

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

MAY 1945

1st May. Tuesday, (D+318).

Weather, Bright & sunny.

All 3 Recce Patrols (sent out at 2200 hrs. 30 May) returned safely.

A Coys recce reported enemy on track junct. 456397 and along rd. at 460396. They were followed in by a German patrol which they engaged without suffering any casualties.

C Coys recce patrol discovered that copse 474378 (previously held by the enemy) was clear but there was considerable enemy activity in general area 476384-474385-476376.

D Coys recce patrol heard enemy moving about in wood at 474390 but otherwise their front was very quiet.

There was very little activity during the day but two of the Bn. Snipers in position at 478368 had a brisk engagement with a party of 18 Germans.

Our snipers opened up at 100x range and believed they inflicted casualties before withdrawing. 2230 hrs. The Bn. received the order not to take any offensive action against the enemy for the following 24 hrs. It was understood that this was because of surrender negotiations which were proceeding at a higher level.

We sent out no patrols during the night.

Bagrep, 3 POW's (Labour Corps).

2nd May. Wednesday, (D+319).

Weather, bright and sunny.

0900 hrs. The psychological warfare section visited the Bn. and made an announcement to the enemy by loudspeaker from A Coy area. The announcement was that our arty would not shell a certain factory in Hamburg which was being used by the Germans as a hospital.

0930 hrs. The Comdg. Offr. Who had recently paid a visit to the notorious BELSEN Concentration Camp talked to Bn. HQ personnel about the horrors of this Camp.

1800 hrs. Our two snipers in posn. near WOXDORF took three Germans prisoner. A little later our snipers found a party of 18 Germans in the village who refrained from surrendering although politely asked by our snipers. The letter returned later bringing a tank with them but even the presence of the tank could not affect a surrender. The Germans could not be shot at because of the order that no offensive action be taken.

We sent out no patrols during the night.

Bagrep, 4 POW's captured by our snipers.

3rd May. Thursday, (D+320).

Weather, cold and showery.

0800 hrs. The Bn. learned that HAMBURG had been declared an open city and that the Garrison had surrendered en masse.

1000 hrs. Many prisoners began to drift in.

1700 hrs. They were miscellaneous types ranging from 16 years to 55 years and were completely apathetic.

1655 hrs. The Bn. moved into Hamburg and took up posns. in the centre of the city. We had a German Captain attached to us from the Garrison. He acted as liaison officer.

The bomb damage was colossal. Civilians watched us move in. They were very quiet and looked relieved because the war was over for them.

Locations,
Bn. HQ. 497535, Coy S 497533.
A Coy 498530, Carriers 491537.
B Coy 597538, Mortars 503534.
C Coy 503536, A/Tks. 497535
M.M.G's 495535.
Bagrep 105 POW's

4th May. Friday, (D+321).
Weather, rather cold and overcast.
Bn. past a quiet day in Hamburg.
No civilians were allowed out and the town was very quiet.
During the afternoon D Coy went to OSDORF 4156 where there were about 1000 inoffensive German soldiers waiting for us to evacuate them.
2040 hrs. We heard the newsflash on the BBC announcing the surrender of N.W. Germany Holland and Denmark.

5th May. Saturday, (D+322).
Weather, intermittent showers.
0400 hrs. 131 Bde. informed us that we would move off at 0830 hrs. To the Danish frontier.
0830 hrs. Move to Denmark cancelled.
0950 hrs. Bn. moved to concentration area at HASLOH 4469 and remained at 4 hrs. notice during the day.
Locations,
Bn. HQ 444686, Carriers 440691.
A Coy 440689, Mortars 441692.
B Coy 441697, A/Tks. 440692.
C Coy 440690,
D Coy.

6th May. Sunday, (D+323).
Weather, overcast showers.
Area, same location.
1030 hrs. The C.O. addressed the Bn.
He said that since the beginning of the war the battalion had had 84 officer and 1400 O.R's casualties. We observed a 2-minute silence.

7th May. Monday, (D+ 324).
Weather, bright and sunny.
The Bn. moved to near AASBUTTEL 1209 via PINNEBERG 3665 STEINBURG 2084, ITZEHOE 1793, SCENEFELD 1407.
Locations,
Bn. HQ. 125107, Carriers 135112.
A Coy 118095, Mortars 135112.
B Coy 122099, A/Tks. 135112.
C Coy 120099, A2 135112
D Coy 118094.

- 8th May. Tuesday, (D+325). VE Day.
Bn. in same location.
2130 hrs. Victory bonfire and double rum issue.
- 9th May. Wednesday, (VE+1)
Weather, bright and sunny.
Bn. moved to near LUNDEN via ALBERSTORF 0118, NORDHASTEDT 9421, HELDE 8823, WEDDINGSTEDT 8828.
Locations,
BN. HQ 892496, Carriers 89491.
A Coy 890511, Mortars 890491.
B Coy 893498, A/Tk. 89490.
C Coy 891501.
D Coy 940506.
- 10th May, Thursday, (VE+2).
Weather, Fine & Sunny.
Bn. in same location, 892496.
- 11th May. Friday, (VE+3).
Weather, fine and sunny.
Bn. in same location.
- 12th May. Saturday, (VE+4).
Weather, fair and sunny.
Bn. in same location.
During day dealt with many POWs and civilian problems.
- 13th May. Sunday, (VE+5).
Weather, very hot.
Bn. in same location.
Still dealing with POWs and civilians.
- 14th May. Monday, (VE+6).
- 15th May. Tuesday, (VE+7).
- 16th May. Wednesday, (VE+8).
- 17th May. Thursday, (VE+9).
- 18th May. Friday, (VE+10).
- 19th May. Saturday, (VE+11).
- 20th May. Sunday, (VE+12).
- 21st May. Monday, (VE+13).

- 22nd May. Tuesday, (VE+14).
Weather, fine.
Capt. N.A.H. Marsden S.O.S.
- 23rd May. Wednesday, (VE+15).
Weather, cold and windy.
Commanding officer spoke to the Bn. On the subject of vocational training.
- 24th May. Thursday, (VE+16).
Weather, Dull some rain.
N.T.R.
- 25th May. Friday, (VE+17).
Weather cold and windy but brightened later.
Bn. Small Arms Shooting Meeting, full results see opposite page.
- 26th May. Saturday, (VE+18).
Weather, overcast and windy.
Bn. Memorial Service and March past.
- 27th May. Sunday, (VE+19).
Weather, some rain overcast.
N.T.R.
- 28th May. Monday, (VE+20).
Weather, rain in the morning, brightened up later.
Bn. receives 24 hrs notice to move.
- 29th May. Tuesday, (VE+21).
Weather, overcast but fine.
1200 hrs. Bn. moved to conc. area HENNSTEDT 3006 via,
LEHE 8949
LUNDEN 8438
BARGEN 8532
STELLE 8630
WEDDINGSTEDT 828
HEIDE 8923
NORDNASTEDT 9421
ALBERSDORF 0118
HANERAU 1115
GOKELS 1315
SCHENEFELD 1407
EDENDORF 1596
ITZEHOE 1794
MUHLENBARBE 2798
LOCKSTEDT 2803
HENNSTEDT 3006

Locations, Bn. HQ 303059, A Coy 307061, B Coy 308058, C Coy 302061, D Coy 302060, Carriers 302060, Mortars 302059, A/Tks. 302059, A2 & B Rch. 302057.

30th May. Wednesday, (VE+22).

Weather. Bright and breezy.

N.T.R.

Maj. H.J. Nangle DSO left the BN. Maj. G.R. Ball DSO assumes command of the Bn.

Evening commenced in the Bn.

Capt. J. Thompson evacuated sick.

1/5th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment
THE ADVANCE ACROSS GERMANY FROM THE RHINE TO THE ELBE
27th March – 4th May 1945
By
Lt. Col. I. H. Freeland DSO

1. The period of Preparation 20 Feb - 20 Mar

- (A) On 20 Feb 45 the Bn. was relieved. by a Bn of US 8 Armd. Division on the ROER river at St ODILIENBURG and REUTJE and went into billets at WEERT-for rest, refitting and training in preparation for the spring offensive, The Bn had had no period out of the line of more than 7 days since D Day and so an admin spring, clean was the first essential.
- (B) Almost as soon as the Bn arrived at WEERT it was put on to special loading trials on the River MEUSE with Buffaloes so as to give a guide to those units who were later to do the assault crossing of the RHINE in these vehicles, This training; was irksome as it interfered with many other urgent requirements, but we did feel that the results would be useful to the assault troops.
- (C) Training. During this month the bn carried out some very valuable training. The essentials of shooting, weapon handling and fire and movement were thoroughly "blitzed". Each Rifle Coy practised their co-op with Sqns of our affiliated Armd. Regt. the 8 Hussars and methods of intercom and indication of targets between Infantry and Tanks were standardized. Several TEWTS and Cloth Model discussions were held on "the Advance" and "Village Fighting", which we expected to be our chief concern when the battle of Germany began.
- (D) Admin. The C.O. and Bde. Comd held thorough admin Inspections of the Bn. and a very high standard was reached. We were thus able to feel that we were ready for a long "Swan".
- (E) Recreation. Offrs & Sgts Messes held dances, while each Coy had at least one. Social life was almost intense on occasions. Football and a Sports Meeting were the chief events in the athletic line and the Bn football team did quite well. We were lucky in having the Regimental Band under Mr Barsotti with us for the first 2 weeks and they gave much pleasure to everybody.

- (F) Presentation of Medal Ribbons. Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery presented Medal ribbons on 5th March for awards won in the ROER battle of January. The Bn had more recipients than any other unit and we also provided the Guard of Honour under Command of Capt. N. A. H. Marsden and Band.

2. **THE ASSAULT ACROSS THE RHINE.**

{a.) The Plan. 7th Armd Division was part of 12 Corps, who were the right hand Corps of 2nd British Army. 15 (S) Div and 1 Commando Bde were to carry out the assault crossing of 12 Corps at WESEL and NORTH of it and to link up with the Airborne Corps which was to be dropped NORTH of WESEL. 7th Armoured Div. was, then to break out of the bridge head and advance on the axis BRUNEN – RAESFELD - BORKEN - STADLOHN, thus cutting northwards across the L of C of the 1 German Para Army, who were opposing 50 Corps on the left.

(b) D Day. found the bn still at WEERT, and the Airborne Armada passing right overhead told us that the moment for the final phase of the war had come. We were to move to a concentration area WEST of the RHINE on approximately D + 3 and so it was somewhat of a surprise when we were ordered at short notice to move on D + 2. the reason being that the assault crossing had progressed so well that a class 40 bridge had been built much earlier than expected. Recce parties went off on D + 1 under the command of the 2IC (Major H. J. Nangle DSO) to look around the concentration area EAST of the RHINE, but had to wait 48 hours for the Bn to arrive, during which time they had many excitements as they were close to the river bank and got mixed up in Boche air attacks and our own mine exploding operations.

Crossing the RHINE Night 27/28 March

After spending one day in the concentration area WEST of the RHINE the bn moved over the river on the night 27/28th March at XATEN, reaching the forward concentration area. at approx. 0400 hrs. after a very slow and tedious journey. After a quick breakfast the bn prepared to move. Forward.

3. **THE DIVISION PLAN**

The plan was for 22nd Bde to lead the breakout with 9 DLI under command and to pass through 6 Airborne Div. on the CL given in Para; 2 (a). 131 Inf. Bde was to follow. On breaking out with 5 DG group leading on the CL, 5 Royal Tanks Group was to take a more northerly route.

4. **THE START.**

The first day of the advance went slowly against light opposition. When breaking; out of a congested bridgehead traffic control is the chief problem and the Division had a sharp reminder on its importance. Opposition was chiefly from SP guns and a few infantry in the villages and woods. Many Boche were glad to surrender. In the evening the bn, which was leading 131 Bde. was ordered to firm base RAESFELD with 8 Hussars, while 22 Armd Bde. had reached the outskirts of BORKEN. 30 prisoners were taken in RAESFELD during the mopping up. Capt. G. F. A. Cole ((Carriers) capturing the majority during a recce of his position. In the early hours of 29th March 6 HLI (155 Inf Bde. 52 Div who were under Comd of 7 Armd Div.) arrived to take over from the bn. Shortly after first light the bn moved forward to firm base BORKEN so enabling 9 DLI to continue. BORKEN had been practically razed to the ground by our bombing and it was quite empty except for a few civilians, so little mopping up was required, D Coy (Major G. R. Ball DSO.) on the left were troubled by SP guns, but patrols sent out could not locate them. C Coy (Major C. V. Lilley MC.) on the right were in a castle used as a Boche hospital, In the

afternoon A Coy (Major D. J. Watson supported by A Sqn 5 Royal Tanks were sent to clean up an area in which enemy infantry were active. They collected about 20 prisoners including a Coy Commander from 15 PG Div.

On 30th March- the bn came under comd. 22 Armd. Bde. And was ordered forward behind 1 Royal Tanks, who were waiting; to pass through in the lead as soon as 9 DLI and 5 DG had cleared STADTLOHN, An enemy bn supported by SP's and mortars was holding the town which had also been bombed to a shambles, and it took most of the day to clear it and it was not until late afternoon that 1 Royal Tanks crossed the river by the only intact bridge. Opposition was considerable and little progress was made.

5. The Capture of AHAUS.-AHAUS was 12 miles NORTH of STADTLOHN and it was decided to capture it by a bold night attack in Kangaroos up two roads, It was a bright moon light night and the plan was for a Coy and a Sqn on each road to dash as quickly as possible through the enemy positions and into the town, relying on speed and surprise for Success. Mopping; up was to be done when it got light. The artillery was to fire concentrations ahead of each column as required. The remainder of the Bn/Regt was to move on whichever road proved the most suitable.

A Coy and B C Sqn were on the right axis and D Coy and A Sqn on the left (the main road). The latter route was known to be defended by the enemy. The method of attack was as follows. One troop of tanks Led firing their Besas right and left into the woods to dissuade bazooka men, then a platoon in Kangaroos followed and so on right through the Coy/Sqn. Should the leading tank be knocked out, or the advance halted for any reason, the infantry were to debus quickly and clear the road automatically on both sides, The attack started at 0050 hrs. and went quickly to start with. D Coy and A Sqn knocking out two vehicles and drivers and one gun, the vehicles caught with their engines running. After the initial ` surprise the bazooka men came to life and a very exciting party started. 'D' Coy column got Split for two kangaroos were bazookaed and the infantry baled out. However, 1½ platoons and two troops of tanks with Coy and Sqn HQ's got through and reached AHAUS, the remainder of the column fighting their way through and joining up throughout the early hours. The majority of 16 platoon (Lt J. C. Nuttall) who were in the bazookaed kangaroos firm based in some houses, fought the enemy off all night and made their way to AHAUS when it got light. A very good performance. On the right no enemy were met but the leading tank was blown up on an R mine, which were met in some quantities and slowed up the advance very considerably ably while the route was cleared. Major Watson was unfortunately wounded by an accident.

'B' Coy was passed through after 'A', and at first light the three company's were in AHAUS and mopping up against only slight opposition, Again, this town was almost completely destroyed by the RAF there were no civilians about. Some shelling resulted and a few enemy infantry were in houses NORTH of the of the town had to be cleared by A Company after they had bazookaed the leading tank of the Sqn which passed through to continue the advance. Throughout the day 1 R Tanks pushed on slowly against accurate enemy SP fire, losing two tanks to AP. By last light A Sqn was 800 yards from HEEK the days objective, and C Company was rushed up in Kangaroos to firm base with it. A Coy following up closely to give depth. The plan then was for 'D' and 'B' Company's to advance on foot up a cross country track in the dark to seize HEEK and secure the bridges so that 131 Infantry Brigade could pass through in the lead at first light. 'D' Company with their wireless carrier, which became ditched and the relief one going up on a mine, passed through and seized the bridges before they could be blown. Only slight opposition was met and

about 15 prisoners were taken. It was here that German civilians in large numbers were met for the first time and we were able to practice; our order

“IM HAUSE BLEIBEN SOIET WIR SCHIESSEN
“Get into your house or you will be shot”

which was found to be most effective. “C” Company in mopping up near their position captured 3 officers and 107 ORs 26 Bazookas and 8 Spandau’s.

By this time the Bn. was very tired for it had had no rest for three days and two nights. Later in the day however it was to follow up 5 Royal Tanks (Still with 22 Armd. Bde.) on route to OCHTRUP. As determined opposition was met here the Bde. by passed it and continued on on the same route 131 Bde, making for RHEINE on the on the DORTMUND-EMS canal. At last light we arrived with 1 Royal Tanks to firm base astride an important crossroads SOUTH EAST of OCHTRUP and close to METELEN.

The Bn. spent 36 hours in this area, being joined by HQ 12 Corps before the enemy nz 5 6 e greet flap ensued when Group HQ was slightly mortared. During; this period 131 Inf. Bde were helping out 159 Inf Bde (11 Armd. Div.) who were having a hard fight with OCTU’S and NCO’s Schools from HANOVER on the wooded hills NORTH of DORTMUND-EMS canal near IBBENBUREN. After spending one day in concentration area SOUTH of the canal the Bn with 8 Hussars was ordered to get round by night on to the high ground NE of IBBENBUREN and thereby help in the frontal attack on the town. Unfortunately, the road was very bad and very congested and when the leading Sqn/Coy Group (“B” Coy Major C. V. Lilley. MC.) ran into determined bazooka men in a village and two 2 Kangaroos and one tank were hit with 11 casualties in “B” Coy it was decided to firm base there until daylight, as armoured movement on a dark night against anti-tank weapons is suicidal.

Next morning it was decided to hand the IBBENBUREN area over to 53 Div while the Div by-passed it to the EAST. The Boche Training Schools fought hard in this area and held up two Armd. Divs for 48 hours, a good performance considering that they had few support weapons. It was a good example of how well trained and determined Infantry in defence can achieve much against vastly superior forces.

That night found the Bn. and 8 Hussars firm; based around the river crossings and road centre of HALEN with a detachment on a canal bridge WEST of BRAMSCHE (Carrier platoon (Captain G. F. A. Cole) a section of mortars, and a troop of 8 Hussars). A very quiet night was spent by the Bn. except for the carriers, for a party of about 30 enemy made a determined attempt to blow up the bridge. They were driven off by the artillery without much difficulty but not before Capt. Cole had been wounded, and the tank troop comd. killed and two other casualties to the carriers. Next day the Bn. followed up 5 Royal Tanks through DIEPHOLZ and firm based with 8 Hussars at SULINGEN for the night, continuing the advance next day in the lead of 22 Armd Bde with 8 Hussars. Good progress was made and much equipment captured or destroyed, chiefly in the area of VILSEN. Such was our progress that orders were given for the Regimental Group to rush the bridge over the WESER NORTH of VERDEN and capture it intact. Turning EAST near SYKE, where “C” Coy (Capt. M. A. H. Marsden) was left to guard the flank, the Bn. reached EMTINGHAUSEN 4 miles from the WESER at last light against stiffening opposition and it looked as though the Boche would not let us get the bridge intact. Next morning the Div. Comd. came to Bn HQ and stressed the importance of capturing the bridge intact as quickly as possible and that risks must be taken to achieve it, but if the bridge was blown in our face we were to make no further attempt to cross.

The CO therefore gave out orders for the Bn. to rush the bridge in kangaroos relying on speed and surprise, smoke being used to mask enemy guns. While orders were being given out "B" Coy with C Sqn 8 Hussars were entering THEDINGHAUSEN came up against 6 enemy SP guns that halted the advance and made it impossible to rush the bridge, especially as they were supported by artillery from EAST of River WESER. Although the SP guns were given a hot time. (Sgt. Humphries 6 pounders with 'B' Coy firing much of their ammunition). It was decided to cancel the attempt to rush the bridge, and in fact early in afternoon the Boche blew the bridge. Handing; over the area to the 6th KOSB (155 Infantry Brigade) the Bn. and 8 Hussars formed up to attack RIEDE at last light, a village to the NORTH en route to BREMEN. This tillage had been held during the day and it was decided to stonk the place thoroughly before going in, C Sqn. 8 Hussars doing a Sqn. shoot to thicken up the arty, while 'A' Coy (Captain J. T. Peasley MC). and B Sqn. on the right with 'D' Coy and A Sqn on the left advanced down two roads., The village was well. brewed up, but no Boche were found, withdrawn northwards an hour previously. Next morning the advance was continued on the axis SUDWEHYE – LEEST - BRINKUM -DELMENTHORST (5 miles WEST of BREMEN) with "A" Coy and A Sqn in the lead. As soon as "A" Coy entered SUD with the tanks in support outside the village and B Sqn. On the NORTH flank, resistance was met from a Company of 20 SS Training Division who had just arrived from BREMEN and who fought hard until completely routed by "A" Coy killing 15 and capturing 14. "D" Coy . was then passed through to capture KIRCHWEHYE, but the village was surrendered by the, the Burgomaster, the SS having withdrawn EAST and NORTH. 'C' Coy then continued in the lead with C Sqn towards LEESTE, but shortly after crossing the railway came up against determined resistance from SS infantry and SP guns, accurate sniping causing several casualties amongst officers and NCOs, Seeing that the advance on this axis was unlikely to succeed "D" Coy and A Sqn were passed up a bad track along the railway line further EAST with the object of capturing the EAST end of LEESTE and so loosening up enemy resistance on the CL. With great speed and dash and without the support of tanks, which were unable to get forward owing to the difficult going, "B" Coy fought their way forward to the cross roads at the EAST of LEESTE against fierce resistance, inflicting casualties on the SS although SP guns and Mortars caused trouble. Much Boche transport in the town was flushed Northwards and being spotted by the op as well as "B" Coy, was attacked by Typhoons with great effect and to the satisfaction of "B" Coy, who had a seat in the stalls. It was now last light and as orders were received that the Division was to advance no further towards BREMEN "B" Coy was withdrawn 1,000 yds and firm based with A Sqn and the platoon of MMGs. Thus ended a most satisfactory day, for the Bn. had advanced to within 5 miles of BREMEN against stiff opposition inflicting many casualties on the SS, The next day was spent in patrolling and harassing the enemy, K Bty 5 RHA shelled the centre of BREMEN and B Coy shot up the SS on all possible occasions, while the snipers collected 10 plus. Next morning the Bn. was relieved by 4th KOSB and moved with the rest of the Div to a concentration area WEST of NIENBURG for 48 hours rest before passing over the river WESER and ALLER through the bridgehead formed by 53 Div at RETHEM and so to HAMBURG.

6. **CROSSING RIVER WESER AND RIVER ALLER**

The bn crossed the river WESER at NIENBURG on morning 15 April and harboured for 24 hours on the North side of the town. 53 Div had much hard fighting at RETHEM against 2 Marine Divisions strongly supported by 88mm guns before they gained a bridgehead and so it was not until 15 April that 22 Armd Bde (still temporary parents of the Bn. crossed River ALLER and advanced out of the bridgehead on the axis WALSRODE – FALLINGBOSTEL.

7. **WALSRODE – FALLINGBOSTEL.**

Again 8 Hussars was in the lead with the Bn following. WALSRODE was reached by last light 15 April against only slight opposition and the Bn firm based there for the night without incident, although the town was overflowing with civilians and three hospitals full of German wounded. Next morning 8 Hussars soon reached FALLINGBOSTEL but there met determined resistance and all bridges over the river were blown. They therefore by passed it to the South and advanced as far as DORFMARK, setting free a large Allied POW Camp on the way. "C" Coy (Capt. ".W. T. Crook) was under the command of the 8 Hussars now and had much satisfaction in freeing several members of 'B' Coy who had been captured at SUSTEREN in January. While this was happening the Bn. was ordered to establish a bridgehead over the river in the town itself, thereby enabling the Sappers to build a bridge and open up the CL. The CO planned to capture the town by passing 'A' Coy across the river by wading, or in assault boats if necessary, to the NW of the town and by cutting of across the loop in the river the escape of any Boche in the town would be prevented, while 'D' Coy rushed across the demolished bridge to form a tight bridgehead and then work up the two roads leading North out of the town towards 'A' Coy. 'B' Coy in reserve was to follow later and reorganize on the NW of the town with 'A' Coy on the NE. The platoon MMGs, 3" mortars, 3 RHA and C Sqn 8 Hussars plus A Coy 1 Rifle Brigade (under comd. 8 Hussars) to support the crossing by fire from near bank if required. Carriers to act as left flank protection. The crossing went quickly without opposition, the Boche having withdrawn shortly before. During the reorganization phase 'A' Coy patrolled well forward and killed a few Boche while arty and MMGS engaged enemy movement. The Assault Pioneers had been given the task of rafting four 6 pounders, FOO jeep and three Coy jeeps across the river assisted by two Weazels to haul the guns into position on the far side, The Pioneers had two assault boats only and nothing but planks a rope with which to make the raft, however, within 5 hours of the crossing all guns and jeeps were across (not without excitement) in spite of the difficult approaches and exits from the bank. This is the first time that the Bn. has ever done this rafting in ation and it was carried out most successfully and the Pioneers are to be congratulated on a fine achievement with only mock up equipment. The trg done on the canal at WEERT proved its worth, while the value of Weazels as a gun and ammunition tower was very apparent.

8. **SCHNEVERDINGEN to the AUTOBAHN.**

Next day the Bn. passed over the CLASS 40 bridge, handing over to 5 Royal Scots, and followed up 8 Hussars. SOLTAU was the next big place and this was strongly held. It was therefore by passed to the WEST, a very bad cross country track being used which was soon almost impassable after 1 R Tanks and 8 Hussars had gone down it. The Bn. therefore left all wheels except jeeps behind under the 2IC and continued the advance (in kangaroos) behind 1 Royal Tanks to SCHNEVERDINGEN which had just been captured with 500 prisoners and several guns. Firm-basing here for the night, the Bn collected many more prisoners before being relieved once again by our old friends 4 KOSB. By this time 1 Royal Tanks in the lead followed by 8 Hussars had been held up in the wooded hills NE of WELLE and the Bde. Comd was considering employing the Bn. to clear the Forest and open up the CL. The Forest was vast however and he therefore decided to switch 8 Hussars followed by the Bn. to the WEST to capture TOSTEDT just SOUTH of the autobahn from HAMBURG to BREMEN and this plan tied up nicely with the advance of Guards Armoured Division who had now appeared on the left under Comd 12 Corps. TOSTEDT was lightly held but the bridge over the railway had been blown and so a track round

had to be used. The Bn. firm based the town for the night with "C" Coy guarding the bridge while sappers repaired it. Next morning 20th April the advance continued to the autobahn SOUTH of HOLLENSTEDT and here 88's held up the advance by knocking out the leading tank. The 8 Hussars less B Sqn (under comd. the Bn) then changed direction and advanced EAST down the autobahn leaving the Bn the task of capturing HOLLENSTEDT and securing the autobahn crossing. 'B' Coy had been left to guard the CL through TOSTEDT and was to join up later when relieved by 1 RB.

9. **THE CAPTURE OF HOLLENSTEDT**

The plan for the capture of HOLLENSTEDT was as follows. While the bn. was forming up, "C" Coy (as fire coy), B Sqn 8 Hussars and platoon MMGs were to move into position on the high ground overlooking the village and 'C' Coy was to work forward as a feint attack. "A" and "D" Coys as Main Effort meanwhile were to move round to the left behind the high ground which screened them from the enemy and with two troops B Sqn in support "A" Coy followed by "D" was to do a single axis left flanking attack (ideal School of Inf). when 'A' Coy had cleared the village to the main crossroad, "D" Coy was to pass through and clear the EAST of the town. Both Coys were to reorganize on NE & NW roads out, Carriers to do left flank protection on F.U.P. 'B' Coy in reserve was to move up to firm base the autobahn crossing itself. During the attack 5 RHA, one Medium Bty, 3" mortars, B Sqn less two troops, pl MMGS and "C" Coy were to support the attack which was to start at 1350 hrs. During the forming up stage it appeared that the enemy in the village had gone, except for the odd chap who "C" Coy dealt with. However the CO, was determined to put in a proper Bn attack as the place had held several 88's early in the morning and the Bn. I had so far had no chance to do such an ideal manoeuvre on such favourable ground. The attack therefore went in with full support and about twelve prisoners were taken without a fight. A Bty. of 88's were found destroyed presumably by arty fire earlier in the morning and the WEST end of the village was demolished by a Typhoon attack earlier in the day.

A quiet night was spent here except for a visit from a Boche aircraft and next morning; the Bn. was ordered to clear a piece of road between the two Bde CLS. This was accomplished without opposition, but a visit from the Luftwaffe produced a tornado of small arms fire, especially from Bn. HQ, and the aircraft disappeared smoking into the distance. Meanwhile 8 Hussars was meeting considerable opposition to the North at ELSTORF and the Bn. was warned to go and help them. However, just after the CO had done a recce with O.C. 8 Hussars, the Bn less "B" Coy (which was to go under Comd 8 Hussars) was ordered to clear HARBURG forest supported by 5 DG and help out 2 Devon who had too much on their hands and were meeting opposition and considerable arty fire.

10. **THE CLEARING OF HARBURG FOREST**

The forest was enormous for a Bn to clear and it was only possible to do it sketchily and piece by piece. The plan was for "D" Coy to move up the main road to HARBURG and HAMBURG, which ran through the forest, and cut off the narrowest bit of the forest on the WEST side of the road opposite "D" Coy 2 Devon in that area "A" and "C" Coys were then to "drive" the forest NE towards "D" Coy, who acted as "the guns" ("B" Coy was still at ELSTORF with 8 Hussars). The clearing went well and quicker than expected. Enemy arty fire caused a few casualties on the main road, but no opposition was met in the woods and 20 odd Boche were collected from the "drive". 'C' Coy then took over from "D" Coy 2 Devon, while "A" Coy came

Lack 1,000 yds to beat the EAST side of the road towards "C" Coy. Last light found. the Bn. in a defensive position astride the main road on the reverse slope of an open hill in the middle of the forest, but with two platoons "D" Coy in the forest itself on the West side. "A" Coy was 1,000 yds behind guarding the right flank while "B" Coy when it arrived was positioned well to the right in a dominating position facing; SE. Next day the Bn reverted to 131 Bde all three Bns were positioned in line on this high wooded ground above HARBURG and HAMBURG. So near and yet so far. However it was obvious that an Armd Division was out of its "class" in such country and orders were given for the Div to remain in a def posn until 8 Corps had crossed River ELBE and HAMBURG could be attacked from the EAST & SE, So ended the "Swan" and the Bn. got down to defence warfare and all the tricks which proved so successful in our winter fighting.

11. **THE FINAL BATTLE**

The Bn quickly got well settled in, booby traps were laid in the woods and claimed many victims, standing patrols were out permanently, the snipers got going, harassing fire with mortars, arty and MMGs was laid down and "D" Coy shot up all wandering Boche in the thick forest.

In front of the Bn were SS training troops, Marines and even Police and they had many guns, mostly 88 mm A.A. or higher. The latter gave us some trouble, but casualties were luckily light. Thorough patrolling soon showed where the German positions lay and no enemy patrol got through the outpost line. On the night 25/26th April SS troops made a determined attack on 2 Devon's on the left and a subsidiary attack by 50 men supported by 1 SP gun was made on 10 platoon "B" Coy (who had taken over from "C" on the right). Although the standing patrol in front of 10 Pln. was forced to withdraw, the enemy attack was smashed up with heavy loss by the small arms, mortar and arty fire which was quickly brought down. 10 Platoons 2" mortar fired .60 HE bombs and the PIAT was very effective in the mortar role. The enemy lost at least 8 killed and by dawn the standing patrol was re-established. The object of the attack, according to prisoners, was to capture the high ground and keep the Div away from HARBURG Enemy losses on 2 Devon front were very heavy and this proved to be the enemy's swan song, for thereafter he took little offensive action and his arty fire was negligible. The Bn. however shot up the Boche on all possible occasions until a shortage of ammunition for guns and mortars restricted this. Later it was possible to pull one Coy into reserve for rest, bathing and entertainment and the war gradually seemed to die away until on Sunday morning 29th April envoys. from HAMBURG came in to "A" Coy (left forward Coy) with a request that a hospital established in a rubber factory in HARBURG should not be shelled or bombed. These envoys, who consisted of two Officers and a prominent civilian from the City's Chamber of Commerce, were sent back for interrogation.

12. **NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE SURRENDER OF HAMBURG**

The envoys proved to have more up their sleeves than at first disclosed and all were returned to the German lines with a demand from Gen Lyne for the unconditional Surrender of HAMBURG. After a lapse of 36 hours, during which a no offensive firing order was observed, more important envoys arrived at 9 DLI on the right. After two days of rumours and suspense orders were given for the occupation of HAMBURG by 131 Inf Bde and shortly afterwards the unconditional surrender of the German armies in NW Germany was announced.

13. THE ENTRY INTO HAMBURG.

At 1800 hours May 3rd 1945 therefore, 131 Inf Bde led the advance of 7 Armd Div into Germanys chief port and the largest town captured by the Western Allies. The Bn together with 5 R Tanks crossed the two great bridges over the river ELBE guarded by 9 DLI and 1 Royal Tanks, and led the Bde into the devastated city. All civilians had been ordered to remain indoors, but 15,000 police patrolled the streets. The Bn motored quickly to the Town Hall, G.P.O. and Police Barracks which it was scheduled to guard and which were situated in the centre of the city. On the Town Hall the Adjt (Capt R. G. Newell) hoisted the Regimental Flag and so marked a fitting end to the war against Germany, in which the Bn. can rightly be proud of the part it had played.

1/5th Battalion List of Officers Who Crossed The Rhine

Bn. HQ's Lieut. Colonel I. H. Freeland, D.S.O. ,
Major H. J. Nangle, D.S.O.
Capt. L. J. Wheatley, M.C. (Adjutant, Capt. R. G. Newell on leave)
Lieut. A. L. Trewby, I.O. (killed)
Capt. J. A. Knight, S.O.
Capt. F. D. Packer (Quartermaster).
Capt. A. D. Payne, R.A.M.C.
Rev. V. C. Castle
Capt. P. G. T. Kingsley (Attd.)
Capt. C. Smith
Lieut. G. G. Bockstaele (Belgian L.O.)

H.Q. Company Capt. W. G. Chatterton (Capt. R. C. S. Maclean on leave)
Capt. G. W. Bevan, Mortars
Lieut. J. R. Jeffery, Mortars
Capt. G. F. A. Cole, Carriers (wounded)
Lieut. L. W. Maddox, Carriers
Capt. W. G. McLoughlin, A./T. (Capt. R. J. D. Duns on leave)
Capt. B. G. Meara, M.T.O.

"A" Company Major D. J. Watson (wounded)
Capt. W. T. Crook (Later OC "C" Coy)
Lieut. M'. L. Baker, M.C.
Lieut. J. V. Hepworth
2/Lieut. R. Maxwell, M.C.

"B" Company Major C. V. Lilley, M.C.
Capt. J. T. Peasley, M.C. (Later OC "A" Coy)
Lieut. J. W. Thomas-
Lieut. J. R. Surtees
Lieut. H. G. Macdonald (wounded)

"C" Company (2 plns. only) Capt. N. A. H. Marsden (wounded)

Lieut. G. H. Bond (wounded)
 Lieut. D. Wilkinson-Cox, M.C. (killed)

"D" Company Major G. R. Ball, D.S.O.
 Lieut. W. E. Gell
 Lieut. F. T. Newcomb
 Lieut. A. C. Overington (wounded)
 2/Lieut. J. C. Nuttall

Left out of battle Lieut. R. W. Churchill
 Lieut. R. C. Nicholls (wounded)

Major J. E. Edney (a member of 1 /5th Battalion at Alamein) and Capt. Marshall of the Regiment were on 131st Brigade Headquarters.

CASUALTIES.

Coy	Killed		Wounded		Missing		Total			
	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs		
Bn HQ	1	3	-	5	-	-	1	8		
HQ Coy	-	1	1	13	-	-	1	14		
"A" Coy	-	2	1	5	-	-	1	7		
"B" Coy	-	2	1	14	-	-	1	16		
"C" Coy	1	3	3	9	-	1	4	13		
"D" Coy	-	3	1	8	-	-	1	11		
<hr/>										
	2	14		7	54		-	1	9	69