by Arty and Mortar fire" which continued throughout the night. (74)

A haze covered the countryside in the early morning of Friday, 20 April, but it soon burned off to become fair and warm: the tenth consecutive day so described by the war diary. That morning, an O-group was held at Major Dunlop's company headquarters to discuss ways to move the leading companies onto their objectives. The companies moved out at 11:00 A.M. with two troops of BCR tanks in support, following not only a "terrific barrage" but also the Typhoons overhead. By noon, both lead companies had reported on their objectives. Graydon's men on the left met little opposition so they pushed on a further two kilometres before they were halted by a crater in the road. The engineers were immediately sent forward while the infantry provided cover. The advance on the right flank did not match this success as Captain Muir's men again came under small arms and mortar fire from the east. While his company continued to hold the tracks, Dunlop's men passed through to reinforce Graydon's position to the north. When they reached it that afternoon, a patrol north had returned with only a rough idea of what lay ahead. The village of Sud Edewecht was only about a kilometre north of their position. The patrol went only a few hundred metres past their company position to where the main road crossed the railway: both routes then crossed the Aue River, which was little more than a stream. A small hill to the northeast offered the enemy a clear view to the south. As the patrol neared the rail bridge, "they came

under very heavy SA fire from automatic weapons and were forced to return." As the twisted track led up to the bridge, the patrol assumed that it had been destroyed.(75)

With this information, Dunlop's company was ordered to form a bridgehead across the river that afternoon. The enemy's self-propelled (SP) guns soon forced Dunlop's men back with casualties. That night, a PIAT patrol was dispatched to knock out the guns. They too came under fire and were forced to withdraw. Defensive plans were again organized to consolidate the gains of that day. Muir's A company came up in support, as did the Brigade machine guns. Such measures did nothing to ease the heavy shell fire that night which "prevented the RCE from working on the crater." (76) The Regiment had lost 32 men since crossing the canal two days before.

The shell fire "decreased considerably" in the early hours of the 21st. This allowed one platoon from Graydon's company to dig in north of the crater. At 9:00 A.M., the guns laid down a concentration to aid the advance. One tank had by then crossed the crater to aid the infantry but a second was destroyed by an SP gun which remained active despite the artillery's efforts. The advance continued against enemy shelling which "caused many casualties." By midday, Dunlop's men had passed through and dug into the railway bank and roadside just south of the Aue River. The enemy was "just across the road," actively sniping and shelling. By 2:30 P.M., the company found that the road bridge across the river had also been destroyed. The war diary entry of 3:00 P.M., 21 April relates the scene:

The Coys were under extremely heavy mortar and shell fire causing many casualties. Personnel of the Carrier and Attack Pl were sent forward to strengthen the forward coys. Artillery, Mortars and MMG were brought down in an attempt to relieve the situation. They fired continually on the right flank. Typhoons were very active over the area. They engaged many targets but failed to knock out the SP gun.(77)

Sergeant Bill Leslie of the carrier platoon has a vivid memory of 21 April,

1945, his birthday:

One of the toughest things I ever had to do...was right near the end. The companies were very low and we were back along a canal... Our officer had gone on leave in England and I was in charge. I got word from the Colonel to bring the carrier platoon up on foot, and the anti-tank platoon were also to go up on foot...They had a railroad crossing where the road crossed the railroad...and the railroad was elevated a little bit. [On] our side, there was one building. It sat back maybe a hundred yards from the crossroads and on the other side there were some buildings but they were mostly knocked down. They had tried to take that, just a little cross roads and they couldn't get across...

We went up along the side of the railroad tracks so that we couldn't be seen. When I got up almost to the corner, there was a fellow going across with some food...and a big cannister of tea. He got up and as he ran down the railroad tracks there was something firing straight down the railroad tracks. They couldn't see you below the tracks but once you got up on the tracks, he would fire. He hit this fellow...By the time I got over there, he was dead...

This friend of mine came with me...he was sort of acting as a runner...So they called for me to go to the other side of the tracks, to run in front of this bloody gun...I took off all my equipment, all I took was a Sten gun...I said "If I get over, you just throw my equipment over..." I got up and ran and when I heard the gunfire, I dropped and I rolled...right on top of this guy that had gone over ahead of me...But I got over there, and there wasn't any more than a half a dozen guys there and there was just parts of buildings there. This officer was there and he was very nervous. He was a lieutenant. He said, "Sergeant, I want you to go back and get your platoon and put in an attack on this place..."

...In the meantime, a radio call comes to the lieutenant that they want him back at headquarters...Just then, we hear this tank coming down the road towards us so I said "I don't know about you, but I'm getting the hell out of here." There was nothing I could do there...Instead of crossing where I had crossed, I went back down on the same side and whoever was firing down must have been firing on an angle, because he didn't see me. I got across the track and he didn't even fire...(78)

The weakened companies drew together that night to fend off the closing artillery and sniper fire which climaxed in a counterattack from the right flank at 10:00 P.M.

The Regiment lost 37 men this day. Since the 14th, it had suffered a total of 113 casualties, the strength of one full rifle company. With Major Lawson's company attached elsewhere, the Regiment's fighting arm was then

about half its normal strength. Approximately 100 reinforcements were allotted to the companies this day, bringing the Regiment close to its full working establishment.(79)

The Argylls suffered 44 casualties on 21 April as they too were kept from crossing the Aue river. That night however, as the Lincolns fended off the counterattack, the Argyll's front was left open. Bridging quickly provided armoured support and by the morning of the 22nd, the Argylls occupied the town of Osterscheps, north of the river. They continued north, but as their Regimental historian relates, their concerns centred on the Linc's attack which went in at 5:00 P.M:

This was a possible danger point, as the Lincoln's on the main road to the right were heavily engaged and locked in a grim struggle. As well as our own weapons, we could hear the high, quick series of explosions from flak guns and the spitting crack of 88-millimetre airbust, leaving the tell-tale smoke puffs hanging in the air. We did not envy Col. Coleman and his men their jobs.(80)

The Linc's scout patrols sent out that morning found that the enemy was still dug in on the main road north of the river: their positions still buttressed by self-propelled guns. Lieutenant Colonel Coleman decided finally "to by-pass this strong point" by sending Graydon's B company to the east through Muir's men. This was to give Dunlop's company a chance to capture the road junction on the southern edge of Sud Edewecht. The initial advance was slowed by "very hy" mortar and machine gun fire which went unchecked. A smoke screen was then laid on while Muir's men contacted Graydon's who had tried to take out the machine gun positions on the right. Reports that night had B company's forward platoon still south of the road bridge, pinned down by machine gun fire: "The enemy in well dug-in posns along the creek bed to the EAST was able to control the open ground to the front. Mortar fire was very hy and many cas were sustained. The fwd coys were unable to adv. or retire until darkness fell."(81) Again, the enemy counterattacked after dark, forcing Graydon's and

Muir's company back to the railline. Twenty seven casualties (4 fatal) were suffered by the Regiment that day.

The Regiment was denied entry to Sud Edewecht until Wednesday 25 April when the combined efforts of the three infantry Regiments and supporting units finally pushed the enemy into retreat. On Monday the 23rd, the Argylls moved "to the main axis to cut the enemy off, or loosen them up." (82) By then, the Argylls were at half their regular fighting strength, but their efforts gained enough of the enemy's attentions to allow one platoon from B company (then back under Major Martin) to form a bridgehead that afternoon. (83) The attack continued later that night when the Algonquins attacked along the railline, digging in beyond the river just south of the town. The remainder of Martin's men then moved across the Aue under the Algonquin's barrage. The Regiment's forward companies spent the next day clearing houses along the north bank of the river; fighting which prompted this comment by the Algonquin's historian: "The expected loosening up of the resistance in front of the Linc's had not materialized, they evidently being faced with an ultra-fanatic crew who had elected to fight to the finish." (84) An Algonquin platoon and one tank came south that evening "shooting up houses" to ease the Linc's advance. The bridgehead was soon secure, allowing Muir's men to push toward Sud Edewecht. They contacted the bulk of the Algonquin Regiment the next afternoon: "They made no contact with the enemy." (85)

The plans for the final push to Bad Zwischenahn, the resort town on the southern shore of the Zwischenahner Meer, were distributed that night. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was again to be under 4 Armoured Brigade, whose Commanding Officer later recalled the tactics he chose to employ in the next days:

The condition of the roads in the bridgehead was such that no more than 2 squadrons of armour could be deployed at any one time.

and usually only one troop of each could be used for direct fire...[He decided] to choose company objectives some 200 yards apart, to tee-up company attacks supported by a troop of tanks, and to drive straight ahead.(86)

The Regiment was divided into three of the fighting units Moncel described: a section of carriers, two WASP's, a FOO with his tank and a section of engineers were attached to two of them.(87) The Regiment led the right thrust of the Divisional drive while the Lake Superiors and Argylls advanced along a secondary road to the west of the main road. The Division would not reach its objective (some ten kilometres distant) for five days: "We just kept edging and edging and edging without any real push." (88) The scattered, desperate remains of II Parachute Corps would not permit the infantry to appreciate the approaching victory.

On Thursday 26 April, the Regiment fought out of Nord Edewecht toward the village of Ekern. The unit war diarist perhaps betrayed a frustration shared by many when he wrote: "Progress was very slow against fanatical resistance by the enemy." That night, A company (then back under Maj. Swayze) pushed past the craters at the north end of the town while C company (which had come under Captain J.W. Kidd that day) moved north along the railline to the west. The next morning, Swayze's company reached the southern edge of Ekern where some felled trees and sniper fire caused further delays. By 10:30 A.M. 27 April, D company (back under Maj. Brady) could only push on another four hundred metres before small arms and self-propelled gun fire marked yet another roadblock. As darkness fell, artillery, mortar and tank fire harassed suspected enemy positions while the infantry maintained patrols which covered the engineer's work on the roads. The repairs were completed by 4:30 A.M. 28 April. Tanks moved forward to Brady's and Kidd's companies who were then under "hy mortar and shell fire." Martin's men passed through by midmorning and were clearing houses in the north end of the town by noon. They soon came under the direct

fire of another SP gun from the town's northeastern corner. A tank hunting party from Brady's company was sent to deal with the gun, but they became pinned down by an enemy position in a windmill. Martin's men withdrew later that afternoon.(89)

A "very effective" two-stage fire program was used to dislodge this opposition in the north of Ekern that night. Ninety minutes after the first barrage commenced at 10:15 P.M., Major Martin's men were on their objective with "little opposition" and twelve prisoners. The second barrage was laid down at 2:30 A.M.; Major Swayze's men took five prisoners on their objective two hours later. By 10:00 A.M. 29 April, Capt. Kidd's, C company had another fourteen prisoners. At midday, Brady's men "in close fighting overpowered the enemy strong point at the windmill and firmly established the position."(90) The Regiment sustained twenty eight casualties (nine fatal) fighting for Ekern on 28-29 April.

The push for Bad Zwischenahn began that night. While the Argylls and Lake Superiors advanced onto the town from the west, the Lincs continued north on the main axis to "seal the town off" from the southeast. The Regiment was supported by one medium and three field artillery units, as well as a heavy anti-aircraft regiment, a battery of rockets and a full tank regiment. Captain Kidd's company led off at 10:00 P.M. Four hours later, Kidd's and Brady's men reached the main railline south of the town. By the midmorning of 30 April, Lt. Col. Coleman had gone forward to organize the companies which "very cautiously" worked into the town a platoon at a time.(91) As the day ended, the Regiment's men moved through the town, watching for a lone machine gun nest or self-propelled gun manned by Hitler's still defiant supporters. Their Fuhrer had committed suicide that afternoon.

On the morning of 1 May 1945, the town was surrounded and an emissary asked the burgomaster to choose between "unconditional surrender" and "annihilation." The town chose the latter course, although it came under shellfire throughout that afternoon from enemy positions to the northeast. As 2 Division had advanced onto Oldenburg that day, 4 Armoured Division was ordered north of Bad Zwischenahn toward the coastal city of Wilhelmshaven. (92)

That afternoon, the Regiment came under 10 Brigade to prepare "to establish br-heads to give the armour [4 Armoured Brigade] a clear road" to the north. At 11:00 P.M., Swayze's men moved to a small canal crossing east of Bad Zwischenahn. By 3:30 A.M. 2 May, the company was "consolidating" against small arms fire. Artillery concentrations later "dispersed" the enemy seen moving across this front. As dawn broke, the position was secure "but snipers were very active in their area." Captain Kidd's men were to secure another crossing along a main road about a kilometre northwest of Swayze's position and no more than a half a kilometre from the east shore of the Zwischenahner Meer. They had difficulty moving against artillery and machine gun positions. Sometime before dawn, 13 platoon under Lt. T.R. Waid crossed the canal, but a self-propelled gun forced the rest of the company to try to outflank the position from the west. The company dug in but withdrew later against "hy enemy fire." Lieutenant Waid had just come to the Regiment on 24 April; he took command of Lt. Patterson's platoon just prior to the attack. He and twenty-eight others were captured that morning. Only two of these men (both of them NCO's) were with the Regiment before 25 March; fifteen of them had come up four days before, on 29 April. (93)

The remains of Captain Kidd's company stayed under heavy fire as they slowly advanced through the morning. Major Martin's men passed through them in the afternoon into the village of Aschhauserfeld. That night, contact patrols

included a party of scouts, drivers and batmen under the Scout's Lt. Hughes. They watched the front's extreme left flank along the lakeshore. On the right, the darkness allowed Swayze's forward platoon to be relieved by some Algonquins: the incessant sniper fire had isolated them throughout that day. Three members of the Regiment were killed Wednesday 2 May, 1945: Privates Nisbet and Payette had been with the unit since 6 April; Private Lamson had been with the Regiment for five days, since 28 April.(94)

Major Brady's company pushed on during the night and found that the small bridge north of Aschhauserfeld had been destroyed. On the morning of 3 May, they formed a bridgehead to allow Major Swayze's company to pass through. His men were to meet the Argylls who had gone up the west side of the lake and were then coming back south. Swayze remembers the tactics and significance of this advance:

We realized that this was going to be the end... Coleman stopped the battalion... and then moved crews up forward a thousand yards. [They were] machine gun crews: there was a Bren gun and three or four men which was more than you needed and their orders were if there was the slightest sign of any activity... they were to fire a full burst in the general direction and turn around and run like hell. The reason for this is obvious. But the second [reason] is eventually somebody in Division is going to say 'move forward cautiously' which they did. So we moved forward cautiously another thousand yards, but it was already taken...

Then we got another order to move again. And [Coleman] said 'This will be the last time...' He said, 'You put in the first attack of the Lincoln and Welland. Now I want you to put in the last.' And I took A company and moved forward a thousand yards and stopped and that was the last attack we made.(95)

The Regiment's war diary entry dated 10:00 A.M. Thursday 3 May, 1945 read: "None of the Coys. were in contact with the enemy."(96) That afternoon, the Regiment moved off in a nontactical convoy to relieve the Algonquins in the town of Ofen, ten kilometres east of Bad Zwischenahn. The next day was cloudy with rain. Only some contact patrols were sent out. At 9:00 P.M. Lt. Col. Coleman attended a 10 Brigade conference:

I remember being summoned to Brigade and to my astonishment I

discovered my old pal Bell-Irving sitting in the Brigadier's seat. Jim Jefferson had quietly left. I was one of his commanding officers and I didn't even know he was leaving....Orders from high command were to prepare for an attack at 8:00 A.M. the following morning if the Germans had not surrendered, but they expected that they would surrender. I remember getting the orders and going back. The O-group had been waiting for me for two to three hours...I told them what was happening...So all the preparations were made and I remember being extremely tired so I laid down on the floor...at ten or eleven o'clock at night...I woke up in the next morning feeling extremely rested. Bucko Watson, the Second in Command was sitting on a chair grinning at me...I said, "For God's sake, Bucko, what time is it?" He said, "Its eleven o'clock." I said, "Well, what's happened to the attack?" He said, "It never took place so I never bothered to call you."(97)

The Regimental war diarist recorded this message at 1:00 A.M. Saturday 5 May.

1945: "The following msg [message] was received from 10 Cdn Inf Bde: 'All offensive ops cancelled forthwith. A Cease fire 0800 hr 5 May 45. All units stand fast until further notice.' The long-awaited order had come in."(98)

CHAPTER VII: NOTES

- 1 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), p. 390.
- 2 D.W. Fowle, Taped Interview, 18 November 1983.
- 3 Col. C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War vol. 3: The Victory Campaign (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1960), p. 539.
- 4 R.O. Patterson, Taped Interview, 12 June 1984; Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.
- 5 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 6 R.O. Patterson, Taped Interview, 12 June 1984.
- 7 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983; J.E. Reeve, Taped Interview, 27 October 1983.
- 8 Maj. R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954), p. 243.
- 9 War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment (PAC RG 24 Vol. 15,106), April 1945.
- 10 R.O. Patterson, Taped Interview, 12 June 1984.
- 11 Col. J.F. Swayze, Taped Interview, 28 December 1982.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 546.
- 14 War Diary, L & W, April 1945.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.
- 17 War Diary, 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade (PAC RG 24 Vol. 14,156), 1 April 1945.
- 18 War Diary, L & W, 1 April 1945; War Diary, 10 CIB, 1 April 1945.
- 19 War Diary, 10 CIB, 2 April 1945.
- 20 War Diary, 10 CIB, 3 April 1945; War Diary, L & W, 2-3 April 1945.
- 21 War Diary, 10 CIB, 2-3 April 1945; Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 546.
- 22 War Diary, L & W, 3 April 1945.

- 23 Brig. R.C. Coleman. Taped Interview. 22 February 1985.
- 24 War Diary. L & W. 3 April 1945.
- 25 Col J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 26 War Diary. L & W. 4 April 1945.
- 27 J.A. Dunlop. Taped Interview. 1 August 1984; War Diary. L & W. 4 April 1945.
- 28 C.L. Challice. Taped Interview. 22 September 1984.
- 29 J.A. Dunlop. Taped Interview. 1 August 1984.
- 30 C.L. Challice. Taped Interview. 22 September 1984.
- 31 Ibid
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Brig. R.C. Coleman. Taped Interview. 22 February 1985.
- 34 War Diary. L & W. 4 April 1945.
- 35 Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 547.
- 36 Brig. R.C. Coleman. Taped Interview. 22 February 1985.
- 37 R.S.J. MacIntosh. Taped Interview. 6 April 1984.
- 38 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 253.
- 39 C.L. Challice. Taped Interview. 22 September 1984.
- 40 Maj. R.A. Paterson. A Short History: the Tenth Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hilversum, Netherlands: De Jong & Co., 1945). p. 31.
- 41 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 254.
- 42 War Diary. L & W. 5-6 April 1945.
- 43 H. Smethurst. Taped Interview. 22 September 1984.
- 44 War Diary. 10 CIB. 6 April 1945; Lt Col. H.M. Jackson ed., The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada [Princess Louise's] 1928-1953 (Montreal: Industrial School for the Deaf, 1953). p. 197.
- 45 War Diary. L & W. 7 April 1945.
- 46 Ibid.: 8 April 1945.
- 47 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 256; War Diary. L & W. 10 April 1945.
- 48 War Diary. L & W. 10 April 1945.

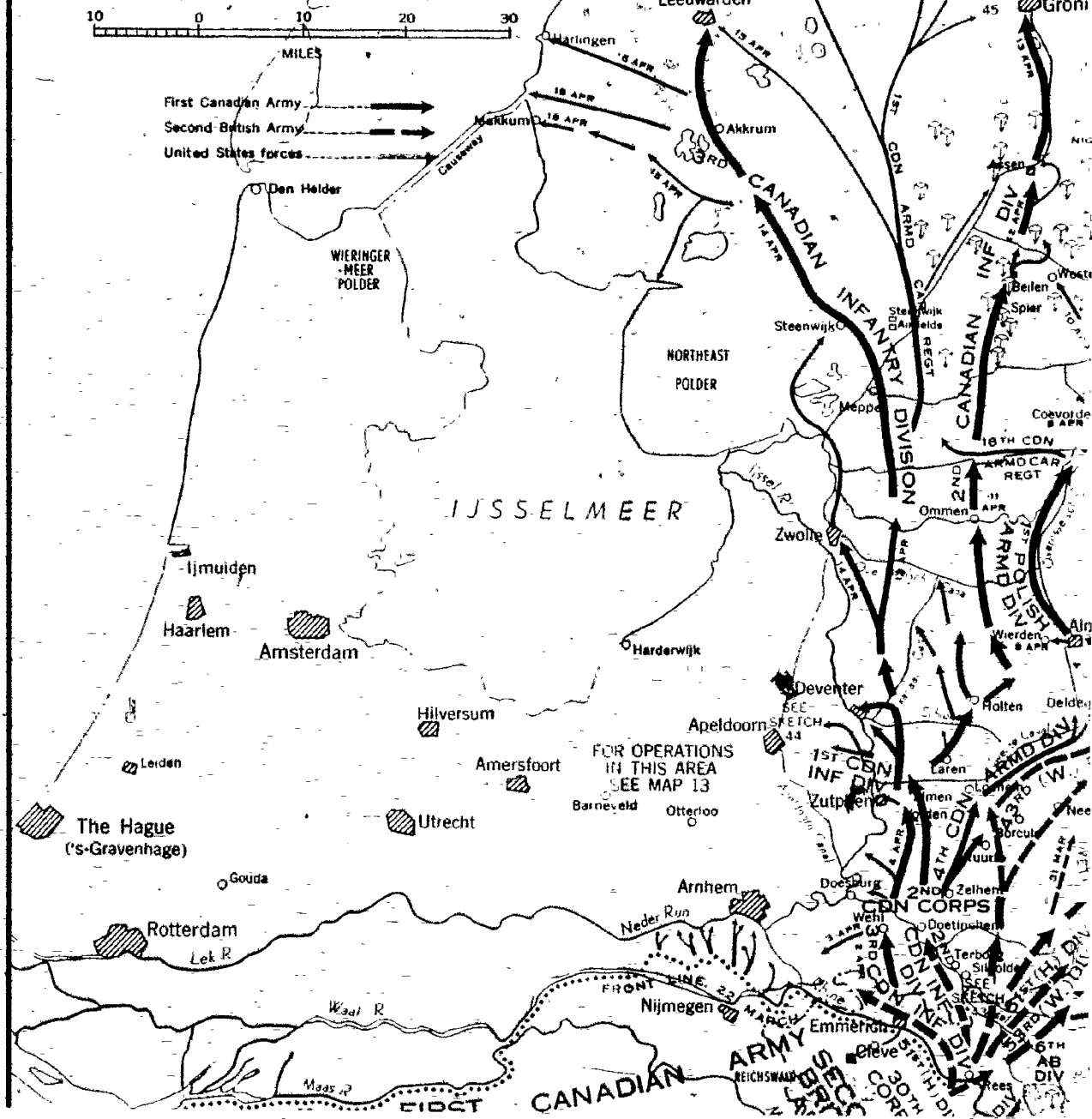
- 49 R.S.J. MacIntosh, Taped Interview, 6 April 1984.
- 50 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 257; E.J. Brady, Taped Interview, 20 June 1984; R.S.J. MacIntosh, Taped Interview, 6 April 1984.
- 51 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.
- 52 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 558; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 257.
- 53 War Diary, L & W, 10 April 1945.
- 54 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.
- 55 J.A. Dunlop, Taped Interview, 1 August 1984.
- 56 War Diary, L & W, 11 April 1945.
- 57 Ibid., 13 April 1945.
- 58 Lt.-Col. J.G. Martin, Taped Interview, 18 February 1984. Lieutenant-Colonel Coleman rotated all of his company commanders out of action throughout the final month: "One tried to keep a fatherly eye on your personnel, especially the company commander. At times, you had to be very arbitrary, saying 'Go away, take a rest.' (Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.)
- 59 Rogers, Regimental History, p. 258.
- 60 War Diary, L & W, 14 April 1945. On this day, Private Barton was evacuated from Leipzig, where he had spent the last seven months on a prisoner work team. Barton had been taken prisoner fighting for Tilly-la-Campagne on 2 August 1944:
- On the 14th, they decided they were going to evacuate us... That night they just stuck us in a field... We walked for several days, and they turned us into a field at night and the next morning, it was up and walking again. No food. Blackie and I got our hands on an American Red Cross hospital parcel. It had dehydrated beet in it and some vitamin pills... We would mix it all up and then eat it... I think it helped a lot... We got pretty close to the Elbe River and they couldn't take us across because the Russians were on the other side. You could hear the Russian artillery and several of the bridges were bombed out... And we were too low priority to go across the river so they turned us back and got us walking toward the American lines... They had stuck us in an old barn overnight. (When I think of how blind we were... because they were famous for putting prisoners in barns and then burning the damn things.) When we woke up the next morning, the Germans had all disappeared. We heard the Russian artillery on one side and we knew that the Americans were that way so we started walking... We went up this road and finally came to a river. We met some of the Americans and I remember one of the first questions we asked them was, "What was Number One on the Hit Parade?" And it was 'Accentuate the Positive.' (R.B. Barton, Taped Interview, 5 July 1984.)
- 61 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.

- 62 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 203.
- 63 War Diary, L & W, 14 April 1945.
- 64 Jackson, Argyll History, pp. 206-7*
- 65 Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 559.
- 66 War Diary, L & W, 16-18 April 1945; Maj. Rogers relates the action met by Maj. Lawson's D Company in the Regimental History, pp. 260-2.
- 67 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.
- 68 R.O. Patterson, Taped Interview, 12 June 1984.
- 69 Brig. R.C. Coleman, Taped Interview, 22 February 1985.
- 70 War Diary, L & W, 18 April 1945; Rogers, Regimental History, p. 264.
- 71 War Diary, L & W, 18 April 1945.
- 72 J.A. Dunlop, Taped Interview, 1 August 1984.
- 73 War Diary, L & W, 19 April 1945.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Ibid., 20 April 1945.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid., 21 April 1945.
- 78 W.P. Leslie, Taped Interview, 4 April 1984.
- 79 War Diary, L & W, 21 April 1945.
- 80 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 213.
- 81 War Diary, L & W, 22 April 1945.
- 82 Ibid., 23 April 1945.
- 83 Jackson, Argyll History, p. 214; Rogers, Regimental History, pp. 265, 6.
- 84 Maj. G.L. Cassidy, Warpath: The History of the Algonquin Regiment 1939-1945 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948), p. 321.
- 85 War Diary, L & W, 25 April 1945.
- 86 "Account given by Brig. R.W. Moncel," 15 June 1945, quoted in Stacey, Victory Campaign, p. 599.

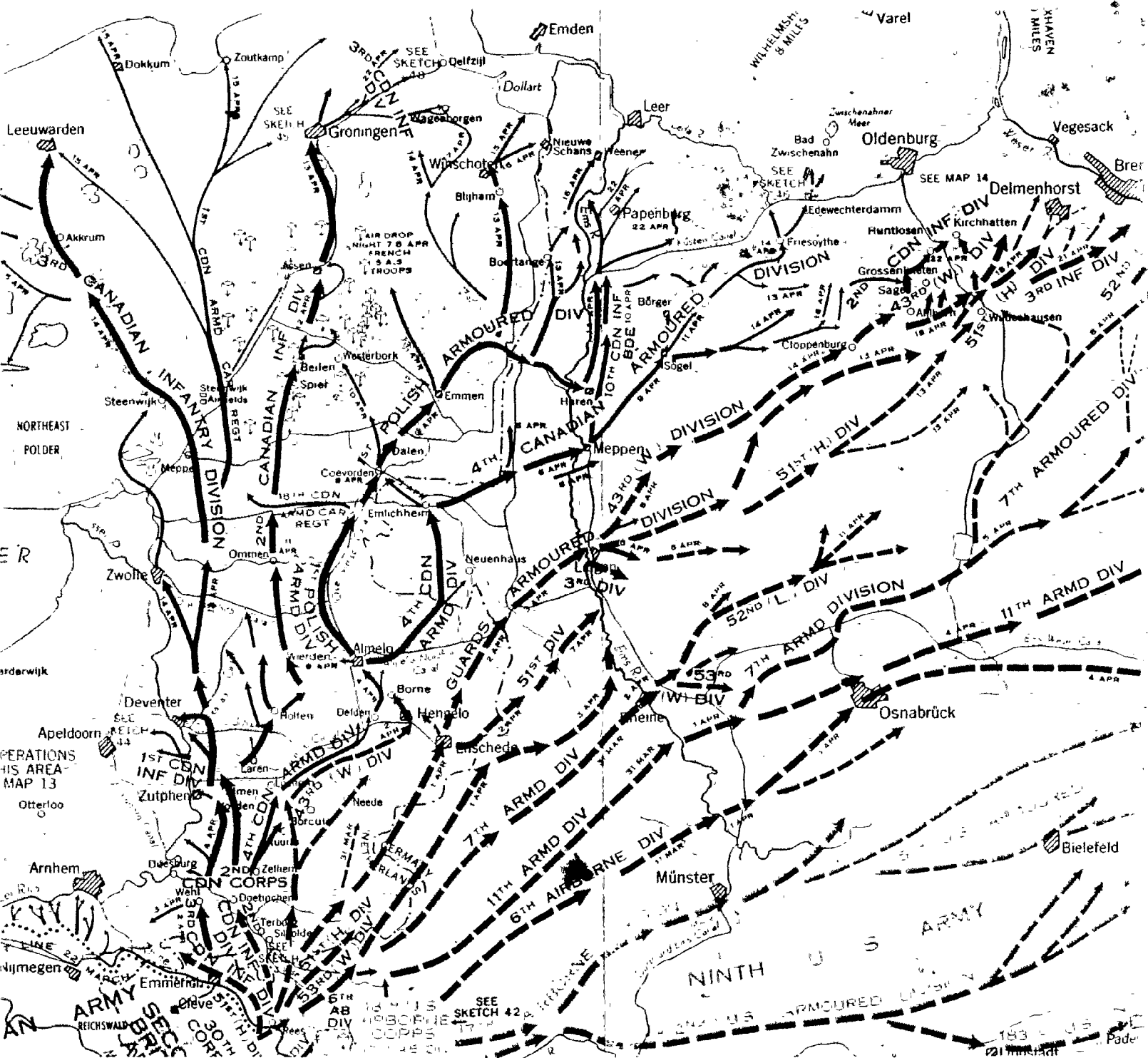
- 87 War Diary. L & W. 25 April 1945.
- 88 Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 597; R.O. Patterson. Taped Interview. 12 June 1984.
- 89 War Diary. L & W. 27-28 April 1945.
- 90 Ibid.. 28-29 April 1945.
- 91 Ibid.. 29-30 April 1945.
- 92 Stacey. Victory Campaign. p. 600.
- 93 War Diary. L & W. 2 May 1945; Rogers. Regimental History. p. 273.
- 94 War Diary. L & W. 2 May 1945.
- 95 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 96 War Diary. L & W. 3 May 1945.
- 97 Brig. R.C. Coleman. Taped Interview. 22 February 1985.
- 98 War Diary. L & W. 5 May 1945.

104

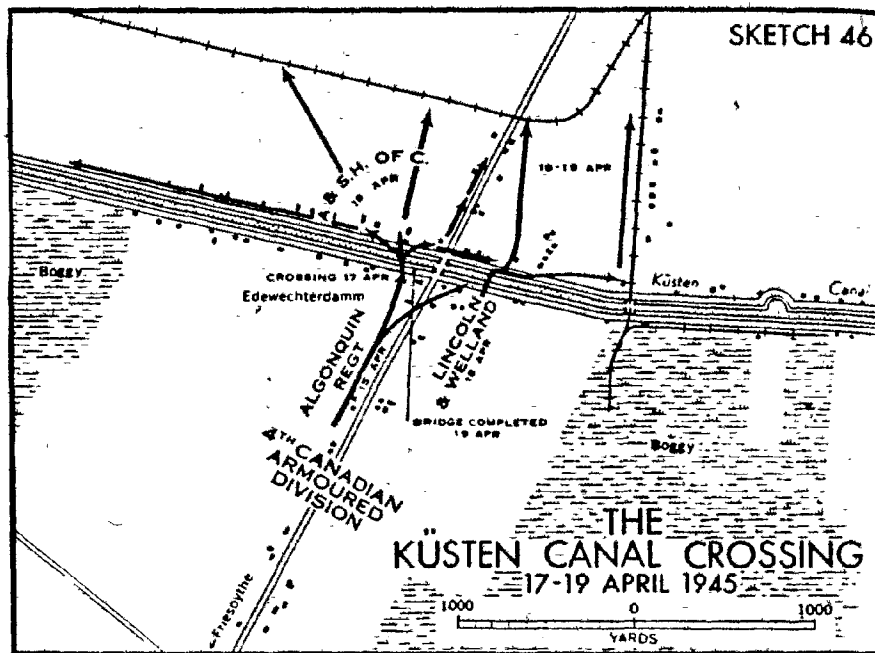
ADVANCE ON THE NORTHERN FRONT 23 MARCH - 22 APRIL 1945



Source: Stacey, The Victory Campaign



acey, The Victory Campaign



Source: Stacey, The Victory Campaign
p.560.

CONCLUSION

The War in Europe ended Tuesday 8 May, 1945. Operation ECLIPSE, the plans for the final disbandment and repatriation of the Canadian Army, was immediately set into motion. As with all previous schemes, the men gave little thought to these grand arrangements. As one former officer suggested, "I didn't pay any attention to it whatsoever. Once the War was over, I was just a civilian drawing pay."(1)

A few weeks after the ceasefire, the Regiment moved out of a German Air Force barracks in Wehnen near Oldenburg, and onto an estate ('De Klinkenbelt') near Nijverdal, Holland:

With the move to Holland, the fighting days of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment were brought to an end. Equipment was to be handed in, stores were to be accounted for, and the Regiment was to change from a fighting unit into a school. Five compulsory periods of education, voluntary courses, and a Padre's Hour each week, together with an intensive sports programme, were to keep everybody busy during the day.(2)

As 4 Armoured Division was the last of the Canadian Divisions into action, its formations had to 'bide their time' before they could be sent home. The usual military formalities became "a little bit sketchy" according to one. "But...we got to know each other."(3) The Regiment's strength continued to fluctuate through this period: some were sent home on points; others volunteered for the Pacific Theatre (they were home before the bulk of the Regiment). Still other men were dispatched to the Army of Occupation: a move which was often "bitterly resented" as John Martin remembers:

I was sent to Occupation Forces south of Bad Zwischenahn with the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. I wasn't too happy about that. It was like being sent to prison which I didn't think I deserved at the point. I was with the SDG's for about a month, but then Coleman went to bat for one or two of us and we were sent back to Holland.(4)

On 12 September 1945, the Regimental convoy moved into line for the final time as the unit took over billets in the town of Bussum, east of Amsterdam. In the next weeks, two trips were organized to attend celebrations in Eekloo, Belgium and Bergen op Zoom, Holland. Owen Patterson has fond memories of his stay in Eekloo, a town which had been liberated by a previous generation of his Regiment one year before:

We unloaded all of the trucks...outside of the town and marched in to make a better impression. Honestly, we were marching through roses...They lined the troops all up in front of City Hall...and then they asked all the officers into the City Hall to sign the register. So we went in and did that and came out and [there were] no troops. The citizens had been told that when we went into the hall, they were to each grab a person and take them and he was with them...as their guest for a week...We had a fantastic week there. We did have a few parades to the Lincoln and Welland burial grounds...but mostly they were just on the loose. And the citizens looked after you. No pub in town could close if there was a Lincoln and Welland in it. Nobody could pay for anything. They had huge fireworks displays at night...It was just great.(5)

The Regiment spent the Christmas of 1945 in the 1st Canadian Repatriation Depot ("Ontario Camp") in southern England. Seven days before, the Regiment had departed the continent from Oostende: 32 officers and 396 men made up its ranks. On 20 January 1946, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment sailed from Southampton aboard the "Ile de France." Its men stepped onto the docks at Halifax on Sunday, 27 January where they were met by Major M.J. McCutcheon.(6)

At 10:30 A.M. Tuesday 29 January 1946, the train carrying the last of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment pulled into the St. Catharines station. The Regiment's final parade was preceded by the 2nd Battalion Band playing "The Lincolnshire Poacher." Its strains were doubtless drowned out by the thousands who lined the parade route. At the head of the parade was Lieutenant-Colonel James F. Swayze, DSO; the Regiment was brought home by a Niagara Falls native who had been with the Regiment for over five years. A reporter from the St. Catharines Standard recorded the final active moments of

the Lincoln and Welland Regiment:

Forming up in the armouries, the battalion was welcomed back by Lt. Col. H.G. Morrow, M.C., officer commanding the 2nd battalion. The final act of dismissing the men of the battalion was short. There were no ceremonies to keep the men from greeting their families and friends as with a heart-felt "Goodbye, good luck and God bless you all," Lt. Col. Swayze dismissed the battalion for the last time.(7)

It was a day of mixed emotions for those 401 men who marched into St.

Catharines:

We marched down St. Paul's street to the Armouries...That was really something...I had known that I had belonged to a Regiment before that but suddenly, you realized that the Regiment belonged to people: it belonged to a city. It was an entity in many respects...And suddenly...it no longer existed. The Regiment just simply didn't die, it no longer existed....I supposed I belonged to the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, and it was a group of guys. You don't think in terms of tradition and all of these things. You think more in terms of the people that you lived with...(8)

The thrill was spoiled by the fact that we were going to break up. And really, most of us didn't want to quit, I don't think...We were all a little wary of going home...Its a bit strange coming home...Your attitudes [are] different. You're wondering just how you relate to all those people that were just plain family before. Its a change....I think I feel like a lot of others: I wouldn't have missed it for anything, but I certainly wouldn't want any part of it again...(9)

Forty years later, these men can define their association with the Regiment by referring to its history and battle honours ("You look back...and think 'My God, I had a small part in that.'") As veterans in their twenties and early thirties, their feelings were harder to define. Certainly, their feelings of civic pride were not very strong. By 1946, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was Niagara's 'own' in name only: 39 men from the Niagara district returned with the Regiment on 29 January.(10) As patriotism is such an intangible entity, so it must have been with being a 'Linc.' On a Regimental level, one belonged to "B company" or "the sigs." Yet, as Syd Elford suggests, "If we were going down the street and one of the other boys was in

trouble with some other outfit. it wouldn't matter if he was wrong or not. we were in there with him."(11) This cohesiveness was necessary on the battlefield:

All ranks are held together by the fear of having their peers realize that they too are afraid, particularly among those of the social system to which we belong...Once it starts, your individual life is such a miniscule part of it...Its very, very difficult to have the men come to the situation where you realize that you're going to say "charge" and they're going to get up and run across a field and fire their weapons at someone else and; at the same time, there's a fair chance that they're going to get hit...

What is a soldier?...He's thinking not so much of himself but [of] the unit to which he belongs...At some stage, you're with this platoon or section and you're going to keep on because you're part of that section.(12)

It takes little historical imagination to appreciate how even the 'best' training of Canadian recruits involved a long and difficult transformation. The Regiment's training in Canada and Newfoundland often followed antiquated methods and employed obsolete equipment. Even so, the countless hours of drill was a prerequisite for those who became "old" infantrymen. It also took time to develop the mentality of the soldier: one must not only know the capabilities of one's peers, one must also be willing to "keep on going because you're a part of that section."

Clearly, no training could have fully prepared these men for their introduction to the "friction of war." According to one former officer, "Battle is so different, because you lose control so damn fast. It is difficult to explain it."(13) The battle ground is a bewildering place: the noise ("the all pervading rumble of the guns"); the sights ("It was just a blaze of tracer out there."); even the smells ("I can still smell Cleve. A terrible smell of rotting bodies under the ruins") all tended to overwhelm and confuse. Battle Drill introduced men to this environment, but the initial adjustment to the fact that "They want to kill you" must have required remarkable powers of concentration and discipline. Some survived by sheer

luck (Private Barton lay only a few feet away from Private Blake; Barton was taken prisoner, but at least he was alive. Private Blake died in Barton's arms). Most learned how to react very quickly: ("You hit a wall or you hit a ditch and you get up and look around after.")

These lessons had to be learned before the component parts of the Regiment could function. As one former company commander suggested, "We upgraded the Battalion in action enormously." (14) The ability to adjust and adapt to the changing battlefield was one way in which the Regiment survived. The problems of logistics, maintenance and communications were very different as the rolling farmlands south of Caen gave way to the hills near the Seine River, or the icy flatlands south of the Maas.

This flexibility had to be maintained as the Regiment's working strength diminished almost daily. Bringing new men in did not always solve problems, for as we have seen, it took time to develop the cohesion of a fighting unit. When the immediate needs of the day prevented these men from being "eased into" battle or, if new men did not possess the basic skills of the infantryman, a very vicious cycle would begin: casualties would mount, morale would decline. It was a problem which proved to the infantryman that no one understood their world. The Regiment fought on regardless, through the mud, the dust and the gunfire; through the endless changes of plan and hastily-arranged improvisations. The Regiment fought on even as its members were killed, wounded or were just too tired to continue.

Some measure of the Regiment's sacrifice can be seen in the final casualty figures: between 6 June 1944 and 5 May 1945, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment sustained 1548 casualties, 22 percent of which (348) were fatal. These represented the greatest number of casualties in 10 Infantry Brigade: the Algonquin Regiment suffered 1300 casualties (of which 26 percent (341)

were known fatal wounds); the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada lost a further 1142 men (23 percent of these were fatal (262)). As always the infantry Regiments suffered most: 4 Armoured Brigade's Lake Superior Regiment lost 766 men in battle, one quarter of them (195) were fatal; the 15th Field Artillery Regiment lost 108 men, 17 percent of which (19) were fatal wounds. (15)

These numbers give some idea of the extent of the suffering. The intensity of this loss is something only the veteran can know: only they fully appreciate the "friction of battle." Most of these concluding remarks cannot be tested empirically as they are based on impressions gained from the soldiers themselves. I have not avoided "well-worn generalizations" in these final pages. I can only hope that this study of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment has clarified these "labels." By trying to understand how normal Canadian youth met the multitude of challenges found on the battlefields of Europe, can one better appreciate the remarkable sacrifice they made.

CONCLUSION: NOTES

- 1 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 2 Major R.L. Rogers. History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment (Ottawa: 1954). p. 283.
- 3 R.O. Patterson. Taped Interview. 12 June 1984.
- 4 Lt.-Col. Martin. Taped Interview. 18 February 1984.
- 5 R.O. Patterson. Taped Interview. 12 June 1984.
- 6 Rogers. Regimental History. p. 295.
- 7 St. Catharines Standard. Tuesday 29 January 1946. p. 3.
- 8 R.S.J. MacIntosh. Taped Interview. 6 April 1984.
- 9 R.O. Patterson. Taped Interview. 12 June 1984.
- 10 Standard. 29 January 1946. p. 1.
- 11 S.C. Elford. Taped Interview. 4 April 1984.
- 12 Col. J.F. Swayze. Taped Interview. 28 December 1982.
- 13 C.K. Crummer. Taped Interview. 13 June 1984.
- 14 J.L. Dandy. Taped Interview. 13 January 1983.
- 15 Rogers. Regimental History: Major G.L. Cassidy. Warpath: The Story of the Algonquin Regiment, 1939-1945 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1948); Lieutenant-Colonel H.M. Jackson (ed.) The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada [Princess Louise's] 1928-1953 (Montreal: Industrial School for the Deaf, 1953); Lieutenant-Colonel G.F.G. Stanley. In the Face of Danger: The History of the Lake Superior Regiment (Port Arthur: The Lake Superior Scottish Regiment, 1960); Captain R.A. Spencer. History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment: Royal Canadian Artillery, 1941-1945 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1945).

ORDER OF BATTLE.
FOURTH CANADIAN ARMoured DIVISION

HEADQUARTERS

40 Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division

DIVISIONAL TROOPS

40 4th Canadian Armoured Division Signals, RC Sigs
40 4th Canadian Field Security Section, C Int C
43 8th Canadian Provost Company, C Pro C
44 4th Canadian Division Postal Unit, CPC
97 4th Canadian Armoured Division Ordnance Field Park, RCOC

4th CANADIAN ARMoured BRIGADE

50 Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade
51 21st Canadian Armoured Regiment
(Governor General's Foot Guards), CAC^A
52 22nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (Canadian Grenadier Guards), CAC
53 28th Canadian Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment), CAC
54 Lake Superior Regiment (Motor), CIC^A

10TH CANADIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE

60 Headquarters, 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade
45 29th Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (South Alberta
Regiment), CAC
61 The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, CIC
62 The Algonquin Regiment, CIC
63 The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, CIC
64 10th Canadian Independent Machine-Gun Company (New Brunswick
Rangers), CIC

ROYAL CANADIAN ARTILLERY

40 Headquarters, Divisional Artillery (CRA)
40 4th Canadian Counter-Mortar Officer's Staff
73 8th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RCA
74 15th Canadian Field Regiment, RCA
76 23rd Canadian Field Regiment (Self-Propelled), RCA
77 5th Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment, RCA

ROYAL CANADIAN ENGINEERS

- 40 Headquarters, Divisional Engineers (CRE)
- 41 8th Canadian Field Squadron, RCE
- 42 6th Canadian Field Park Squadron, RCE
- 46 9th Canadian Field Squadron, RCE

ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY SERVICE CORPS

- 80 Headquarters, Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (CRASC)
- 81 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade Company, RCASC
- 82 4th Canadian Armoured Division Transport Company, RCASC
- 83 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade Company, RCASC
- 84 4th Canadian Armoured Division Troops Company, RCASC

ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

- 40 Assistant Director of Medical Services (ADMS)
- 89 12th Canadian Light Field Ambulance, RCAMC
- 90 15th Canadian Field Ambulance, RCAMC
- 92 12th Canadian Field Hygiene Section, RCAMC
- 93 12th Canadian Field Dressing Station, RCAMC

ROYAL CANADIAN ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

- 40 Headquarters, Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (CREME)
- 99 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade Workshop, RCEME
- 100 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade Workshop, RCEME

* CAC: Canadian Armoured Corps; CIC: Canadian Infantry Corps. The numbers in the left-hand column are the tactical signs of each unit. (Source: Rogers, Regimental History, pp. 357-358).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Canada: Public Archives

- "Battle experience questionnaires submitted
by Canadian Army Officers who were on Operations, 1944-45,"
Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC) RG 24, Volume 10.450.
- "Weekly Activity Reports October 1944-March 1945."
1st British Corps. PAC, RG 24,
Volume 10.495.
- "Training and Operational Reports." 4th Canadian Armoured Division
PAC, RG 24, Volumes 10.787, 10.943-10.944.
- "Operational Instructions: January-February 1945." 1st British Corps.
PAC, RG 24, Volume 10.790.
- War Diary, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, General Staff, PAC, RG 24,
Volumes 13.789 (August-December, 1944), 13.790
(January-June, 1945).
- War Diary, 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade, PAC, RG 24, Volume 14.156
(June, 1944-December 1945).
- War Diary, 22nd Canadian Armoured Regiment, The Canadian Grenadier
Guards, PAC, RG 24, Volume 14.160 (August 1944)
- War Diary, 21st Canadian Armoured Regiment, The Governor General's
Foot Guards, PAC, RG 24, Volume 14.255 (August 1944)
- War Diary, 29th Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, The South
Alberta Regiment, PAC, RG 24, Volume 14.295
(April 1943-December 1944).
- War Diary, The 15th Field Artillery Regiment, PAC, RG 24,
Volume 14.525 (February 1943-March 1945).
- War Diary, The Algonquin Regiment, PAC, RG 24, Volumes 15.000 (October
1943-October 1944), 15.001 (November 1944-April 1945).
- War Diary, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, PAC, RG 24,
Volume 15.005 (July 1944-November 1945).
- War Diary, Lincoln and Welland Regiment, PAC, RG 24, Volumes 15.101
(June 1940-August 1941), 15.102 (September 1941-December 1942),
15.103 (January 1943-February 1944), 15.104 (March-August 1944),
15.105 (September 1944-January 1945), 15.106
(February-November 1945).

"Training Reports." 4th Canadian Armoured Division. PAC. RG 24.
Microfilm: C-5422. HQS-20-3-4-A,B,C,D,E,G,K.

Canada: Directorate of History Reports,
Department of National Defence

Hitsman, J.M., "Manpower Problems of the Canadian Army During the
Second World War." Department of National Defence: Directorate of
History, Document #63, 17 August 1953.

Stacey, Col. C.P. "Canadian Participation in the Operations in
North-West Europe 1944. Part V: Clearing the Channel Ports.
3 Sept. 44-6 February 45." Historical Section, Canadian
Military Headquarters Report #184.

Interviews: (rank attained when struck
off Regimental strength)

Barkwill, J.H. (Lance Corporal) 16 November 1983

Barton, R.E. (Private) 5 July 1984

Borthwick, C.O. (Lieutenant) 11 April 1984

Brady, E.J. (Major) 20 June 1984

Brittain, G.H. (Company Quarter-Master Sergeant) 26 June 1984

Brown, C.R. (Corporal) 22 February 1984

Challice, C.L. (Private) 22 September 1984

Clement, J.C. (Major, 15th Field) 31 October 1983

Coleman, Brig. R.C. (Lieutenant-Colonel) 22 February 1984

Craigen, Thomas (Sergeant) 27 June 1984

Crummer, C.K. (Major) 13 June 1984

Dandy, J.L. (Major) 13 January 1983

Davis, R.M. (Captain) 16 May 1984

Dunlop, J.A. (Major) 1 August 1984

Dunton, K.M. (Corporal) 11 July 1984

Easser, Percy (Captain) 10 July 1984
Elford, S.C. (Private) 4 April 1984
Fowle, D.W. (Private) 18 November 1983
Hemphill, C.V. (Sergeant) 17 November 1983
Hills, A.E. (Company Sergeant-Major) 11 July 1984
Hipel, K.A. (Corporal) 19 January 1983
Howse, R.P. (Sergeant) 16 September 1984
Huntley, G.F. (Private) 1 August 1984
Kipp, C.D. (Sergeant) 16 September 1944
Leslie, W.P. (Sergeant) 4 April 1984
Loughlin, Howard (Corporal) 3 July 1984
Lumsden, Harold (Corporal) 16 September 1984
MacIntosh, R.S.J. (Private) 6 April 1984
Martin, Lt.-Col. J.G. (Major) 18 February, 16 September 1984
Patterson, R.O. (Lieutenant) 12 June 1984
Rogers, R.L. (Major) 21 February 1984
Ross, Donald J. (Corporal) 22 September 1984
Ross, Robert (Lance Corporal) 9 April 1984
Smethurst, A.J.H. (Company Sergeant-Major) 22 September 1984
Swayze, Col. J.F. (Lieutenant-Colonel) 28 December 1982, 21 April,
September, October 1984
Sutton, D.L. (Private) 1 October 1984

Newspapers:

St. Catharines Standard, June-September 1940, January 1946.

Toronto Daily Star, January-February 1945

Secondary Sources

Articles

Wood, H.F. Maj. "Operation Elephant: The Battle for Kapelsche Veer." Canadian Army Journal 3 (September 1949): 8-12.

Crummer, C.K. "A Night in Freneuse." Unpublished Personal Account: Typewritten.

Dunlop, J.A. "St. Lambert sur Dives, August 18 to 21, 1944." Unpublished Personal Account: Typewritten.

Dunton, K.M. Unpublished Personal Accounts: Typewritten.

"The Battle for Bergen op Zoom." Bergen op Zoom: Unpublished account. English translation, typewritten.

Books:

Allen, Peter. One More River: the Rhine Crossings of 1945. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980.

Bennett, Ralph. Ultra in the West: the Normandy Campaign, 1944-45. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979.

Brown, Shaun R.G. "The Loyal Edmonton Regiment at War, 1943-1945." M.A. thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1984.

Cassidy, Maj. G.L. Warpath: the Story of the Algonquin Regiment, 1939-1945 Toronto: the Ryerson Press, 1948.

Clauswitz, Carl von. A Short Guide to Clausewitz on War. Edited by Roger Ashley Leonard. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967.

Copp, Terry and Robert Vogel. Maple Leaf Route: Falaise. Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1983.

_____. Maple Leaf Route: Antwerp. Alma: Maple Leaf Route, 1984.

Duguid, Col. A. Fortescue. History of the Canadian Grenadier Guards, 1760-1964. Montreal: Gazette Printing Company, 1965.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. Crusade in Europe: A Personal Account of World War II. Garden City New York: Doubleday & Co., 1948.

Elkis, John. The Sharp End of War: the Fighting Man In World War II. Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1980.

- Hamilton, Nigel. Monty: Master of the Battlefield 1942-44.
London: Hamish Hamilton. 1983.
- Jackson, Lt.-Col. H.M. (ed.) The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada [Princess Louise's] 1928-1953. Montreal: Industrial School for the Deaf. 1953.
- Kaufman, David. (ed.) and Michiel Horn (historical text).
A Liberation Album: Canadians in the Netherlands, 1944-45.
Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson. 1980.
- Keegan, John. The Face of Battle. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 1983.
- King, J.B. and John Batchelor. Infantry at War, 1939--1945.
Purnell's History of the World Wars. London: Phoebus Publishing Co.
- Marwick, Arthur. The Nature of History. London: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1970.
- Mowat, Farley. The Regiment. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1973.
- _____. And No Birds Sang. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1979.
- Paterson, Maj. R.A. A Short History: The Tenth Canadian Infantry Brigade. Hilversum, Netherlands: DeJong & Co., 1945.
- Rogers, Maj. R.L. History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment.
Ottawa: 1954.
- Spencer, Capt. R.A. History of the Fifteenth Canadian Field Regiment: Royal Canadian Artillery, 1941-1945. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1945.
- Stacey, Col. C.P. Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. 1: Six Years of War. Ottawa: the Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery. 1957.
- _____. Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, vol. 3: The Victory Campaign. Ottawa: the Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery. 1960.
- Stanley, Lt.-Col. George F.G. In the Face of Danger: The History of the Lake Superior Regiment intro. Col. R.A. Keane. Port Arthur: The Lake Superior Scottish Regiment. 1960.
- Thompson, Paul. The Voice of the Past: Oral History. London: Oxford University Press. 1978.
- Wilmot, Chester. The Struggle for Europe. London: Collins. 1952.
- Winston, Ramsey G. (ed.) The Battle for the Falaise Pocket.
After the Battle Series no. 8 (1975).