

1/5th Battalion The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) War Diary

MARCH 1945.

- 1st March. Thursday (D + 261).
Weather, fine rain persisted most of day.
- 2nd March. Friday (D + 262).
Weather bright and sunny, cold and with occasional heavy squalls of sleet or hail.
Bn. reps during day repeated exercise with Buffaloes as on February 26th but included this time a night crossing also of the R. MAAS.
- 3rd March. Saturday, (D + 262).
Weather, Bright & sunny day, cold overcast by last light.
- 4th March. Sunday, (D + 263).
Weather, heavy rain during day.
Field Marshall Sir Bernard law Montgomery visits WEERT and Bishops College presents awards to men of Bn. gained during recent operation "Blackcock".
- 5th March. Monday, (D + 264).
Weather, bright and sunny overcast later.
- 6th March. Tuesday, (D + 265).
Weather, heavy showers during day.
Lt. R.W. Churchill T.O.S. & posted to A Coy.
- 7th March. Wednesday, (D + 266).
Weather, very rainy till midday cleared later.
1730 hrs. Offrs. Cloth model & discussion in Offrs. Mess.
- 8th March. Thursday, (D + 267).
Weather, overcast throughout, some showers at intervals.
Bn. Dart tournament held in evening at Queen's Club (A Coy Area)
Scatter party left for new area (LOWAIN) but impending move eventually cancelled.
Bn. Dance (O.R's) held at Bishops College.
1700 hrs. Officers cloth model exercise & discussion in Offrs. Mess.
Bde. Comdr. Expresses complete satisfaction on performance of Bn. at his inspection.
- 9th March. Friday, (D + 268).
Weather, fine day but generally overcast.
Maj. G.R. Ball DSO assumes Comdr. of D Coy, Maj. C.V. Lilley MC assumes Comdr. of B Coy.
- 10th March. Saturday, (D + 269).
Weather, find the overcast.
A general holiday for the Bn.

Bn. Sports held during afternoon (some heats run off in morning) prizes presented by Lt. Col. I.H. Freeland DSO.

11th March. Sunday, (D + 270).

Weather, find the overcast.

Capt W.G. McLoughlin from B Coy to A/Tk. Pln.

12th March. Monday, (D + 271).

Weather, fine the overcast.

16 Rfts. received by Bn.

13th March. Tuesday, (D + 272).

Weather, fine.

0900-1000 hrs. Bde. T.E.W.T. for all Offrs. in Bn., held in area HEEL PANHEEL & THORN in 2 discussions, One for Coy Comdrs. & Bn. & other for Pln. Comdrs. & 2i/c of Coys.

14th March. Wednesday, (D + 273).

Weather, V. Fine.

1730 hrs. Certain Offrs. of Bn. 2 theatre at HEEZE to hear a lecture on "Typhoons" by Wing Comdr. ? Lewis.

1630 hrs. Bn. Football XI play 9 D.L.I.

Drawings by Capt. Bryan de Grineau of the SUSTEREN - SCHILBERG – ECHT battle (from I Illustrated London News) on view at intelligence office from 14th onwards.

15th March. Thursday, (D + 274).

Weather, very fine bright and sunny.

Lt. G.H. Bond T.O.S. & posted to C Coy.

16th March. Friday, (D + 275).

Weather, colder, overcast and some rain.

1730 hrs. Lecture by Capt. (QM) Packer on "Administration" in Sgts. Mess.

Capt. E.S. Layton & Capt. D.B.R. Burney with 12 Rfts.

17th March. Saturday, (D + 276).

Weather, Fine but overcast.

Bn. Football XI played WILHELMINA 1 F.C. at WILHELMINA Stadium at 1430 hrs. & won by 4-3.

18th March. Sunday, (D + 277).

Weather, Fine but overcast.

Concert by MAASTRICHT Municipal Orchestra conducted by S/Sgt. Myron Levite U.S. Army (of New York Sympathy Concert Orchestra) at Bishops College, Weert at 1500 hrs.

19th March. Monday, (D + 278).

Weather, very fine, bright and sunny.

The following discussions and lectures held in the desert rat theatre at HEEZE.

0900 hrs. Discussion- intercommunication Tks & Inf. All Cpts. & above.
1015 hrs. Lecture - Air Support. " " .
1115 hrs. Lecture by G.O.C. Control of occupied Germany - all Majors & above.
1730 hrs. Cloth Model Exercise at Bde. HQ to be attended by all Offrs. down to 2i/c.

20th March. Tuesday, (D + 279).

Weather, very fine, bright and sunny.

1730 hrs. Electra by the APIS at the Queen's club to be attended by 2i/c of rifle Coys, Carrier & A/Tk. Pln. Comdrs. & I.O.

Lt. T. Newcomb transferred from A to D Coy.

21st March. Wednesday, (D + 280).

Weather, very fine bright and sunny.

1500 hrs. Bn. Cross country team race of approx. 4 miles resulted in 1. D Coy, 42 pts. 2. A/Tk. Pln. 100 pts. 3. Bn. HQ 148 pts. 4. Sigs Pln. 150 pts. 5. A Coy 198 pts.

The race was won by Pte. D. Johnson of D Coy.

22nd March. Thursday, (D + 281).

Weather, very fine right and sunny.

23rd March. Friday, (D + 282).

Weather, very fine, bright and sunny.

Village clearing demonstration in Co-op with Tks.

0930 hrs. A, C, D Coys march to PANHEEL crossing, 582975.

1300 hrs. Support Plns. Snipers, & Assault Pioneers to PANHEEL.

24th March. Saturday, (D + 283).

Weather, very fine bright and sunny.

Aerial Armada carrying Air Corps 2 East bank of R. RHINE in WESEL area passes over WEERT.

1000 hrs. Cloth model exercise on "The Advance" held in Sgts. Mess and attended by all Offrs. W.O's, Pln. Sgts. & Sect. Sgts. of Support Plns.

A Pln. Field Firing Ex. Co-op with Tp. of Tks. Competition from 0830 hrs to 1600 hrs. Was cancelled as tanks were not able to take part.

25th March. Sunday, (D + 284).

Weather, overcast with slight rain during first part of morning fine but some cloud later.

Capt. E. Smith (attached) & Lt. R Nicholls join Bn.

26th March. Monday, (D + 285).

Weather, rain during morning cleared later and became bright and sunny.

1300 hrs. Bn. moved Via NEDERWEERT 6100, BERINGE 7505, PANNINGEN 7704, HELDON 7803, KESSEL 8200, R. MAAS into VENLO 9104, STRAELEN 9717, GELDERN X rds. 012256 to Conc. area in sq. A 0227 with Bn. HQ at 024295 (rest in very close proximity, the whole area being thickly occupied by 131 Bde. Traffic was very heavy on the route particularly from VENLO northwards progress was slow therefore an convoy got split into vary in groups but

all were gathered into the fold by last light though some missed the guides and went as far as the Rhine crossing near XANTEN.

27th March. Tuesday, (D + 286).

During the day Bn. remained in the concentration area awaiting its turn (or opportunity) to get on the axis To the Rhine crossing.

The weather was generally overcast some slight showers during morning when a heavy ground mist persisted for some hrs.

1945 hrs. Bn. moved via KAPELLEN 0431, SONSBECK 0535, XANTEN 1141 crossed the river Rhine there by the Cl. 40 bridge 1341 and after a very long and tedious journey reached the D.P. at 155435 just east of BISNICH 1342 and were taken by scatter party who had been awaiting our arrival for many hours two allotted places in the concentration area in sq. 1642 with Tac Bn. HQ at 158424, arrived approximately at 0300 hrs. on March 28th.

28th March. Wednesday, (D + 287).

Weather, fine bright and sunny during majority of day but showery towards last light.

0907 hrs. Bde. gave warning order ready to move at 0930 hrs following 8 Hus. Preliminary information from Bde. showed 22 Armd. Bde. were making good progress against light opposition being held up in the main by demolitions. fwd. elements of 11 Hus. reached ERLE & of 5 D.G. - RAESFELD 3853.

1034 hrs. Bn. moved to X rds. 155435 – X rds. 177437 – X rds. 182448 – HAMMINKELN 2048 – 257484 where after an O Gp. had being held it was announced Bn. Wood firm base at RAESFELD.

They would proceed there by direct route through BRUNEN 27 4/8 with forward company carried on tanks of supporting squadron of 8 Hus. If the situation warranted it and this was not considered likely a receipt of code word "Fish" Bn. would proceed N. to BORKEN. 3961.

1330 hrs. Bn. moved but progress was very slow owing to heavy traffic on road & demolitions at bridge at 298492 & 333516, it was here that 5 R.T.R. & 5 D.G. had reported opposition earlier on and there were still groups of enemy operating in an uncoordinated way in the woods to the N. of the road & holding up 5 R.T.R. in their drive on BORKEN via bridge at 323538.

1340 hrs. Recce Gp reported that they had taken 30 POWs & handed them over to 1 R.B.

1600 hrs. Bn. arrived at BRINK 3652 & RAESFELD 3852 there were reports of enemy just to East of town in woods (at 388542) & also a few S.P. Guns swanning around one of these at least shelled RAESFELD at sporadic intervals following upon our arrival. Quite a good haul of POWs were secured in the area plus a number of displaced persons and some German workers an odd organisations.

1610 hrs. Gun firing at RAESFELD placed at 421534 moved later to 418543.

1635 hrs. Bn, "All in".

Locations, Bn. HQ 376523, A - 384527, B - 386532, - C - 373527, D - 381550, Carriers - 378522, Mortars - 374526, A/Tks. - 375525.

1953 hrs. Reported to Bde. That we had contacted Airborne Troops to our right from ERLE 3950 who were holding the line of the railway to the East of ERLE.

2320 hrs. 9 D.L.I. were reported in GEMEN & 2 Devons in BORKEN.

50 + POWs were bagged for day (included 30 taken by Recce group near BRUNEN & hand it to 1 R.B., those taken at RAESFELD where we also received many from 9 D.L.I. & some from Airborne troops to pass back).

29th March. Thursday, (D + 288).

Weather, overcast chilly and showery all day.

0645 hrs. Bn. moved N. Along main Rd RAESFELD – BORKEN.

0700 hrs. Bn. ordered not to pass through BORKEN till instructed.

0720 hrs. Bde. Informed that leading company (D) has halted 1000 yds. from BORKEN.

Reports were received of enemy S.P. guns Active to the N. of BORKEN & GEMEN supported by small groups of enemy armed with M.M.G's & bazookas & odd parties with Mortars in houses.

1130 hrs. Bn. moved Slowly around BORKEN & firm based there and at GEMEN.

Locations, Bn. HQ 401609, A 398618, B 403631, C 406608, D 398631, Carriers 406606, 398618, A/Tks. 402607.

Mortars

To our immediate N. Tanks of 5 D.G. Had progressed almost to WESEKE 3968 but on both sides of axis as mentioned above enemy were still active in woods. This also applied to our western flank where we were apparently against the left flank of 1st Para Army, 5 R.T.R. Found that all bridges over river W. of BORKEN were blown & crossing was strongly opposed. On the eastern flank there appeared to be only sporadic activity & our friends there were making excellent progress towards COESFELD & on left flank had earlier cleared VELEN 4866 just E. of RAMSDORF 4365.

As a consequent patrols were sent out.

1230 hrs. D Coy Patrol to PROTTEMBERG went via 389629 to 397031 385631 and had N.T.R.

B Coy report collecting 3 POWs (one wounded) some civilians.

C Coy patrol reached objective at 414613 & had N.T.R.

A Coy reported suspicious movement at 405619, suspicious objects also which turned out to be 4 enemy ammo carriers, booby trapped.

1432 hrs. 5 D.G. Well in WESEKE 3968, found three abandoned S.P's & had dealt with roadblock.

1438 hrs. Bde. Warned us that wooded area at 409645 contained enemy Inf. who were to be cleared by one of our sub units, (general area sq. 4165).

1534 hrs. Warned by Bde. that 11 Hus. Had a chap at 408639 & we should be careful not to engage him (A & B Coys warned).

1549 hrs. SP guns were firing onto C.L. from just N. W. of BORKEN & we were requested to find out about these and engage his arty.

1600 hrs. Sound bearings sent B Coy 285 degrees grid from 403631 & D Coy 314 degrees mag from three 97633.

1630 hrs. D Coy told to repeat their midday patrol and try to locate S.P. gun firing from just West of railway.

1700 hrs. A Coy Patrol to flush woods to N. has left.

1720 hrs. A Coy Patrol has N.T.R. & is progressing well fwd. Coys at 406642 & 1 POW taken.

1745 hrs. C.O. reports A Coy have taken several prisoners & hope to pick up many more.

1754 hrs. 5 D.G. Report having leading companies nearly in SUDLOHN 4072.

1805 hrs. A Coy now at 402647 & bagrep of 25 POWs.

1815 hrs. Enemy reported active in houses in N. Of WESEKE 3968.

1820 hrs. A Coy now at 405646.

1828 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report RAMSDORF 4385 is clear & 5 D.G. in SUDLOHN 4072.

1904 hrs. A Coy report Their HQ at 405647, fwd. Coys at 410646, two POWs at 406651.

1915 hrs. Carriers to be ready to move in 15 minutes to provide section guards on main roads to West.

1958 hrs. A Coy Have now returned from their patrol having cleared area given. D Coy have reported the patrol as before & have N.T.R.

1956 hrs. A Coy reported That POW says that at 405647 there were 120 men and one S.P. gun this afternoon leaving at 1400 hrs. They were of 33 ERSATZ Bn.

2100 hrs. All Coys etc. informed that Bn will be fully relieved by 7 Cameronians at approx. 0500 hrs. tomorrow and Bn. will then follow up 22nd Armd. Bde.

2130 hrs. Carriers report that they are now neat and tidy at 388617 388610 and 390605, having one section at each point.

Later the section at 390605 reported that tanks were already in position there so they were not needed.

POW bagrep 27 O.R's (from 15 P.G. in main).

Casualties, 10 are slightly wound did an not evacuated.

30th March. Friday, (D + 289).

Weather, fine but overcast.

First light sit Rep to 131 Bde. had N.T.R.

0847 hrs. 9 D.L.I. now in STADTLOHN 4077, cleaning up little opposition.

0905 hrs. 2 Devons in SUDLOHN 4072.

1040 hrs. Tac Bn HQ Moved from BORKEN 3961 & At 1052 hrs. past S.P. At 39763.

At midday Bn. Came under command 22nd Armd. Bde.

1435 hrs. Reported to Bde. leading Coys nearly in SUDLOHN 4072.

1530 hrs. Tac Bn HQ S. of STADTLOHN at 424753.

1800 hrs. From this locality a patrol of the Carriers went out to N.E. to recce routes joining at rd. junction 457768 & from location 453758 had N.T.R.

1941 hrs. Informed that 5 R.T.R. with 2 Dev. going N.W. from us and we must make best possible progress with 1 R.T.R.

Tac moved forward to 428760 (with Tac Bde.).

2038 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report enemy met in area of rd. junction 383707 despite heavy going 106 POWs taken, some others killed and wounded.

The mopping up of STADTLOHN by 9 D.L.I. Taking all day owing to considerable resistance by element of 346 Div. holding it has a flank guard to 1 Para Army Our drive towards AHAUS would not take place until 2230 hrs. when B Coy followed by D Coy moved off with their Sqn. of Tks.

They were going to rush through to AHAUS 7 miles N.E. on two parallel routes the L.H. one being the main rd. the R.H. being the secondary rd. through rd. junction 454794 to X rds. 481838 to X rds. 488854, both these routes were softened up by a regt. of arty. apiece firing ahead of the leading tks. Owing to the difficulty of passing through STADTLOHN actual advance did not start till 0700 hrs. March 31st when under a heavy barrage Tks. & Kangaroos crossed Strat Line.

POW Bagrep, 32.

Casualties, Maj. D.G. Watson & 3 O.R's wounded.

31st March. Saturday, (D + 290).

Weather, Overcast, cold blustery west wind, rain at time.

0038 hrs. Bde. reports Offr. POW of 857 G.R. 346 Div. says whole Regt. came into this area with arty Bty. & 6 Assault Guns arrived last night, no contacts with flanks, told 1. to stay S. of river through STADTLOHN today, 2. to withdraw to high ground 4478 tonight, 3. to withdraw about 4 km tomorrow night.

We surprised them by our night attack, captured HQ of one Bn. as it prepared to move.

0101 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report L.H. Gp. just starting.

0140 hrs. 1 R.T.R. at 451825 on left & 458805 on right.

0300 hrs. Tac Bn. HQ moved to 51784.

0325 hrs. 1 R.T. On the left have just been heavily stumped. On right Rd blocked at 488854 is holding up progress.

0300 hrs. On left some Inf. opposition, On right around roadblock but not far forward of this.

0311 hrs. R.H. Coys A little lost, met some mines.

0324 hrs. Some of fwd. Coys have reached AHAUS they have passed through plenty of enemy who fired on them with bazookas. No damage caused. On right hand mines being dealt with, when better progress will be made.

0355 hrs. Bde. tells 5 D.G. that with one subunit from 9 D.L.I. Clear route behind 1 R.T.R. & 1/5 Queen's after first light.

0359 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report 2 Tks. & 2 Kangaroos bazooked, men OK. Only way to get through woods or past cover which hold enemy as to go through at top speed on R. H. side meeting mines all the way (Every 10 yds.) Will take longer than expected to firm base AHAUS.

0602 hrs 1 R.T. report At 499868 & 484855, 1 Sub unit of 1/5 Queen's & arty at 456797 2nd party now in AHAUS.

0600 hrs Tac Bn. HQ moved to 467819.

0630 hrs D Coy report 2 POWs taken (later increased to 5).

0730 hrs A Coy at 490867 & MMG at 440790.

0830 hrs Tac moved towards AHAUS.

0900 hrs. Tac moved at 488854.

0902 A Coy report Roadblock at 495867 & debris at 581866, Tks. are at 501867.

0919 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report Blocks cleared ready for further progress, all quiet now.

0940 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report Bazooka men in houses on both sides of Rd holding them up.

0952 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report Enemy put down smokescreen over river.

General picture of the above attack is that on left the advance reached about halfway when determined defence with bazookas broke up the party. At approx. 0330 hrs. a Pln and a ½ of D Coy with tanks reached AHAUS missing members had to debussed when Kangaroos bazooked occupied a nearby farm house kept off enemy during night & fought way up to rejoin next morning.

On the right the advance was even slower because mainly of mines plentifully scattered along route which had to be lifted. Battalion consolidated in AHAUS at first light. A Coy In passing up the R.H. Route had Maj. D.L. Watson slightly wound did and consolidated N.E. Edge of AHAUS. Only four casualties resulted from operations so far POWs were taken an many enemy left looking isolated in woods. Spasmatic street fighting continued throughout latter part of day many POWs being captured.

Locations at AHAUS, Tac Bn. HQ 488854, A 507877, B ? D 496869, Carriers 497878, C Coy in reserve & Mortars ?. Bn, HQ moved at first light from 423751 to 486846.

During the rest of the day 1 R.T.R. tried to open up the C.L. to HEEK, 6 miles off, S.P. guns & bazookas caused some trouble.

It was not till dusk therefore that C Coy on Kangaroos passed through A Coy.

1120 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report Losing 1 tank to S.P. firing down rd. N.E. of AHAUS.

1201 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report 2 S.P. troubling them.

1219 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report S.P. believed in sq. 5187, other on C.L.

1420 hrs. A Coy report POW who says Teller mines on rd. S.W. of WESSAM at 455875.

1441 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report 16 POWs at 531882.

1519 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report S.P. at 528892.

1523 hrs. 5 R.T.R. report in OTTENSTEIN 4386.

1535 hrs. 2 Devons join 1/5th Queen's.

1600 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report at 533900.

1620 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report at 863890 an 88mm has K.O'd one of his Tks.

1642 hrs. 1 R.T.R. report 552911 going still clear.

1730 hrs. C Coy moving up to A Coy thence task to hold rd. junc. 564921 when Tks. reach HEEK 5791.

1820 hrs. C Coy have started & A Coy ready to move.

1824 hrs. 1 R.T.R. nearly at HEEK held up by rd. block near rd. junc.

1838 hrs. ! R.T.R. at HEEK, round roadblock.

1940 hrs. Tac Bn. HQ moves & at 2045 hrs. arrives at 544904.

Locations, A Coy 535902, C Coy 564917.

2032, C Coy report having 30 POWs.

General picture, of attack on HEK night 31/1st April C Coy protecting N.W. side of HEEK by commanding X rd. at 564921, D Coy moved forward along track S. of main rd. reached their objective on outskirts of HEEK an incident at 0140 hrs. where B Coy passed

They were delayed by a series of ? Wireless Carrier being bold and relief one going up on mine. It was not till 0600 hrs. That bridge at was built and C.L. was secured intact. A Few snipers were around bridge offering slight opposition. C Coy Secured a good bag of POWs t hree officers 107 O.R's. The chief of police of area and an RSM also captured.

Casualties were one killed and two wounded.

2345 hrs. C Coy Reported being fired on from 566924 by heavy machine gun.

Main Bn. HQ moved up to 532899.

POW Bagrep., 73 of 133 G.R., 857 G.R., 346 Arty Regt. 109 Div.

Casualties, 1 X O.R. killed, 6 O.R's wounded. (2 not evacuated, 2 X O.R's exhaustion.

Capt. J Peasley transferred to A Coy from B Coy.

Summary of events for 30-31 March 1945

The Bn. has achieved much during the last 48 hrs. The capture of Ahaus by a thorough surprise attack with armour at night and the capture of HEEK and securing of the important bridges there before they could be blown are good examples of the speed and resource required when pursuing a beaten enemy. By Sarah surprise and the use of darkness the Bn. has achieved these successes with very few casualties all ranks are congratulated on their first class performance. We shall continue to fight like this until the German Army finally lays down its arms.

1. The morning of the 30th March 45 found the Bn. waiting to embuss in Kangaroos 1000 yards short of STADTLOHN. The mopping up of the town by the D.L.I. took most of the day so that it was not until 2230 hrs. that "B" Coy followed by "D" Coy moved off with their squadrons of tanks. They were going to rush through to AHAUS 7 miles away on two parallel routes, each route being softened up by a regiment of Arty firing ahead of the leading tanks. Owing to the difficulty of passing through the town the advance did not start until nearly 0100 hrs. Thanks to the accompanying crescendo of arty fire the tanks and Kangaroos crossed the start points belching forth tracer.
2. On the left the advance reached about halfway and then some determined enemy with bazookas broke up the party. So that finally at about 0330 hrs. a Pln. and a half of D Coy with their tanks reached AHAUS. It was later discovered that the missing members of the company had rapidly debussed when the Kangaroos were bazookaed occupied a nearby farmhouse kept off the Germans during the night and fought their way to the company the next morning.
3. On the right the advance was even slower because of the R mines on route that had to be lifted but B Coy Finally consolidated in AHAUS at first light. A Coy Had previously passed up the right hand route, Maj. Watson being slightly wounded and consolidated the N.E. edge of AHAUS. The total number of casualties for the operation was four and a few prisoners were taken many more Boche being dislocated and lurking in the woods. Spasmodic street fighting continued throughout the latter part of the day more prisoners were taken.
4. During the day of 31st the tanks tried to open up the C.L. to HEEK another six miles further on. S.P. guns and bazookas caused considerable delay so that C Coy who were mounted in Kangaroos this time the spearhead of the advance did not pass through A Coy until dusk. They had the task of protecting the N.W. side of HEEK while D Coy started off for the village using a track. They reached their objective without incident at 0140 hrs. and waited for B Coy to pass through them. The latter were delayed by a series of misfortunes, their wireless carrier became bogged and the relief one going up on a mine so that it was not until nearly 0600 hrs. that the bridge across the C.L. was intact and secured thus enabling the advance of 7 Armd. Div. to continue unimpeded. There were a few snipers around the bridge but otherwise the enemy displayed complete apathy.
5. "C" Coy had a magnificent bag of prisoners, 3 Officers & 107 O.R's, the Chief of police of the area and an RSM were also captured.
Casualties during the taking of HEEK amounted to 1 killed and two wounded.

the total POWs for the two days was 3 Offrs. & 179 O.R's.

Lt. Col. I.H. Freeland DSO.

Comdg. 1/5th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regt.