

1/5th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) War Diary September 1944

September 1944

- 1st Sept. Friday, area 922605.  
At 0915 hrs. Bn. Moved via FORMERIE 6734, SECQUEVILLE 6935, MOLLIENS 7335, FOUILLOY x rds. 745431, BETTEMBOS 7950 to MOLLIENS VIDAMME 900584 (arriving 1515 hrs.  
At 1535 hrs. Bn. Diverted from Bde. C.L. to OISSY 922605 whence rifle Coys went to SOMME bridge at PICQUIGNY 9944 to form firm base on S. bank and cover work of R.E's on bridge harassed by enemy fire from CHAUSSEE TIRANCOURT 9965.  
At 1750 hrs. Arty. And Mortar fire disperse enemy Inf. From village into neighboring woods.  
At 1845 hrs. All Coys in posn. With supporting arms. Tac Bn. HQ at 970635.  
23 POWs (of 344 Div.) brought in during day.
- 2nd Sept. Saturday area 145894.  
At 0130 hrs. Bn. Crossed R. SOMME and conc. At 007665.  
At 1115 hrs. Bn. Moved via CANAPLES 054770 x rds. 038819, FIENVILLERS 062832 to conc. Area at 145894 on ridge N.W. of DOULLENS 1587. During morning odd groups of enemy reported near C.L. but all bypassed. Strong enemy posns. At ST POL 1612 could not be easily bypassed nor overrun.  
At 1940 hrs. Bn. Moved to Bn. Conc. Area at FRAMCOURT 1406. 3 P.O.W's of 346 Div. brought in early.
- 3rd Sept. Sunday. Area 140060.  
1100 hrs. Carriers recce route around St. POL 1612 to x rds. 236160.  
1815 hrs. Bn. Moved via BUNEVILLE 1805 x rds. 2409, AUBIGNY -EN-ARTOIS 3407, BOUVIGNY 4015, to conc. Area.  
2250 hrs. 445210 (MAZINGARBE) where "B" Coy stood by for task at x rds. 466242 but not eventually needed  
2 POWs of 272 Div. brought in.
- 4th Sept. Monday Area 458236.  
0045 hrs. Civilians reports of 1000 + enemy with Tks. Moving S.E. from BETHUNE necessitated 2 Coys with supporting arms standing to on main rd. BETHUNE – LA BASSEE during morning many reports of large bodies of enemy in area to N. of CANAL De La BASSEE.  
1200 hrs. Tac Bn. HQ and Coys move to conc. Area 460239 for task to clear villages of GIVENCHY 4720 and FESTUBERT and open route to 1 R.T.R. & 1 R.B. operating to N.  
1345 "H" Hour.  
1355 "D" Coy cross canal without opposition reach objective x rds. 465262 & take POWs & eqpt.  
1546 hrs. "B" Coy cross canal without opposition reach objective church 475262 report Sniping & take POWs.  
1620 hrs. "D" Coy send fighting patrol into FESTUBERT 4627 and report "All Clear".  
1805 Tac Bn. HQ over canal to 468254. 188 POWs (mainly of 59 Div) 4 x 89 mm Mortars with ammo, 1 x 75 mm P.A.K. with ammo taken.  
By first light Bn. Relieved by 71 Bde. of 53 Div. and proceeding to conc. Area at CAMBRI 4624.
- 5th Sept. Tuesday Area 090590.  
1715 hrs. Bn. Moved via VERMELLES 4621, SECLIN 6827, HEM 7938, Franco – Belgian Frontier to conc. Area just N.E. of AUDENARDE 0958.
- 6th Sept. Wednesday Area GHENT.  
0730 hrs. Bn. Moves via AUDENARDE 0958, ZWARTENBROEK 189625, to form a firm base around x rds. 254627.

1515 hrs. Bn. Moves via OOSTERZELE 250618, GAVERE 1366 x rds. 114670, to GHENT entering without opposition on withdrawal N. of German Garrison and receiving a wildly enthusiastic reception from the citizens.

1815 hrs. Bn. Established to cover all entrances to city from N. & W. by guarding bridges over canal at 174816, 179808 & 192818 (particular reference to industrial area 1982, 1882 (held by enemy). Harassing fire (Mortar & guns & some Sniping reported during night. 189 POWs (mainly of 70 Div.) & much H.D. transport & equipment captured. 3 x O.R's wounded.

- 7th Sept. Thursday. Valuable contacts established with patriot forces (White Bde.) & other civilian sources with much useful information on enemy dispositions, demolitions, defences etc. answering "D" Coy moved to area of Rly. Stn. 179783 a Carrier standing patrol at 155766 & contact made with 5 D.G. entering city from E. Intermittent enemy shelling & Mortaring in area of "A" & "B" Coys. 103 POWs brought in (of many units) 1 x O.R killed, 2 x O.R's wounded,
- 8th Sept. Friday. During afternoon small bridgehead established by "A" Coy on N. side of canal at 179808 against slight opposition covering bridge repaired there by R.E's & enabling Tks. to cross & deal with enemy strong pts. in houses. Some infiltration by enemy to W. side of canal from Ind. Zone 1982. Intermittent Mortaring & shelling at all times. 304 POWs brought in (again of many units) 3 x O.R's wounded, 12 x O.R's Reinforcements.
- 9th Aug. Saturday. Additional Reinforcements of 15 of Scots Div. strengthen the thinly held defences & 1/6 Queen's also firmly established in area 1982. Usual enemy harassing fire. 82 POW's brought in. 3 x O.R's killed , 2 x O.R's wounded & 1 O.R. exhaustion. Civilians report some enemy movement N. and attempts to cross canal by pontoon bridges on barges 2388.
- 10th Sept. Sunday 1745 hrs.  
Enemy infiltration from over canal at 137849 into VINDERHOUTE 1384? Reported.  
Lessening of enemy fire. 2 x O.R's wounded.
- 11th Sept. Monday Area J 246739.  
1930 hrs. Bn. on relief by elements of Polish Armd. Div. at 1700 hrs. had left GHENT and moved to conc. Area at MELLE 2474.
- 12th Sept. Tuesday  
1605 hrs. Bn. Moves via ALOST 4066 TERMONDE 4676 x rds. 610787, BOOM 6381, x rds. 701838, MECHELEN 17175 x rds. 871789 to HEIKANT 8580 & Concentrate there, (arrived 2250 hrs.).
- 13th Sept. Wednesday Area 853806.  
N.T.R.
- 14th Sept. Thursday.  
Capt. J. EVANS promoted A/Maj. & Lt. W.T. CROOK A/Capt.
- 15th Sept. Friday.  
1630 hrs. "A" & "B" Coys u/c \* Hus. Move to take up positions covering area to S. of ALBERT Canal (in co-op with 1 R.B. & RAF Regt. 83 Grp.) from MASSENHOVEN 8393 to HERENTHALS 9790. Towards HERENTHOUT 9186.
- 16th Sept. Saturday,  
1015 hrs. Tac Bn. HQ moves & by 1120 hrs. is established at 884860. "B" Coy takes over posn. Held by Coy R.B. at BOUWEL 9090. 8 POWs brought in, 4 x O.R's wounded.

- 17th Sept. Sunday.  
N.T.R.
- 18th Sept. Monday Area 016879.  
0630 hrs. Main Bn. HQ moves to 884860.  
1010 hrs. Bn. Moves via HERENTHOUT 9186 rd. junc. 994827, x rds. 998786 x rds. 046813, over ALBERT CANAL at 046856 and forms firm base at x rds. 016879.  
"D" Coy to patrol to HERENTHALS 9790. Casualties, 1 O.R. killed.
- 19th Sept. Tuesday.  
0930 hrs. "D" Coy with M.G's of N.F. leave to clear woods at 990903 and have N.T.R. there but engage enemy posn. to N. of Canal there.
- 20th Sept. Wednesday.  
During the day Mortars engage enemy groups seen digging in in area 985898 and also stonk woods area of rly. Bridge at 994907.
- 21st Sept. Thursday.  
0900 hrs. "A" Coy u/c 1/6th Queen's move to VELVEKEN 045879. Pln. Of "B" Coy & Carrier Sec. by first light established at 992894 to deal with possible enemy infiltration from HERENTHALS 9795. "C" Coy reconstructed u/c Maj. D.A. GRANT MC and take over "A" Coy posns.  
29 x O.R's Reinforcements received & posted to "C" Coy.
- 22nd Sept. Friday, Area 016879.  
On movement of 1/6th Queen's to MOLL 1690 "A" Coy reverted to Comd. And moved to BOEKEL 019890, vacated by 1/7th Queen's moving slightly E. 10 reinforcements received & posted.
- 23rd Sept. Saturday, Area 092889.  
Civilian reports tell of general enemy withdrawal from ALBERT CANAL and patrols edging fwd. finally enter HERENTHALS 9790 meeting no opposition.  
1300 hrs. On relief by 1st Leicester's 146 Bde. Of 49 Div. Bn. Moved via rd. junction. 046861 to GHEEL 0787 and formed firm base to S. of Bridge over ESCAUT CANAL at 118938.
- 24th Sept. Sunday, Area 378118.  
0835 Bn. Moved via MOLL 1690, LOMMEL 3095, across BELGIUM – DUTCH border, WESTERHOVEN 3706, STEENSEL to conc. Area at 378118.  
1250 hrs. Enemy had temporarily cut main C.L. between ST OEDENRODE 4232 and YEGHEL 4837.
- 25th Sept. Monday, Area 433310.  
0600 hrs. Bn. Moved via VELDHOVEN 3714, around EINDHOVEN 4218 to conc. Area just S. of ST. OEDENRODE. At 433310 arriving 1030 hrs. C.L. being very congested. Enemy forces (2-3 Bns. Conc. At SCHIJNDEL 4038 menace supply rd. & Bn. Has task with 8 Hus. & US Airborne elements of 101 Div. on spot to restore situation.  
1250 hrs. Tac Bn. HQ with Coys etc. move to x rds. 426328 with Task 1 to clear wood at 424342 & completed by "A" Coy at 1515 hrs. and Task 2 to clear area 423345 completed by "D" Coy at 1650 hrs. both against slight opposition. Later some enemy Mortar & shell fire fwd. areas.  
16 POWs (G.A.F. personnel) brought in.
- 26th Sept. Tuesday. Night 25/26 patrols of up main rd. to 418358 find rd. blocks ? left flank contact 8 Hus. & US troops & group on right flank have N.T.R.  
1450 hrs. "B" Coy reach obj. rd. & dyke junct. 418358, no opposition but enemy in immediate front in strength. "A" Coy reach obj. rd. & dyke junct. 418358, no opposition but enemy in immediate front in strength.

2200-2250 hrs. Patrols of "D" Coy contact 1/7th Queen's otherwise N.T.R.  
Intermittent shelling and mortaring of fwd. areas during day caused casualties, 4 x O.R's being killed & 7 x O.R's wounded.

- 27th Sept. Wednesday Area 442326.  
Night 26/27th have N.T.R. save one patrol contacted enemy at 399354. 3 x O.R's missing believed POWs. Intermittent shelling & Mortaring of fwd. Coys caused 6 x O.R's wounded.  
1700 hrs. relief by 7 R.W.F. of 158 Bde. Commenced but change over protracted by bad weather and some enemy interference.  
2200 hrs. Bn. Concentrated at EVERSE 4432.
- 28th Sept. Thursday, Area 438412.  
0800 hrs. BN. MOVES VIA VEGHEL 4837.  
1030 hrs. Bn. Relieved 1 R.B. at DINTHER 4440 and HEESWIJK 4341 and is established by 1200hrs.  
Groups of disorganized enemy in woods just S. of canal 4240.  
Some shelling & Mortaring of fwd. Coys caused 1 O.R killed & 6 x O.R's wounded.
- 29th Sept. Friday.  
Night of 28/29 patrols have N.T.R.  
1310 hrs. "A" Coy moved fwd. along rd. to cover bridge at 406429 supported by 1 tp. Of Tks. & later reinforced by 1 Coy 1/6th Queen's group u/c Maj. NANGLE.  
1530 hrs. "A" Coy firmly established without encountering enemy opposition.
- 30th Sept. Saturday.  
Night 29/30. Patrols (Contact fighting "B" to "A" & Recce by "D") have N.T.R./  
0830 hrs. "A" Coy report being heavily shelled & Mortared.  
1020 hrs. "A" Coy withdrawn to 416428.  
24 POWs (of 85 Div) brought in 1 x O.R. killed.

Lt. Col. J.H. Freeland.  
Comdg. 1/5th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regt.

### Appen. J1.

THE CROSSING OF THE RIVER SOMME.  
1st and 2nd September 1944 by 1/5th Queen's.  
Written by the Comdg. Officer Lt. Col. J.H. Freeland.

#### 1. GENERAL SITUATION.

After crossing river SOMME on 31st August 44 the Bn. advanced rapidly to river SOMME not once deploying for battle. 7th Armd. Div. was leading 12th Corps advance which was acting as left flank protection for the more rapid thrust of 30 Corps further to the East. Little opposition was met by 22nd Armd. Bde. but many prisoners in a disorganised state were captured. On approaching the SOMME, the Div. was ordered to seize a crossing about 5 miles east of ABBEVILLE and to capture this place. While the Div. was deploying the Bn. received orders to go off on an independent mission to guard the bridge at PICQUIGNY 6 miles West of AMIENS at which place the R.E's we're building a bridge.

#### 2. SITUATION AT PICQUIGNY.

On arriving at PICQUIGNY at 1500 hrs. with "A" Coy group leading as advanced guard (Major E.W. BALL) the situation was entirely different to that given to the C.O. 8 D.L.I. 50 Div. who were advancing on the right of the Div. had been in possession of PICQUIGNY since 0900 hrs. that morning after a stiff fight to clear

the town. The Boche had blown the bridge and were still on the far bank and continued to give trouble from Spandaus and Mortars.

The R.E's were therefore waiting to start on the bridge as soon as enemy opposition was cleared. 8 D.L.I. received orders to move East that evening and it was therefore up to the Bn. to clear the enemy from the far bank and protect the bridge site.

Meanwhile shortly after the Bn. arrived 50 Div. arty. Stonked enemy positions on the far bank and our Mortars joined in. The enemy's reaction to this was to leave his positions and stream up the open rolling downs in full view giving the Gunners including "D" Battery 3 RHA which was as usual support to the Bn. a perfect "Larkhill shoot". The M.M.G'S joined in and the Boche were hurried on his way.

### 3. THE CROSSING.

Meanwhile "A" Coy who had taken up position on the near side of the demolished bridge quickly dashed across a wooden footbridge and formed a close bridgehead in ground thick with trees and hedges with a village about 500 yds. in front. No enemy could approach "A" Coy in daylight without being seen from the near bank from which our Arty. and Mortar O.P's and M.M.G'S could do the necessary execution. "B" and "D" Coys then took up positions on the near bank with the troop of 17 pdrs. which could cover the hills on the far side.

Shortly after dark when everyone had settled down for the night feeling rather pleased with themselves at having formed a bridgehead over the famous SOMME without a single casualty orders were received for the whole Bn. to cross the river and concentrate 1000 yards on the far side as soon as the our R.E's had completed the bridge. The whole Div. was also to cross this bridge and push on any towards St. POL bypassing ABBEVILLE which was now to be left to the 1st Canadian army to deal with.

The Bn. completed its concentration on the open hills on the far bank by 0500 hrs. in the pouring rain with 2 Coys up astride the road and near to a demolished Flying Bomb site around which the bomb craters gave evidence of the accuracy of the RAF's concentrated attacks. From dawn onwards 22nd Armd. Bde. past N.E. through our position and about 1200 hrs. the Bn. followed on. The capture of the Flying Bomb site was a very satisfactory for those members of the Bn. who live in London or Southern England while our rapid advance through the SOMME country so famous in history was an astonishment to everybody as it was here that the first organised Boche resistance to the breakthrough was expected.

A few prisoners including some wounded were captured on the far bank at dawn on 2nd September.