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Cdn Ops - North West Europe (Series 25)

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*for* *Ver Clifford Mcl*  
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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN NORTH-WEST EUROPEEXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARIES AND MEMORANDA

(SERIES 25)

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1. THE BATTLE FOR DELFZIJL (EXTRACTS FROM A REPORT BY 11 CDN INF BDE FORWARDED BY HIST OFFR, 5 CDN ARMD DIV) (See Sketch Map and GSGS 4042 1:250000, Sheet Nos 2A, 3A, 3B, GSGS 4346 Sheet No K54 and GSGS 4414 Sheet Nos 2606-8, 2706-8).

On 20 April 1945 5 Cdn Armd Div was ordered to relieve 3 Cdn Inf Div in the Provinces FRIESLAND, GRONINGEN and DRENTE. This portion of HOLLAND had all been cleared with the exception of the FRISIAN ISLANDS and a pocket around DELFZIJL extending to the GERMAN border.

11 Cdn Inf Bde Gp moved on 21 April to the FRIESLAND area. 3 Cdn Inf Div was already on the move and there was no direct take over. 11 Cdn Inf Bde area was roughly to the WEST of 00 EASTING from the North Sea to inclusive ZWOLLE. In this area there was no contact with the enemy except at the EAST end of the Causeway SW of HARLINGEN.

The FRISIAN ISLANDS were known to be occupied by the enemy and one of our chief tasks was to prevent raids on the coast or an effort by the troops on the islands to evacuate through FRIESLAND.

The move was very long and was made difficult by lack of sufficient bridges over the IJSSEL by changes in the routes made necessary at the last moment. The area allotted to the Brigade was changed after the move had begun. However, recce parties were in hand and COs were briefed at the Dis P.

C.B. Highrs were centred on DOKKUM, 4 A Tk Regt under comd were centred on FRANEKER and were responsible for the port of HARLINGEN and the Causeway. Ir R.C. were centred on SNEEK and were responsible for the coast from MAKKUM to LEMMER. PERTH R were centred on STEENWIJK and were responsible for the area from LEMMER to the MEPLER DIEP, and a battery of L.A.A. under command were centred on ZWOLLE with the task of contacting 1 Cdn Inf Div across the IJSSEL. No fighting took place in this area.

GOC 5 Cdn Armd Div was then ordered to clear the DELFZIJL pocket. 5 Cdn Armd Bde had been given the task of holding the coast on our right and to the NORTH of DELFZIJL, but he appreciated that this was an infantry task. The PERTH R were placed under command 5 Cdn Armd Bde on the 22 April and the Ir R.C. were placed under command 5 Cdn Armd Bde on 23 April; GGHG took over the 11 Cdn Inf Bde area prior to hand over to

31 H.A.A. Bde and the C.B. Highrs and 4 A Tk Regt went under their command.

Brigade Headquarters moved to area TEN BOER on the night 24 April and for the first time in its history it had no one under command.

On 24 April 11 Cdn Inf Bde took command of the DELFZIJL area and C.B. Highrs reverted to under command and moved into reserve in area LOPPERSUM. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, less BCD, WESTMR R and 8 NBH were still responsible for the coast NORTH of BIERUM.

At this time the Brigade Group was situated as follows: RIGHT - Westmr R (535121) with responsibility from the SPIT at 5623 to OTTERDUM 5024. Ir R.C. with responsibility OTTERDUM to FARMSUM 4625. BCD in APPINGEDAM 4125. PERTH R H.Q. 386316 "D" Coy 386310 "C" Coy 416325. 8 NBH then situated SOUTH of GRONINGEN were placed under command. 8 Fd Regt deployed in the area LOPPERSUM was in support. 17 Fd Regt still supporting the GGHG was ordered to move as soon as relieved by 31 HAA Bde. 10 Fd Sqn was in support.

#### "THE PROBLEM"

##### GROUND

The Brigade had a very large frontage of some 16,000 yards on its objective, the total perimeter being some 25,000 yards. The ground was extremely flat with very little cover, small villages and towns being dispersed over the area. A complicated network of ditches and canals made cross country movement impossible. The weather was wet and the whole area subject to flooding, which meant all vehicles were confined to roads. There were no dykes of importance except directly along the coast. Roads were slightly raised and the railway line to DELFZIJL through the Ir R.C. area was raised about four feet giving some cover. The area SOUTH of the EAST-WEST road into APPINGEDAM was known to be flooded, but the limits of the flooded area were not yet known.

##### ENEMY

The garrison of DELFZIJL was estimated at 1500 fighting troops plus an unestimated number of maintenance troops. Fighting troops consisted of a battalion of Naval Marines plus battle groups; average strength 200.

Air photographs disclosed batteries of 105mm guns dug in on the dyke at the neck of the SPIT in 5523 at TERMUNTERZIJL, in the NE corner of DELFZIJL and in NANSUM. Various other emplacements were dug in along the dyke. Various concrete emplacements were detected in all battery area, particularly in the DELFZIJL - FARMSUM area, and other gun positions were detected on the low ground around DELFZIJL and FARMSUM of which only two 4 - gun positions appeared to be occupied. There was also an outer perimeter of wire and a continuous trench system about 2,000 yards from the coast stretching from NANSUM to the SPIT and each main position was surrounded by wire with trench system. There were heavy naval guns in the area EMDEN and the ISLAND of BORKUM, within range of our own troops.



## OWN TROOPS

The infantry were spread very thinly on the ground, the armour was confined to roads and could only move after the bridges had been constructed over demolitions. The artillery outnumbered enemy guns but were outranged by the guns at EMDEN and BORKUM and appeared to have little effect on the concrete positions of the enemy 105's. The air was limited by weather and priorities were given to 2 Cdn Corps.

## TIME FACTOR

There was no limit fixed for the action other than that the assault on DELFZIJL should take place not later than immediately after the fall of EMDEN, possibly two weeks ahead. It was appreciated that during this time the complete German army might collapse, but only if constant pressure were kept up everywhere. In view of the large number of enemy involved and the tremendous frontage it would be necessary to have at least three battalions deployed throughout the whole period. There was little cover, the weather was miserable and the enemy shelling was taking its toll of casualties. It was accordingly decided to push forward to at least reduce the pocket immediately with the reservation that as the picture developed a pause could be made later and more troops could be rested.

## P L A N

PHASE I - To reduce the perimeter.

PHASE II - To assault the town of DELFZIJL. (To be determined after further developments).

### PHASE I

Westmr R with under command one troop 8 NBH to move NORTH to TERMUNTERZIJL and the SPIT with their left boundary on the TERMUNTER canal. Ir R.C. with under command one troop 8 NBH to determine the limits of the flooded area SOUTH of APPINGEDAM, to move NORTH to the river between TERMUNTERZIJL and OTTERDUM and when relieved in this area by the Westmr R to assault FARMSUM with their right flank on the river, behind the outer perimeter of defences. The BCD to face up to the enemy at APPINGEDAM. The PERTH R with under command one squadron 8 NBH to hold on the canal at HOLDWIERDE and swing at BIERUM around the NORTH end of the BEIRUMER - MAAR and with the left flank on the river to capture NANSUM and proceed SOUTH to DELFZIJL. C.B. Highrs and one squadron of 8 NBH were in reserve. 8 Fd Regt supported the PERTH and BCD, 17 Fd Regt supported the Westmr and the Ir R.C.

Division made first priority for sappers construction of a class 40 route APPINGEDAM - DELFZIJL. Brigade gave other tasks in priority: Construction of route TEN POST - SCHILDWOLDE, construction of bridge between the Ir R.C. and Westmr R at 480185 and construction of bridge at HOLWIERDE when NANSUM was captured. 1 Fd Sqn was immediately put in support and supported Westmr R and Ir R.C. while 10 Fd Sqn supported PERTH and BCD. C.B. Highrs remained in Brigade reserve at LOPPERSUM.

### COURSE OF THE BATTLE

On the right the Westmr R advanced at night towards WALDENDORP and on the right of the WINTER DYKE towards KERKHOVEN. They met some opposition on the way and soon realized that even though movement on the POLDER on the right was possible at night it was impossible to stay there in daylight. Accordingly the company on the right moved over to the main WALDENDORP axis. On the night of 26 April Westmr R entered WALDENDORP and the leading company passed right through the town. The following company were in position by daylight on the SOUTH edge of the town prepared to mop up during the day. Mopping up proceedings continued all day and were not completed before night fall. During that night the town was so heavily shelled that they could not move forward, and on the following day movement was impossible owing to observation. On the night of 28/29 Apr one company moved forward to the canal at 516210 and by 0600 hours leading elements had reached 525224. They continued the advance during the day and by first light on 30 Apr two companies had consolidated in TERMUNTEN. The enemy was still holding the SPIT in force and causing considerable trouble with his guns in concrete emplacements.

By first light on 1 May all the Westmr R area had been cleared with the exception of the SPIT. At about 1400 hours that afternoon a civilian reported that the enemy had evacuated the SPIT by sea, and this report proved to be correct. As DELFZIJL had by now been captured the Westmr R took no further part in the action. They had had considerable fighting, particularly in the WALDENORP area; the main difficulty being observation by the enemy of our movement over the flat ground and the fact that our troops could be engaged over open sights from the enemy gun emplacements. They cleared a very large area, captured over 700 prisoners and a very large quantity of equipment both in TERMUNTEN and on the SPIT, and their movement on the right flank enabled the Ir R.C. to get forward for the final assault.

The Ir R.C. felt forward with deep patrols from WAGENBORG and soon established that all the area to the NORTH and WEST of the AFWATERINGS - KANAAL was flooded and that all crossings of the canal were demolished. This left a deep wedge in the Brigade front over which our troops could not be supported, but it was decided the flooded area could safely be ignored, thus reducing the very large frontage of the Brigade. Small patrols only, consisting in one case of the pipe band, were left to hold the canal. The battalion still had a very wide front and found itself with three companies up; one moving up the canal on the left flank of the Westmr R one moving up the road to HEVESKES and one on the bend in the canal NORTH of SCHAAPBULTEN. On the night 27 Apr the right company reached 523227. They lost contact, and arrangements were made to drop a 48-set by parachute. However, a small patrol was able to get forward with spare parts and this was not necessary. The company had been counter-attacked at first light and again at last light and they ran out of ammunition and accordingly withdrew, but before first light another company had taken over that position. The company moving towards HEVESKES were working on very open ground where movement was possible only by night. The going was slow as they had to deal with mines and road demolitions before they could get any supporting arms forward. The left company was also working on very open ground, moving over the rail junc at 477229 where they found some cover behind the line of the railway and although heavily shelled were able to maintain the position. By the morning of 30 Apr the right company had cleared BORGESWEER and the WEST bank of the canal up to TERMUNTERZIJL.



By noon another company had entered OTTERDUM and the third company was in contact with the enemy at HEVESKES. During the previous night DELFZIJL had fallen to the C.B. Highrs and it was possible for our tanks to fire directly into FARMSUM from the NORTH. It was known that the remaining enemy in the pocket now facing the Ir R.C. were very strong and comprised at least a complete battalion of naval marines, strength over 300, with comparatively high morale. Consideration was given to delaying the final assault on FARMSUM for 24 hours while the complete weight of our artillery was brought to bear on this area. However, the Commanding Officer decided that owing to the condition of his troops and the possibility of taking further casualties while waiting, he would assault on that night. At 0001 hours 2 May the assault was launched. One company moved from OTTERDUM along the dyke where it was delayed by anti-pers mines and the pioneer section were all made casualties. However, the leading platoon commander was a trained sapper and he personally cleared a gap single-handed and enabled the company to advance. A second company cleared HEVESKES and entered WEIWERD and a third company passed right through and seized the bridge at 473245 before first light. At first light all opposition collapsed and the Commandant of DELFZIJL pocket came out to surrender. The Commanding Officer went forward and met the Commandant in his underground concrete HQ and accepted unconditional surrender of all the troops remaining in the pocket. On that day some 1400 enemy prisoners surrendered to the Ir R.C. The Commandant supplied full information concerning minefields, and supplied German sappers to lift the anti-pers mines.

When the BCD came under command 11 Cdn Inf Brigade they had taken up a position on foot with a few supporting tanks in APPINGEDAM. The demolitions in front of APPINGEDAM prevented any further forward movement; on their right was the canal which prevented their entry into the SOUTH portion of APPINGEDAM which was occupied by the enemy. They were under heavy shellfire as the enemy was destroying APPINGEDAM house by house. As they were not trained in river crossing or street fighting they were ordered to ignore the area SOUTH of the canal and were given a holding role facing DELFZIJL with various patrol tasks to contact the PERTH on their left.

On the night 29 Apr they were ordered to capture MARSUM in conjunction with the C.B. Highrs attack on UITWIERDE. The Commanding Officer chose to attack in daylight and succeeded in occupying the town after meeting a little opposition by 2105 hours. On the following day they patrolled NORTH from MARSUM and EAST toward DELFZIJL, cleaning up various factories on the way. That afternoon they succeeded in crossing the canal and reported the SOUTH portion of APPINGEDAM evacuated by the enemy.

The PERTH R company in HOLWIERDE had to face up to the canal where the bridge had been destroyed. The enemy were occupying the EASTERN portion of the town and movement there was very difficult. The company in BIERUM were making contact by patrol only. The PERTH R first objective was to capture the line NANSUM - HOLWIERDE from the NORTH. The morning of 28 Apr the leading company of the PERTH R had reached the SPIT at 439039 where they encountered mines and some opposition. On the night 28/29 Apr they had reached the area of Light House at 440300 where they were in behind the enemy outer perimeter and had had a pretty stiff fight for any enemy machine gun position. By 1800 hours on the 29 Apr they had captured the

line NANSUM - HOLWIERDE after some heavy fighting for a very strong enemy position in NANSUM. On 27 Apr it had been decided to commit the reserve bn, the C.B. Highrs on the NORTH for the final assault on DELFZIJL, and they accordingly passed through the PERTH R in daylight. The PERTH R came into reserve moving on the 1 May to a position behind the Ir R.C. in Brigade reserve. The PERTH R had relieved a unit of 3 Cdn Inf Div in contact with the enemy and had been in contact and under heavy shell fire throughout. Their casualties were the heaviest in the Brigade and they had some very heavy fighting in the NANSUM area as they were the first to enter the outer perimeter of the pocket and enemy morale was still high.

C.B. Highrs remained in LOPPERSUM in reserve until 29 Apr and then moved into the BIERUM area preparatory to passing through the PERTH R. It had been hoped that they could launch the attack on DELFZIJL on that night but the weather had remained very bad and the track running from BIERUM through 42 3319 had been washed out. They were therefore ordered to capture UITWIERDE on the 29/30 Apr and wait for the construction of a bridge at HOLWIERDE, the BCD having protected their right flank by the capture of MARSUM. The sappers had declared the BIERUM track impossible. However, during the daylight 29 Apr the C.B. Highrs filled in the road and managed to get all necessary supporting arms through by dark. At first light of 30 Apr they had captured UITWEIRDE after encountering comparatively light opposition. On the night 30 Apr/1 May they launched the assault on DELFZIJL. They moved off with one company leading on the left to capture the enemy position at 463271. This company moved down the dyke, through a minefield, through wire, and captured various enemy positions dug in along the dyke. First light found the leading elements within 50 yards of the enemy heavy guns which were firing direct over open sights. Ammunition was running low and further forward movement in daylight was wellnigh impossible. The Commanding Officer then despatched the second company under cover of a heavy smoke screen to attack the station at 460270. This company gained the objective after overcoming some opposition. Ammunition was sent to the left company and tanks with the right company were able to engage the enemy heavy guns, and the whole opposition suddenly collapsed. Throughout the rest of the day BIERUM was cleared and town of DELFZIJL was mopped up. Many prisoners were captured and great quantities of enemy equipment. On entering the town it was found that all locks and port installations were prepared for demolition. Charges were removed and the port was captured virtually intact with a large number of barges, fishing craft, etc.

8 NBH Initial plan provided for a half squadron to support each of the Westmr R and Ir R.C. One squadron was to support the PERTH R with one squadron in reserve. On the right one troop was able to support the Westmr R throughout. The half squadron with the Ir R.C. moving to SCHAABULTEN to support the left company met with bad luck as the road collapsed under the rear tank and they could not move until the road forward was cleared through FARMSUM. However, they were able to support the advance of the Ir R.C. with fire. The reserve squadron was therefore committed to support the Ir R.C. in their final assault. On the left, one squadron supported first the PERTH R and subsequently the C.B. Highrs throughout the whole battle. Very close and intimate support was given at all times under the most difficult ground conditions.



ARTY. 8 Fd Regt was able to support the BCD, PERTH R and Ir R.C. throughout without moving. 17 Fd Regt after some preliminary short moves was able to support the Westmr R and Ir R.C. throughout the whole battle, but with a very wide frontage. Until the last phase of the battle it was not possible for more than one regiment to support any one unit. At first 25 pounders were thought to have little effect on the enemy's concrete positions and so far as is known no guns were put out of action. However, prisoner interrogation indicated that the 25 pounders caused very heavy casualties to enemy personnel manning the guns.

A battery of H.A.A. were placed in support for long - range counter battery purposes. The effect on the guns at BORKUM and EMDEN is not known, but prisoner interrogation indicates that the effect on the closer positions had very definite morale value, but small killing value. In the final assault on FARMSUM by the Ir R.C., the GGUG were deployed and fired in the fire plan as an Arty Regiment.

A battery of "heavies" were also in support and engaged the guns in the EMDEN area and the guns in the "pocket". Counter-battery from the "heavies" apparently caused enemy batteries to close down temporarily, but so far as is known no enemy guns were permanently put out of action.

RCE. The Engineers found the task of constructing a road from TEN POST to SCHILWOLDE very difficult, and at best a Class 5 route was constructed which was partially under water. This meant that nearly all lateral traffic had to go around through GRONINGEN. Class 40 routes in the NORTHERN area were very difficult to find as most of the existing bridges were of light construction. However, bridges were strengthened and satisfactory routes eventually obtained. Reconnaissance in the forward area was most difficult and the craters NORTH of HOLWIERDE were very difficult to fill as the movement of a bulldozer invariably drew very heavy fire. Eventually, when the EAST portion of HOLWIERDE was captured the bridge there was constructed without difficulty. The Sappers had a very heavy commitment, being required to construct many bridges, fill many demolitions and lift many mines. By having a representative attached to each unit with the CRE working close to Brigade they were able to keep constantly in touch with the situation and switch their main effort when necessary.

AIR. The weather was very unfortunate for air support and priorities were given elsewhere. The two efforts that were made available were not satisfactory. On one occasion all bombs landed in the target area, but no direct hits were made and on the second occasion the aircraft were early, the arty smoke was not down and no hits were scored.

During their action the Bde Gp took over 3,800 prisoners and killed many others. German wounded were evacuated to EMDEN and their numbers are unknown.



2. THE LIBERATION OF NORTHERN HOLLAND: THE ADVANCE OF 2 CDN INF DIV FROM THE RHINE TO THE NORTH SEA (FROM NOTES GIVEN BY G.S.O. I TO HIST OFFR, 2 CDN INF DIV, 10 MAY 45).

PREAMBLE

1. During the nineteen days from 29 Mar to 16 Apr, inclusive, the Division was engaged in that most pleasant of all tasks the liberating of an oppressed country and the smashing of a part of the broken German armies. During this period the Division advanced 112 aerial miles; built bridges totalling 1140 feet; passed 5,022 PW through the cage (with a further estimated 1,200 taken but not accurately accounted for); laid to rest at least half this number; overran a concentration camp of 1,000 delirious Jews as well as about 14 German hospitals (some of the latter contained Allied wounded); laid 1,540 miles of signal cable, all for a total of 44 officers and 768 ORs killed, wounded and missing.
2. The prologue to this piece was the driving of German paratroops through the HOCHWALD Forest, the town of XANTEN, and over the RHINE at WESEL - while the epilogue finds the Division back in Germany. The role of the Division in the crossing of the RHINE was that of a follow up force and thus a week elapsed after the assault before the Division was allowed to cut loose east of the RHINE.
3. The Division crossed over with 10 Cdn Armd Regt (The Fort Garry Horse) under command, later to be joined by 1 Cdn Armd C Regt (The Royal Canadian Dragoons) - straight from the Italian Theatre - and "A" Sqn, 1 Cdn Armd Carrier Regt ("Kangaroos") Originally, 4 Cdn Med Regt, which was relieved by 10 Med Regt RA, on 9 Apr, was under the command of 2 Cdn Inf Div. The Corps plan demanded a sustained effort from the Division from the RHINE to the NORTH SEA on an axis MILLINGEN-TERBORG-DOETINCHEM-VORDEN-LAREN-HOLTEN-OMMEN-ASSEN-GRONINGEN, flanked on the right by 43 (W) Div up to the TWENTE Canal, then 4 Cdn Armd Div through ALMELO and COEVORDEN, and finally by 1 Polish Armd Div to WINSCHOTEN. On the left, 3 Cdn Inf Div was directed up the line of the River IJssel to ZWOLLE and then on to LEEUWARDEN.
4. The object of the operation was to drive the enemy into the cage, into the grave, or into the NORTH SEA. The principle employed was a single thrust line with one bde up preceded by the div recce regt and, at the opportune moment, the launching of the armd car regt on the left flank of the div to roam the countryside. Such a policy was bound to leave the flanks untidy, but pauses to mop up were only taken when the pace of the advance threatened to endanger the security of our maintenance routes by reason of infiltration from the flanks. Throughout the operation many a German was required to set a smart pace up the div axis in an effort to reach the PW cage.
5. The enemy, too, had a plan although the last seven days must have left some doubt in the mind of the commander as to its successful execution. Up to the crossing of the TWENTE Canal the enemy formations, though badly mauled both west and east of the RHINE, were still able to carry out a reasonably well co-ordinated withdrawal. The controlling headquarters were regts of para formations with under command bns reinforced with para trainees from northern Holland, Green Police and any

groups of soldiery, formed into battle groups overnight, who were unfortunate enough to be in the path of retreating, but determined, regimental commanders. The country favoured a withdrawal with its numerous canals and streams permitting extensive bridge blowing along these lines and catering in the defiles. With the decline of the Luftwaffe, large quantities of aerial bombs became available to the ground forces and they were put to good use as demolition charges. As the enemy was unable to muster any significant support from guns or mortars, the tactics employed consisted of holding important crossroads, any nearby villages, and defending every water-line until breached - when a withdrawal took place, generally at night. However, during the last five days, co-ordinated direction disappeared and he seemed disposed to withdraw any hour of the day - generally leaving it too late to be successful.

#### THE BATTLE DAY BY DAY

##### 29 Mar 45

The concentration of the div east of the RHINE was spread over the three days 28, 29 and 30th, and the plan was accomplished with the exception of two field regts which were employed in "Pepper Pot" duties in connection with the EMMERICH area until the 31st. During the day, 6 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Recce Regt moved over poor roads through MILLINGEN and across the Dutch-German border to take over from elements of 43 (W) Div. By midnight the Bde and the recce regt had successfully gained contact with the enemy beyond the FDLs, with Camerons of C starting into NETTERDEN to make contact with 3 Cdn Inf Div who were at the approaches to EMMERICH.

##### 30 Mar 45

The paratroops were still holding the built-up communities with a plentiful supply of "Bazookas" and automatic weapons. 8 Cdn Recce Regt started in front of, and on the flank of, the Bde and this role they continued to carry out for the leading bde for the next seventeen days without respite, in many cases fighting hard to keep the momentum. A remarkably fine performance was put up throughout this period, as will be seen in the succeeding days. One sqn was passed over the OUDE IJSSEL River, through 43 (W) Div, and during the day they got to the outskirts of TERBORG. During the day and night, 6 Cdn Inf Bde took VELDHUNTEN and GENDRIGEN, and S Sask R, who had by-passed ULFT, pushed on to ETTEN.



31 Mar 45

By 1200 hrs, S Sask R were into ETTEN, with Camerons of C in the ZIEK area pushing west, while a sqn of 8 Cdn Recce Regt cleared ULFT. By midnight, 5 Cdn Inf Bde was into TERBORG against light opposition, being preceded by another sqn of recce. The balance of the regt pushed out beyond 6 Cdn Inf Bde against isolated, but determined, opposition. During the day, the engineers completed two bridges over the OUDE IJSSEL at GENDRINGEN and ULFT.

1 Apr 45

5 Cdn Inf Bde started off for DOETINCHEM, preceded by the recce regt, with one sqn up the main road and the other two west of the OUDE IJSSEL. By mid-day the town had been reached against practically no opposition. The recce were unable to get into the town but passed around on the right without much difficulty. By the end of the day the Calg Highrs were mopping up the centre of the town, with the other two bns in the woods to the north-west, and the recce holding a bridge intact on the GROOTE BEEK to the north.

While the town itself could not be used for traffic, a diversion was available. Consequently, the decision was made to mount 4 Cdn Inf Bde in a sqn of "Kangaroos" and TCVs with the object of getting to the TWENTE Canal.

2 Apr 45

An early start by 8 Cdn Recce Regt and 4 Cdn Inf Bde, with R Regt C leading in "Kangaroos", found them across the BERKEL in the ALMEN area by 1200 hrs. A bridge that was found intact assisted them to move up to the TWENTE Canal. Fifteen miles were covered in the morning despite a 60 foot crater at VORDEN, which was initially by-passed as it was being repaired to permit class 40 traffic. As 3 Cdn Inf Div was only just reaching up to the OUDE IJSSEL at LAAG KEPPEL, our left flank was exposed to the enemy over a distance of some 22 miles. It was necessary for 4 Cdn Inf Bde to hang back from the Canal in order to watch ZUTPHEN. Despite this fact, R Regt C crossed the TWENTE Canal against moderate opposition; but nothing more could be committed until a gap filler in the form of 6 Cdn Inf Bde was brought up.

3 Apr 45

The whole day was an unpleasant one. As 4 Cdn Inf Bde built up across the Canal, both the class 40 raft and the bridge under construction were subjected to intermittent shellfire. The enemy on the ground was aggressive in an unmilitary sort of way, and his attempted counter-attacks were costly. The class 40 ferry did magnificent work as did the engineers on the bridge which was a 143 foot pontoon with prepared approaches. 6 Cdn Inf Bde came forward during the day and filling the gaps on the left and tapping out towards the IJSSEL they bagged a fair number of PW who were unable to make up their minds as to which side of the river was the best to be on.

4 Apr 45

In the morning - while, on the right flank, 4 Cdn Armd Div was concentrated in the area of WEGDAM and, on the left flank, 3 Cdn Inf Div was approaching ZUTPHEN - the remainder of 4 Cdn Inf Bde crossed the TWENTE Canal and secured their objectives. Patrols of S Sask R reported enemy MGs and their objectives. Patrols of S Sask R reported enemy MGs and infantry in the vicinity of LEESEN, south-east of ZUTPHEN.

5 Apr 45

5 Cdn Inf Bde passed through 4 Cdn Inf Bde and captured LAREN. Opposition offered by the enemy consisted mostly of SA and MG fire.

6 Apr 45

1 Cdn Armd C Regt, less one sqn, came under the command of 2 Cdn Inf Div at 1200 hrs. By 1515 hrs, Camerons of C had succeeded in getting the one coy across the SCHIPBEEK Canal, 4 miles south-west of HOLTEN.

7 Apr 45

6 Cdn Inf Bde consolidated the bridgehead over the SCHIPBEEK Canal. Instructions were issued for the Bde to extend this bridgehead along an axis through LAREN and HOLTEN. 8 Cdn Recce Regt was to feel out the strength of the enemy in the latter place, and, if the situation was favourable, they were to recce the high ground to the north and the road leading from HOLTEN to RIJSSSEN. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was allotted the task of capturing HOLTEN.

8 Apr 45

All units of 5 Cdn Inf Bde were across the SCHIPBEEK Canal by 0930 hrs. Plans were then made for an operation by 4 Cdn Inf Bde with H-hr at 0800 hrs, 9 Apr. This operation was designed to cut the RAALTE-NIJVERDAL lateral, and 1 Cdn Armd C Regt was assigned the task of exploiting along the axis RAALTE-ZWOLLE.

9 Apr 45

By the morning of this date, a class 40 bridge had been opened over the SCHIPBEEK Canal. The northern drive continued, and 5 Cdn Inf Bde captured HOLTEN. While 5 Cdn Inf Bde occupied RIJSSSEN, as a base for a thrust in the direction of NIJVERDAL, 6 Cdn Inf Bde passed through HOLTEN to relieve 4 Cdn Inf Bde. The latter formation had advanced along the western fringe of the woods north of HOLTEN to reach positions astride the main road connecting NIJVERDAL and RAALTE.

10 Apr 45

RHC reached the southern outskirts of OMMEN, while 4 Cdn Inf Bde occupied an area in the vicinity of LEMELE. Instructions were issued for 6 Cdn Inf Bde to clear OMMEN as a preliminary to forming a firm base in the area of BALKBURG and pushing forward along the HOOGEVEEN-GRONINGEN axis. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was instructed to cross the River VECHT, west of OMMEN, and join up with 6 Cdn Inf Bde. Tasks assigned to 1 Cdn Armd C Regt were first, to exploit to the west, in the direction of ZWOLLE, between the River VECHT and the OVERIJSSSELCH Canal; second, to relieve troops of 18 Cdn Armd C Regt north of the GRAMSBURGEN-HASSELT lateral, and third, to continue northwards in the direction of GRONINGEN and LEEUWARDEN. 8 Cdn Recce Regt was instructed to cross the VECHT and exploit the HOOGEVEEN-GRONINGEN axis.

11 Apr 45

By 1800 hrs, Camerons of C were moving forward through the northern outskirts of HOOGEVEEN, and Calg Highrs had reached BALKBURG. During the day, leading elements of 8 Cdn Recce Regt penetrated as far north as a position 11 miles southwest of ASSEN. In the vicinity of SPIER, they had linked up with French SAS troops, and the combination engaged a small enemy pocket in that area.



12 Apr 45

Delayed only by scattered enemy resistance and blown bridges, 6 Cdn Inf Bde pressed forward towards ASSEN. At 1600 hrs, 4 Cdn Inf Bde began to pass through 6 Cdn Inf Bde near WESTERBORK. On the right flank of 2 Cdn Inf Div, 8 Cdn Recce Regt contacted 1 Polish Armd Div south-east of ASSEN.

13 Apr 45

By sunrise 4 Cdn Inf Bde had taken ASSEN by cutting off the town from the rear during the night and capturing a large and completely surprised garrison. "C" Sqn, 1 Cdn Armd C Regt, began to move towards LEEUWARDEN, with "B" Sqn between the latter place and GRONINGEN, heading for the sea. Some difficulty was experienced in finding sufficient personnel to guard the large numbers of PW that were taken.

14 Apr 45

During the night 13-14 Apr, 4 Cdn Inf Bde reached the southern outskirts of GRONINGEN. Enemy SA fire and "Bazookas" were encountered and progress was slow. Stiff fighting continued during the remainder of the day. To the west, patrols of 1 Cdn Armd C Regt reported that they had contacted slight resistance in the vicinity of LEEUWARDEN.

15 Apr 45

Hard fighting continued to feature the battle for GRONINGEN. A characteristic of the defence was the siting of MG posts in the basements of buildings covering neighbouring streets. Nevertheless, approximately 900 PW were obtained during the day. 4 Cdn Inf Bde was relieved by 6 Cdn Inf Bde after 4 Cdn Inf Bde had gained a bridgehead over a canal in the southern portion of the city by rushing in "Kangaroos" a bridge heavily defended with SA and "Bazookas". Moving into GRONINGEN from the west, with Calg Highrs and RHC on the right and left, respectively, 5 Cdn Inf Bde had reported the city clear as far as the 21 easting line by 1700 hrs. Entering GRONINGEN from the south, with Fus MR and S Sask R on the right and left, respectively, 6 Cdn Inf Bde had reached the 14 northing line by the same time. On this date the great drive from the RHINE to the NORTH SEA was virtually completed by 1 Cdn Armd C Regt - which reached the SEA at SCHOOR and ZOUT-KAMP.

16 Apr 45

During the day the German Comd and his staff at GRONINGEN surrendered. Some fighting continued in the northern outskirts of the town, but the core of the enemy's resistance was gone. The divisional task had been completed in record time, and 2 Cdn Inf Div had achieved the distinction of being the first formation to attain its objective in this phase of the campaign.

3. SURRENDER IN THE NORTH (MEMORANDUM OF AN ACCOUNT GIVEN BY BRIGADIER J.A. ROBERTS, TO HIST OFFR, 3 CDN INF DIV, 30 MAY 45).

1. On the evening of 3 May 45, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was directed against the outer defences of AURICH. Steady progress had been made, despite enemy opposition, craters and demolitions. The intention was to establish a firm line along the EMS - JADE KANAL, from whence 7 Cdn Inf Bde, concentrated in rear, could assault AURICH.

2. The duty officer of 8 Cdn Inf Bde awakened the commander at 0200 hours 4 May to advise him that representatives from AURICH wished to see him. The representatives, escorted by LT Col G.O.

Taschereau, O.C., R. de Chaud, proved to be a civilian school principal, who spoke excellent English, and a German Red Cross officer in uniform. These people had no military authority whatever for their mission. They had however talked with the Burgo-master and had come with his knowledge. The people of AURICH wanted to avoid the wrecking of their city, and while they could not persuade the military commander to surrender, they were trying to arrange matters their own way. The Brigadier refused to have anything to do with these people. He refused their offer to guide a body of men into AURICH by unguarded routes to offer the military commander a fait accompli.

3. The Brigadier felt that no German could be trusted to the extent of risking one Canadian life unnecessarily. An opportunity however was offered to the Germans to return to the Commander and persuade him to send an officer with authority to surrender. The route of his approach under a white flag was laid down, and the forward troops advised. To allow them to do this we undertook not to shell AURICH before 1200 hours 4 May. This undertaking hardly compromised our policy of offensive action, as the guns were not within range of AURICH. However some were quickly moved forward, to make good the promise of bombardment, if the enemy failed to surrender.

4. At 1200 hours Q.O.R. of C. reported that the German representatives were at their lines. The G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div, Maj Gen R.H. Keebler, was visiting H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde when they arrived. He accompanied Brigadier Roberts to the meeting. The German party consisted of a Colonel named Harms, and the school principal as interpreter. This officer carried a properly signed and sealed authority from the military commander; however it did not empower him to surrender AURICH but only to learn our terms of surrender. General Keebler refused to have anything further to do with this officer. He did however agree to the suggestion that Brigadier Roberts go into AURICH and see the military commander, in the hope that lives would thus be saved. He gave Brigadier Roberts permission to accept the unconditional surrender of AURICH.

5. The Canadian party consisting of Brigadier Roberts, Major H.A. McKibbin his G.S.O.3, Capt R.J. Pootmans I.O. 3 Cdn Inf Div (interpreter) and a despatch rider from Q.O.R. of C.

6. The first part of the trip was anything but pleasant. The rain was pouring down and, as the road was heavily cratered, the party had to move on foot, or ride pillion behind the D.R. or the bicycle ridden by the school principal. Further, over and above the craters, charges, already wired and ready to blow, were sunk in the road. Unmanned "bazookas" were also in position, with trip wires stretched across the road, to fire them. The enemy infantry were not only in well concealed positions, they were in a belligerent mood. Word of Brigadier Roberts' mission to AURICH had not yet been received by N. Shore R., who were continuing to fight forward on a parallel axis on the left. The Hun resented being unable to retaliate to this fire. The German Colonel relieved this situation and convinced the local commander that all was in order. The deportment and discipline of the enemy in these forward positions was of the highest order. The final lap of the trip was made by motor. The bridge across the EMS - JADE KANAL was still intact though it was obviously prepared for immediate demolition.



7. The party arrived at the Marine Barracks AURICH about 1400 hours, where they met Kapitan Zur See Jaehncke. This officer, a large man, of severe military bearing, was a career naval officer. He embodied the outward traits of German militarism. His mechanical movements and habit of speaking in a loud toneless voice, as if addressing a public meeting, were in strong contrast to his adjutant Oberleutnant Fischer, a most considerate and cooperative officer.

8. The local Nazi Landrat attended the meeting, though added little to the proceedings save to ask that the decision reached at AURICH also include EMDEN, which was under the same commander. New developments had taken place since the departure from 8 Cdn Inf Bde HQ. Word had been received by the Germans that negotiations were proceeding with Field Marshal Montgomery for the surrender of all German forces in front of 21 Army Group. Jaehncke was therefore unwilling to discuss the surrender of AURICH without further orders. Maj McKibbin was sent back to advise the G.O.C. of the present position, and find out the facts of the rumoured negotiations. While Maj McKibbin was away Brigadier Roberts and Capt Pootmans awaited his return in the officers mess. The attitude of the Germans was most unusual. It was rather like that of a losing football team. The war was over, we've lost, let us be at least congenial.

9. Maj McKibbin returned about 1700 hours with a note from the G.O.C. stating that negotiations were in fact in progress on a high level, and empowering Brigadier Roberts to make any decisions he considered right. Kapitan Jaehncke was still unwilling to surrender without further orders. Brigadier Roberts cleared the conference room of all save the interpreters and warned Kapitan Jaehncke that he was through parleying. He would not consider their suggestion that AURICH be declared an open city, and advised Jaehncke that at 0700 hours 5 May he would march his Brigade down the main road to occupy AURICH; further if as much as one shot was fired the troops would "go to ground", and artillery would raze the city. Everything was in our favour and the Germans knew it. They were however unwilling to surrender if they could still edge out a compromise. The Canadian party left about 1800 hours. The results of this meeting were unknown. It was felt that AURICH would have surrendered had the complication of higher negotiations not tied the hands of the local commander.

10. At 2030 hours that night Brigadier Roberts reported the situation to the G.O.C. During this talk the B.B.C. broadcast the news of the general surrender on the 21 Army Group front, and the news of the cease fire at 0800 hours 5 May.

11. The GOC instructed Brigadier Roberts to return to AURICH next morning with orders to the German Commander relative to the concentration of his troops, removal of demolition charges etc. Brigadier Roberts decided to go to AURICH at 0800 hours 5 May. He held an O Group with his staff and the Coy Comd 3 Cdn Inf Div Provost. It was arranged that a section of Provost would escort the Brigadier.

12. At 0500 hours 5 May Oberst Harms and Oberleutnant Fischer came to the Q.O.R. of C. positions to see Brigadier Roberts regarding the recent general surrender. They were advised that Brigadier Roberts would come to AURICH at 0800 hours, and that the only troops he would bring would be a Provost escort.

13. The escort under Capt Crawshaw and Lieut Dowsett, consisted of 14 O.R. pers. A great deal of time had been spent to ensure that the initial impression on the enemy would be favourably striking. The escort were extremely well turned out. Web equipment newly whitened, motor cycles spotless, each equipped with a white pennant. It was an exceptionally smart party that arrived in AURICH. The enemy had played his part, as our party drove through the streets the enemy troops were seen moving back. They were all fully armed, including grenades and extra ammunition hung about them. This concentration was unexpected to Jaehncke, the orders to withdraw having been issued by his adjutant.

However he did agree to continue the concentration of troops under his command at AURICH barracks. The Brigadier also directed that Admiral Weier be advised to meet the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Inf Div. This was a source of considerable trouble and delay as the admiral was on NORDERNEY island. This impasse gave us the impression that the German was adopting "stalling" tactics, which could not be tolerated under the circumstances.

14. The Brigadier then returned to his HQ leaving Capt Pootmans and the Provost Section behind. On returning to 8 Cdn Inf Bde HQ he contacted the G.O.C. who said that General Simonds G.O.C. 2 Cdn Corps was then with him, and that they would come to 8 Cdn Inf Bde HQ. The Corps Commander advised Brigadier Roberts, on his arrival, that he was holding a conference at 1700 hours that day to implement the surrender, and that the Brigadier was to advise the German commander that unless Admiral Weier was present on time, he would reopen hostilities and send in the bombers.

15. General Keebler accompanied Brigadier Roberts on his return to AURICH. Kapitan Jaehncke was in a highly agitated condition. He said they had had no word of a meeting and that he could take no action without orders from his superior. It was pointless to discuss anything with a man in his condition. General Keebler started to leave, followed by Jaehncke. General Keebler made the point absolutely clear that it was the responsibility of the Germans to have their commander at the conference or take the consequences. Brigadier Roberts remained after the G.O.C. left. He brought in a half track WT vehicle to keep his HQ posted.

16. A further development now appeared. Admiral Weier was not the Commander in Chief of the area, but only of the naval forces. General Erich Von Straube was the C, in G. OST FRIESLAND, with his HQ near WILHELMSHAVEN. Much confused phoning and running about the countryside followed before this officer was finally contacted. He agreed to leave for AURICH in ten minutes. Von Straube arrived at AURICH about 1630 hours; he appeared indignant that the Corps Commander was not there in person to meet him. There was all too little time to cater to this whim as all possible speed had to be made to get him to HQ 2 Cdn Corps. He was delivered to the Corps Commander about 1730 hours, where the details of the surrender were arranged.

17. Brigadier Roberts had acted as escort to General Von Straube throughout. He accompanied Von Straube back to AURICH after the conference. This officer, also typical of the German militarist, took himself extremely seriously. An apparently small incident happened on the return trip that crumbled the last stone of his self esteem. A delay developed at the bridge in BAGBAND. While waiting, General Von Straube asked Brigadier Roberts the age of the Corps Commander. To learn he had just surrendered to a man of 41 unnerved him, to learn that Brigadier Roberts was also years younger than himself increased the unhappy state, but to learn that Brigadier Roberts was not even a regular army soldier, but a manufacturer in civil life was the final blow to the dignity of the German General Staff.



