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CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

11 Oct 44

CANADIAN OPERATIONS - NORTH-WEST EUROPE
Extracts from Memoranda (Series 8)

1. Further to my 24/AEF/1/2 (Hist), dated 26 Sep 44, attached are additional Extracts from Memoranda dealing with Canadian Operations in North-West Europe.
2. These Extracts include accounts of some aspects of the operations south of CAEN in August last, and a narrative dealing with infantry experience in the attack on BOULOGNE in September.
3. These Extracts are circulated for general information only, and opinions states are not to be considered as necessarily expressions of official doctrine.

(K. Stuart) Lieut-General,
Chief of Staff,
CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER, 1944

EXTRACTS FROM MEMORANDA

(SERIES 8)

1. 4 CDN INF BDE IN THE ATTACK TOWARDS
FALAISE, 7/8 AUG 44: ACCOUNT BY MAJOR
J.W. KNOX, B.M., AS GIVEN TO HIST OFFR,
2 CDN INF DIV, 10 AUG.

1. It was decided that 4 Bde must push through the enemy def lines. These consisted of a line MAY-SUR-ORNE=FONTENAY-LE-MARMION=ROCQUANCOURT and a secondary line CAILLOUET=GAUMES-NIL. For this, one bn was to be mounted in the Priests of 3 Cdn Div from which the A tk weapons had been taken out, and the other two in half-tracks from 2 Div and 2 Corps, some of which were still partially waterproofed. In order to mount the units tactically the inf secs had to be reduced to five men so that two secs or one sec and a pl HQ could mount a veh. In addition Div provided one res veh per coy so that extra men could be carried and these were used to carry two secs. The RHLI and the Essex Scottish were mounted on half-tracks and were given one extra carrier per coy in which to carry res amn. The Royals being in Priests were able to put extra amn in these vehs. Also under comd for this op was that portion of the recce regt which could be loaded on carriers. The force was commanded by Brig Wyman of 2 Cdn Armd Bde. It was divided roughly into two gps. The first gp with the job of piloting and breaking through was under Lt-Col Gordon of 27 Armd Regt. It consisted of three colns each of two tps of tks, 2 tps scorpions, 1 tp AVsRE. In addition there was another fwd gp working with the recce regt but under the comd of Lt-Col Alway and not under Lt-Col Gordon. The second gp consisted of four colns, three of them bn gps and the fourth a recce regt gp. The recce regt for this op was under comd Brig J.E. Ganong. This whole force stood behind this SL in four colns. Each coln was four vehs wide or about 16 yds. The three bn colns were to move along a centre line between ROCQUANCOURT and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION and the recce contingent was to pass between ROCQUANCOURT and the CAEN=FALAISE highway. Objectives: CAILLOUET - Essex; Pt 46, 0655, - RHLI; Pt 122, 0756, - Royals; Recce Regt also to Pt 122. It was felt that the attack would be held up at the rly-highway crossing at ROCQUANCOURT and the Recce Regt had a secondary function of putting on a diversionary attack there on that flank.

2. H hour was 2330 hrs the night of 7/8 Aug 44.

3..... The three colns moved fwd with scorpions and tks leading. Fwd from there visibility became very poor. The value of searchlights was somewhat increased by decreasing the angle of elevation. Bofors were firing (tracer) on all the flanks of the inf colns and one flank of the recce coln. Dots and dashes gave directions by radio but these appeared to break down during the night.

4. Everything went fwd very well especially with the RHLI and with the Royals except that they advanced very much slower than the plan called for. Considering, however, the visibility and the enemy resistance, they reached their objectives in reasonable time. The Essex were held up on the fwd edge of ROCQUANCOURT between 0300 and 0400 hrs and remained there held up longer than was necessary. The Recce Regt advanced and when they were opposite ROCQUANCOURT they were held down by fire. They sent a patrol to the rly X rds 0658 which was later

recalled on further orders. During this time Brig Wyman was wounded and Brig Ganong assumed comd of 2 Cdn Armd Bde Gp. Between 0500 0600 hrs the Essex were still at ROCQUANCOURT, the RHLI and the Royals were on or close to their objectives. The GOC was very anxious that CAILLOUET be secured and he ordered that tks be sent on to that feature with the recce and that the Essex be pushed fwd to it speedily. The Essex got on to the feature by 1200 hrs and by this time the Royals had consolidated on their objective for some time and the RHLI had consolidated just short of their objective. The RHLI did not get to their objective because of very hy fire which included four dug-in tks and one SP tk dug in right on the objective. Despite this they had secured the fortress area desired by the comd of 2 Armd Bde in square 0655. On the evening of 8 Jul RHLI sent a clearing party through the quarry 0654 and found it clear, the dug-in tk and SP gun there having been destroyed by air bombing and the RHLI's own A tk guns.

5. An attack of this nature requires careful co-ordination and considerable study of air phs is necessary if those taking part in this difficult night op are to be able to recognize clearly the posns they occupy during the night movement in armour through strange country.

2. AN INFANTRY BATTALION IN THE ATTACK ON BOULOGNE: ACCOUNT
BY LT.-COL. R. ROWLEY, O.C., S.D. & G. HIGHRS, AS GIVEN
TO HIST OFFR, 3 CDN INF DIV, 21 SEP 44.

1. Enemy Situation. BOULOGNE was prepared for all-round defence. In addition to its heavy coastal fortifications the city was also made ready against land attack. For this it offers excellent topographical advantages. The town is enclosed by a semicircle of high ground whose natural focus is the centrally located MONT LAMBERT. Throughout this semicircle an elaborate system of mutually supporting strongpoints was constructed to make a formidable shield about the port. From the Northern anchor on the sea at FORT DE LA CRECHE 6765, these positions extended through BON SECOURS 6955, ST MARTIN-BOULOGNE 7045, MONT LAMBERT 7152, HERQUELINGUE 7049, and ST ETIENNE 6848 to the sea once again at NOCQUET 6749. All positions were of three basic types, or combinations of types: coastal defence batteries, radar installations, and infantry positions.

2. ST MARTIN-BOULOGNE, which was included in the initial objective for SD&G Highrs, was an infantry position, both mined and wired. Mines were also known to be placed SOUTH of LA COCHERIE Wood 7153. Within the city itself were further fortifications; the port, for example, had been set apart from the rest of the town by a concrete wall and barbed wire.

3. The strength of the garrison had been estimated as from 5500 - 7000, which proved to be too modest a figure. The state of its morale, however, was accurately judged as being somewhat heartless.

4. Disposition of Own Troops. The task of capturing BOULOGNE and destroying its garrison was assigned to 3 Cdn Inf Div on 5 Sep 44. But it had also to assume responsibility for the defended coastal area as far as CALAIS. This secondary task being allotted to 7 Cdn Inf Bde, left only two brigades available for the assault on BOULOGNE.

5. The problem was solved by positioning 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes astride the BOULOGNE - LA CAPELLE road, which was to be the axis of attack, and by leaving the whole left flank, extending in a wide arc to the channel SOUTH of the city, to a single MG battalion -- CH of O. This unit, with attached troops, thus played the part of a "dummy brigade", and by various deceptive measures endeavoured to create an impression of equal strength in that quarter, 8 Cdn Inf

Bde occupied the general area WIERRE EFFROY 7758 - SOUVERAIN MOULIN 7356 - MANINGHEN-HENNE 7258. On the left 9 Cdn Inf Bde was disposed as follows: SD&G Highrs in the area of CONTEVILLE-LEZ-BOULOGNE 7655; Nth NS Highrs around LA CAPELLE 7553; and HLI of C astride the main road BOULOGNE - ST OMER in the Northern part of the FORET DE BOULOGNE. The extreme right flank was guarded by 7 Cdn Recce Regt.

6. Topography. Topographical considerations, as already noted, were of prime importance. The enemy very naturally occupied the more advantageous ground. The approaches to his strongpoints were all covered by mutually supporting infantry and artillery positions. It was necessary therefore to smother the defenders with a weight of bombs and shells until the attacking infantry could cross the intervening ground and come to grips with them. The path of SD&G Highrs, as will be seen, lay in fairly low ground between strongly armed heights.

7. The River LIANE, which protected the Southernmost forts against attack from the EAST, was expected to offer a barrier to later stages of the operation.

8. Plan. The assault was carried out by 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bde Groups, on the right and left, respectively, of the BOULOGNE - LA CAPELLE road. The inter-brigade boundary, all inclusive to 9 Cdn Inf Bde, ran along that road to the bridge over the River LIANE at 675537: 8 Cdn Inf Bde was charged with assaulting to the line of the river, then turning NORTH to WIMEREUX 6858. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to assault to the river, cross it and secure the OUTREAU "peninsula" to the SOUTHWEST.

9. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to commence the attack with two battalions up -- SD&G Highrs on the right and Nth NS Highrs on the left. There were four phases for SD&G Highrs. The first was the capture of LA COCHERIE, seizing the road from the junction at 704538 to the cross-roads at 708532, and mopping up the whole area. At the same time Nth NS Highrs were to capture MONT LAMBERT.

10. When phase I was complete, three armoured assault teams of 31 Tk Bde were to proceed into BOULOGNE to seize the bridges over the LIANE. Each armoured team consisted of one troop 1 Lothians, (Flails), two troops 141 RAC (Crocodiles), and one half troop 6 Assault Regt RE (AVsRE). Each team had also under command one platoon of infantry -- two from SD&G Highrs and one from Nth NS Highrs. Teams A and B were to operate with SD&G Highrs, two of whose companies were to follow on foot to clear the river area and establish a firm base so that engineers could begin work there. The balance of the battalion was to capture the citadel of BOULOGNE. In this it was to be assisted by two AVsRE (one half troop).

11. Phase III was to be the capture of the Northern Part of the OUTREAU peninsula (the area centred on LE PORTEL). The final phase was to be the capture of the NOCQUET feature 6548.

12. For Phase I SD&G Highrs had under command one troop of M10s (three-inch SP anti-tank guns) and in support two troops of tanks from 10 Cdn Armd Regt, one half troop 87 Assault Sqn, RE, one section 18 Cdn Fd Coy, RCE, twenty Kangaroos and seven armoured troop carriers. In later phases allotment of these devices varied with the nature of the task.

13. The Kangaroos are "stripped" Priests, i.e. 105 mm SP equipments (minus the gun), converted into troop carriers.... Their task was to carry the assault troops as far as the bomb-cratered area, discharge their passengers and return to a rally to await orders. In addition six other Kangaroos were to go forward with the special armoured teams to seize the LIANE bridges.

14. SD&G Highrs were also allotted certain flame-throwing devices: Lifebuoys (portable flame-throwers), and a section of Wasps (carrier-mounted flame-throwers), from 7 Cdn Recce Regt.

15. Air support was arranged to begin before the operation with heavy bombing of five selected areas of the defence system. The first and largest target, which included the MONT LAMBERT feature, was to be subjected to an hour's attack, at the conclusion of which the land operation was to commence. During this time forward troops were to be withdrawn 2000 yards from the perimeter of the target area. From H \pm 1 to H \pm 3 hours the other four were to be engaged. In addition, rocket bombers and fighter bombers were to be available on call.

16. The fire plan was most extensive. An impressive weight of artillery, including two AGRAs, had been assembled. Every potential centre of enemy resistance and interference had been allotted a series of "stonks" and concentrations. An unusual feature was the assignment of two heavy AA regiments to fire low airburst concentrations over known flak positions during the course of the bombing effort.

17. For additional fire support SD&G Highrs could call on their own 3-inch mortars and a platoon of 4.2-inch mortars. There were no prearranged mortar targets: their fire could be asked for by giving map references in clear. As it happened, they were not called on.

18. Narrative of the Battle. At 0855 hours, 17 Sep 44, the first wave of Lancaster bombers appeared over the BOULOGNE area and the air programme began. At 0955 hours, just as the last bombs fell on Target 1, SD&G Highrs moved forward from their assembly area near LA CAPELLE and crossed the start line. (see Fig 1.) The Kangaroos bearing the two assault companies drove forward until mines made further progress impossible; the troops then debussed and advanced to their objectives. D Coy on the right proceeded to the road junction at ST MARTIN-BOULOGNE and B Coy on the left seized a stretch of the BOULOGNE - DESVRES road from 703534 to the sentry-box at 710531. Behind them, on foot, C Coy cleared and captured the woods at LA COCHERIE 7153. A Coy, in reserve, positioned itself in the railway cutting centred on 714537.

19. The bombing had done its work well. All positions were captured by H \pm 45 minutes. The hardest fighting was done by D Coy who ran onto the minefield in the draw running SOUTH from LA COCHERIE Wood along the 71 grid line. This necessitated an assault on foot of 1000 metres without armoured support, for the tanks were also held up in the dead ground of the minefield. B Coy had debussed in the mined area and proceeded to its objective without event. Subsequently C, D and particularly B Coys were subjected to very heavy and extremely accurate shelling.

20. The disadvantage of the terrain was now painfully evident. On the right, beyond the road lay heights as yet not seized by 8 Cdn Inf Bde. On the left the slopes of MONT LAMBERT were still not in the hands of Nth NS Highrs. And from the SOUTHWEST, beyond the river, the battalion area was in view of enemy positions. From all these points came heavy artillery fire which made movement almost impossible.

21. Under this fire an engineer officer of 18 Cdn Fd Coy did excellent work directing the clearing of the minefield up to the crossroads at 707533. The sole available bulldozer had gone astray and the work had all to be done by hand.

22. Late in the afternoon the two armoured columns of 31 Tk Bde arrived. It had originally been intended that Column A should proceed along the BOULOGNE - LA CAPELLE road, but the CO had found this impassable owing to road blocks. It was therefore necessary to send both columns along B's route (the Southern road) as far as the ST MARTIN junction. This route had now been cleared for them.

23. Phase II therefore commenced with the two assault teams setting out for the bridges. The two accompanying infantry platoons were supplied by A Coy. Column A, starting first, went very well, but had to stop short of its objective at darkness. Column B got off to a bad start owing to deteriorating light conditions and soon came also to a halt within the city. The effect of the loss of one hour's daylight (the change from "B" to "A" time was made on 17 Sep (44) was very strikingly demonstrated here.

24. The next morning, 18 Sep 44, the battalion started out on its part of Phase II. (Fig 2.) B and C Coys followed the armoured teams. D Coy and the battalion command group proceeded along A Team's route, their task being the capture of the citadel. With them went two AVsRE. The remaining platoon of A Coy which accompanied them was reserved as escort for PW.

25. Arriving at the citadel, which was entirely surrounded, castle-fashion, by a high wall, D Coy got into position before the bastion gate under cover of smoke. Then commenced a strange drama of mediaeval siege mingled with modern warfare. A French civilian approached, offering to point out a secret tunnel leading into the heart of the citadel. Major Stothard, the company commander, taking with him one platoon, at once, entered the tunnel.

26. At the same time the Churchills wheeled up, raking the ramparts with Besa fire, and prepared to place petards against the portcullis. The gate was effectively blown in. At once a host of white flags waved from the walls. To add to the confusion Maj Stothard had by now appeared in the midst of the besieged fort, utterly astonishing its "defenders".

27. The CO was sent for to take over the citadel. About 200 PW, including sixteen officers, were rounded up, most of whom were drunk, and happy to be out of the war. The garrison was commanded by a major, who was as pleased as the rest. Also present was a German Oberstleutnant, formerly head of the military tribunal. A fairly large proportion were marines. More PW were taken during the day.

28. Meanwhile Columns A and B had reached the river bank where they found the bridges blown, B and C Coys established themselves there. Thus ended Phase II.

29. SD&G Highrs then rested until further orders were issued at an O Group at 1500 hours the next day, 19 Sep 44. The battalion had now to capture an objective somewhat enlarged from that originally planned for Phase III. It consisted of four features: the battery position on the 80 ring contour, centred on 660515; the superb of OUTREAU 6651; the reservoir on the hill 6650; and the two sugar factories 6751. To do this they were to pass through the bridge-head held by HLI of C on the WEST bank of the LIANE. Zero hour was 1600 hours and preparations had to be made quickly.

30. The battalion plan envisaged an attack in three phases, to be executed as follows. Phase 1: on the right, A Coy to capture OUTREAU while C Coy on the left, captured the reservoir feature. Phase 2: D Coy to pass through OUTREAU and assault the battery position on the knoll, B Coy being in battalion reserve. Phase 3: B Coy to capture the sugar factories, A Coy acting as battalion reserve. (Fig 3.)

31. At the outset A Coy found its path blocked by mines in the area 674528. As time was limited, D Coy was directed on OUTREAU with orders, should opposition be light, to push on and take the gun position. Very shortly, however, A Coy was able to extricate itself from the minefield and arrived at its objective on time, taking the village after little fighting and capturing numerous PW.

32. C Coy meanwhile was likewise held up at the start. Their route took them past the mouth of the railway tunnel running Northwest from the road and track junction 672519, from which came forth an embarrassing number of PW. Here they were forced to dispose of over 200 men, including perhaps thirty Black Senegalese complete with fez. Proceeding forward once again, they took the reservoir area, again without heavy fighting.

33. Phase 2 was much more difficult. The gun position on the hill WEST of OUTREAU numbered fifteen pieces in all, including six 88 mm guns. But the enemy gunners were engrossed in heavy shelling of HLI of C and failed to notice D Coy forming up in the woods EAST of the hill.

34. The hill itself was included among the potential artillery tasks and was known by the code word "Norway". (See figure 3) The target had been allotted one medium concentration and four field "stonks". Observing that the nearest stonk would fall too near his own position, Maj Stothard, the Company Commander, therefore called for "Norway, less target 118." The result was magnificent surprise. The infantry, following the fire closely, swarmed over the hill with bayonets and grenades before the last rounds had fallen. At no time were they more than 250 yards from the bursts. The nearest position was overrun and its three 88's taken intact; the troops rushed for the other three, but these were blown up. The action resulted in the taking of 185 PW, but during it Maj Stothard's only two remaining officers were wounded. It was now nearly dark and the company consolidated its position and remained on the hill all night.

35. The following morning one of the 88s were manned and fired against the enemy, the laying being done by two gunner officers. In three rounds a direct hit was made on another 88 in LE PORTEL (approximately 655524) which knocked it out.

36. With the capture of the sugar factories, the battalion's fighting in BOULOGNE was almost done. A few strongpoints remained yet to be dealt with, but the city itself and its most formidable defences were cleared of the enemy.

37. Despite the well prepared defences of the BOULOGNE fortress little use was made by SD&G Highrs of the special mechanical devices which had been provided. Following the paralyzing blow delivered by the bombers, the attack took shape along the familiar infantry pattern, valuable use being made of artillery support. An exception must be made in favour of the Kangaroos, which had two roles: (i) to bring the infantry swiftly forward from a safe area beyond the bombing limits, and (ii) to retain momentum and exploit into the city once the first objective was seized. These tasks they performed very well.

38. The special armoured teams, moving with great swiftness, were not called on to employ their flails or Crocodiles. Nor was extensive use made of the AVsRE, beyond the instance referred to above. The move of the armoured teams Lt Col Rowley described as satisfactory but uneventful.

39. No suitable opportunity to use the WASPS was found. One was in fact knocked out by shellfire. They are nonetheless regarded as an excellent weapon and have never been found ineffectual by the C.O. Company Commanders invariably ask for them. Owing to their cumbersome weight and vulnerability they travel in the rear of the column to be brought forward if necessary.

40. A Lifebuoy flame-thrower was used by D Coy against a pillbox near ST MARTIN-BOULOGNE; one squirt promptly brought forth 25 PW. On the whole, however, their performance in this operation was not satisfactory, only about 45% of them being in working order when needed. This, the CO felt, was to be explained first, by their fragility, and secondly, by the fact that it had not been possible to train those who were to fire them. Even granting their delicate nature, in the hands of an experienced operator they are a reliable and effective weapon.

41. Comments. Lt Col. Rowley remarked of the bombing that it had been slightly off its mark near MONT LAMBERT but had so spattered the objectives of the leading companies, instead of hitting LA COCHERIE Wood, that it actually eased their advance.

42. The fire plan as originally conceived had been excellent and in the closing stages continued to be so. Every possible enemy position had been taped and the response of the gunners had never been quicker.

43. As for the enemy, despite his numerical strength and the almost impregnable character of his fortifications, it was obvious that his morale left much to be desired. Given greater determination on his part, the debussing process from the Kangaroos for example, could have been turned into a slaughter. The whole operation, moreover, would have been a much more costly undertaking. Concerning enemy weapons, Lt Col Rowley said that only one mortar had been encountered and that had been quickly eliminated by the carrier platoon.

44. Finally, the CO said that his men had a thorough dislike for Germans. Therefore the operation went well.

3. NOTES ON CLOSE AIR SUPPORT: ANALYSIS OF OPINIONS BY HIST OFFR, 2 CDN INF DIV, 22 SEP 44.

1. Any analysis of close air sp must begin with tremendous praise for the work of the air arm. The gen opinion of comds is probably about the same as that obtained from one bn comd in this Div. For him it was a superb weapon, but one to be handled with care. He had especial admiration for the way air was used to sp the attack on the night 7/8 Aug when the night bombing on distant targets followed day bombing just before dusk on immediate objectives. He had considerable sympathy for errors in navigation at 300 mph over strange country, when members of his own bn made equal or proportionately greater errors moving 3 mph over much more familiar territory.

2. The opinion of the tps generally is that of great respect for the work of the air force combined with exasperation at some of the inaccuracies of their attacks. There is a special praise for the work of the typhoons which was very manifest during the move of the R SEINE when the rds were lined with burnt-out enemy vehs.

3. The effect of air sp against concrete defs has been

demonstrated during the attacks on the coastal defs near DUNKERQUE. There typhoons have been found ineffective against modern concrete posns. Hy bombers are required against these coastal defs. This opinion of the attacking tps concerning typhoon attacks has been corroborated by PW. Examination of an installation in FORET DE EPERLECQUES, which had been bombed 32 times in the past twelve months, indicates that hy bombing itself is not too useful against sufficiently thick concrete. This building was surrounded by enormously deep bomb craters thickly concentrated, but the roof and sides of the building were not penetrated completely in any place and the roof was damaged very slightly in one posn only.

4. The Div in its adv has had ample proof of the effectiveness of our bombers against towns. BRETTEVILLE SUR LAIZE was probably the best example and in it the engrs afterwards declared there was not even the basis for a new roadway.

5. The effect against tps in dug-in posns is a more debatable pt. According to an arty comd typhoons are ten times as effective as arty on the morale of seasoned tps and our own inf say that the enemy comes screaming out of trenches which are attacked by typhoons. Day bombing at FONTENAY-LE-PIN was extremely effective and sprs clearing the rd afterwards found enemy dead well under the surface of the earth. At LA COMMANDERIE enemy were found dead in their slit trenches even though some distance from the bomb craters. On the other hand the S Sask R did not suffer great cas in the CLAIR TIZON area even though they did not withdraw completely into the safety zone. The chief mil damage inflicted on the R Regt C was the loss of eqpt and the loss in time which had to be spent collecting the scattered tps after the bombing and re-equipping them. Actual cas to personnel were not high.

6. Enemy tps rarely occupy a town during the day but rather tend to move to outlying posns around the town. Our air targets are usually chosen so that they are easily identifiable, that is they are usually towns or villages, and in this way enemy tps quite often seem to avoid very hy cas for they receive sufficient warning from the drone as the bombers approach and are thus able to scatter from target areas. On the other hand some reports, concerning for example the attacks on MAY-SUR-ORNE and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION 7/8 Aug and on USSY 14 Aug, indicate that targets were completely missed.

7. All ranks are much impressed with the efficiency of air attacks on armour and on MT along the rear areas.

8. The effectiveness of air sp is conditioned by its accuracy. This becomes a matter of indicating targets and of proper navigation

9. Effectiveness is also conditioned by reliability. 2 Div has been well served by good weather and has rarely been without air sp because of bad flying conditions. The chief matter of concern to ground tps is that the ETA has not normally been kept which had made difficult the tie-in of air sp with arty programs and the inf attack. Equally difficult is the problem of knowing when the attack, either by bombers or typhoons, has ended and it is safe for our tps to press the ground attack against the enemy. This has resulted in the loss of the most vital period of time when the enemy is most stunned by the tremendous pressure of our air bombardment. This delay, combined with the need for our tps to withdraw a considerable distance for safety, has probably limited as much as anything the value of our air arm. So far no solution seems in sight.

10. The material damage to the enemy is enormous but the damage to his morale is equally important. It is counteracted, however, when our own tps become fearful for their own safety. This condition may have existed during the period of fighting near FALAISE, but is now not evident.

11. Any analysis of the opinion of our tps concerning air sp must close as it begins with great praise for all that the air force does to assist the army.

4. A FIGHTING PATROL SOUTH OF CAEN, 2/3 AUG 44: ACCOUNT BY
CPL LISTER, SCOUT PL, R.H.L.I., GIVEN TO HIST OFFR,
2 CDN INF DIV, 5 AUG 44.

We were briefed about 2200 hrs 2 Aug for a fighting patrol which was to set out from "D" Coy and go to a track junc about 1200 yds SOUTH directly NW of ROCQUANCOURT, 051589. The patrol consisted of one offr with eight ORs and carried two Brens, two revolvers, and five riflemen, plus two 36 grenades per man. Two members of the scout pl were part of the patrol. We moved roughly SE from VERRIERES contour 80 until we hit the track leading into ROCQUANCOURT and reached Pt 052588. There we saw 47 enemy marching from ROCQUANCOURT towards FONTENAY-LE-MARMION. The offr said he saw at least 200 lying in the stubble. They were carrying MGs, weapon belts, amn boxes, and large packs. One pl on one occasion put down their MGs and sited them facing us. This was a bright moonlight night and we could see them clearly although they were about 250 yds away. We tried to take the rear man in the gp prisoner but failed. We, therefore, moved EAST, heard some enemy in the hedges and kept out of their way. Again the patrol met an outpost and attempted to draw back without getting involved. A challenge came out in German and when no reply was given a stick grenade was thrown. The patrol answered with 36 grenades and with Brens. They were met on all sides with hy fire and by very many stick grenades. At this pt the offr was wounded and one Bren gunner was killed. The other Bren kept the enemy's head down until the patrol got about 60 or 70 yds NORTH. Then an additional enemy pl came out to search for them. This pl virtually surrounded them and got within a very few feet. The patrol continued to move very carefully fwd to about Pt 57,0559. Then the offr in charge of the patrol, finding himself so completely surrounded, first ordered the get-away man and then the two scouts to return to camp. The get-away man moved about 50 yds off and then returned saying he did not know in what direction to proceed. Then the two scouts went out with him leaving the remainder of the patrol wounded. The three men tried five times to move through the enemy's fwd posns between ROCQUANCOURT and FONTENAY-LE-MARMION without success until they were WEST of the FONTENAY-LE-MARMION--VERRIERES track.

At about 1000 hrs, 3 Aug, they managed to get through some hedges unobserved and moved in towards our line. They recognized the sgt's voice in "A" Coy and prepared to walk in on the Coy posn. Seeing an enemy post on the side of the rd and knowing that a prisoner was required they decided to capture the one man on guard who was observing every few mins from out of his trench but reading a book in the intervals between. The patrol took him prisoner, walked about 10 yds and then began to run as the enemy opened fire. The enemy outpost here was 400 yds away from the corner of "A" Coy and less than 200 yds from our fwd OP. The patrol left about 2400 hrs, and encountered the large force of enemy about 0300 hrs. The three survivors returned to VERRIERES about 1145 hrs.

5. A SCOUT PLATOON IN THE ATTACK ON AND HOLDING OF VERRIERS:
ACCOUNT BY LIEUT. HINTON, R.H.L.I., GIVEN TO HIST OFFR,
2 CDN INF DIV, 5 AUG 44.

Patrols by night are far superior to those by day. In the daytime Jerry is a good soldier, an SS man and well disciplined, with every man hidden away in his slit trench except a single observer. Thus, when from an OP or from a patrol one man is reported and a few men are sent to dispose of them, they are likely to meet a pl in strength. At night it is easier to get correct strengths of the enemy because his discipline is less rigid. This may apply only to SS tps. An example of this sort of thing was the action of Sgt Proctor, scout sgt, who saw one Nazi soldier from his OP, went alone to scare him off, and ran into a whole enemy posn. Making full use of his weapons he inflicted many cas and drove off the whole pl in the best Sgt York tradition. Jerry uses no day patrols himself. His night patrols are very noisy, are fighting patrols only, or, if there are recce patrols, they are so good that they are never seen. On one posn around VERRIERES every night he sent up a few riflemen and a couple of MGs to a commanding feature and fired at random all over the place in our gen direction. This interfered seriously with our patrols as they could not be sure of the exact strength of the enemy or of being able to pass by him unobserved.

Part of the scout pl went in on 25 Jul directly behind the assault wave of the Fus MR. This taping party consisted of the scout offr and six men. It reached about within 50 yds of the Fus MR objective, TROTEVAL FARM, when the counter attack by fire came. It consisted of hy mortaring and lasted about ten mins. It took men from the taping party. The scout offr took two men and left the others in slit trenches. When a break in the mortar fire came, he began taping the SL. About half the SL was completed when an MG opened up on our left about 200 yds away. The SL ran WEST from junc 055614. The MG fire was coming from a Panther tk about 200 yds away and there were two others coming up behind it. This was about 2200 hrs. One man went to get a PIAT which had been seen back in the fd and was injured getting it, but the second man got it and the two manned it at the X rds 150 yds from the tk.

Meanwhile, taping continued through the high wheat. As no one knew exactly where Jerry was, one man moved about ten yds from the taper on each flank. They would go fwd about 20 yds, stop and listen. Then the offr carrying the tape would come fwd carefully unrolling it. No exact compass bearings or directions could be taken under such circumstances and the taping had to be judged as well as possible. The FUP NORTH of TROTEVAL was all taped and guides had been sent back to lead the coys in. The taping party searched all the buildings on the objective to find the Fus MR but they were outside and could not be found. The CO, when he heard of the tks, sent two pls fwd to chase them away which they did. Then the assault began on a three coy front.

The counter attack by fire which the Fus MR and the taping party had to undergo was really terrific. The taping party had only two cas actually out of eight men, but they were very lucky. The lesson to be drawn from this incident is that when an attack is mounted in two phases, the taping of the SL for the second phase is done better after the immediate counter attack on the first objective has been repulsed. In this case there was a lapse of four hours between phases and the taping might have been done a bit later in darkness with fewer cas.

Our SL ran EAST from TROTEVAL FARM to the hedge junc 055614. One coy started off on the right of the farm, the other two on the left of the farm. The enemy tks were located in the fd 054613 and they were quite noisy with the crews yelling and talking. Quite a few tps behind TROTEVAL FARM, who were uncertain as to their future actions, were knocked out by the tks. The attack on VERRIERES was a simple frontal attack.

This country is open and only slightly rolling with grain several feet high at the present time. This provides excellent concealment for the enemy who takes full advantage of this and has provided himself with very many posns throughout the area. Hence it is impossible to pin-point his exact posn because he himself shifts around considerably. Patrol policy itself in such an area must be flexible. One cannot lay down an exact route to follow because the actual patrol must shift continually to avoid working into enemy posns. It is equally obvious that in such ground and against such an enemy patrols must crawl virtually all the way. This is a long process. To ask a patrol to penetrate from VERRIERES into FONTENAY-LE-MARMION, which is 2500 yds as the crow flies and must be very much farther as a patrol must crawl, and to expect them to do this in less than six hours darkness, is unreasonable. Actually to crawl such a distance under enemy fire would take a good 24 hours.

Whenever we sent out a patrol with untrained men, the patrol itself was unsuccessful in its mission or it never came back. This seems to indicate that the trg which the specialists in the scout pl receive is fully justified.

Jerry sometimes uses his tks to cover his withdrawal. This is particularly suitable since the inf, who arrive first on an objective, come only with PIATS and SA. Tks can cover these weapons from a distance while their own inf withdraw safely behind them. Where only one PIAT is available to take on a tk the man manning the PIAT is sure to come under fire from other tks. If possible, therefore, PIATS should not move singly.

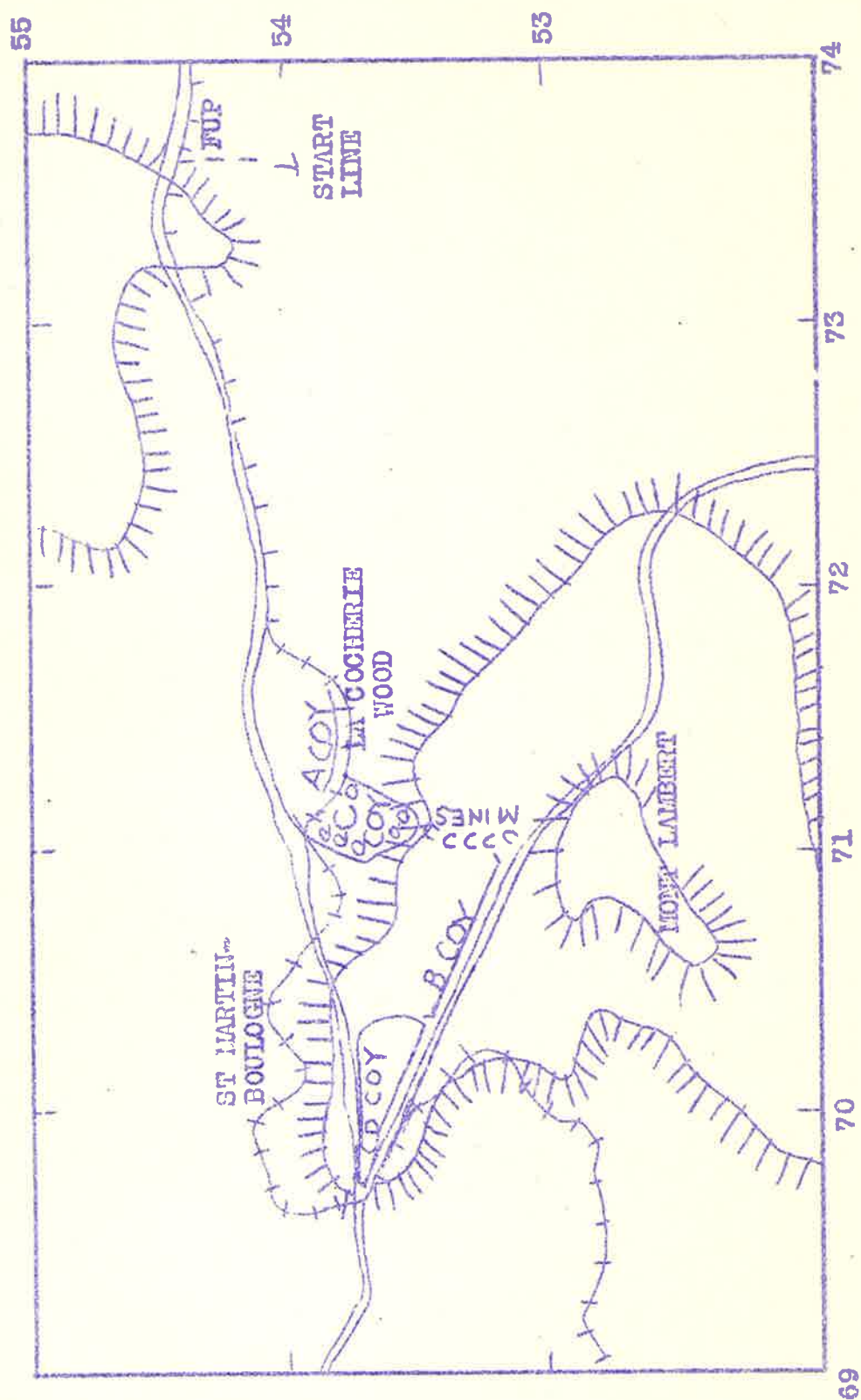
Our arty is employed in a fashion different from that of the German arty. We normally employ our arty in hy concs lasting for short periods. Once the initial rounds have fallen Jerry meets all this in a slit trench. His own arty and mortar fire consists not only of concs but also of casual rounds fired at varying intervals and in varying numbers throughout the day and night. This means that, because men must sometimes leave their slit trenches, he has the element of surprise on his side oftener than we have on ours and so causes more stray cas with his fire.

When a good OP has been located it should be used by a single competent observer whose infm is available for all arms rather than by several observers who collect infm each for his separate arm. For example, one tree, a risky OP at best, was first used by the scout pl, who being skilled in fieldcraft, managed to enter and leave it unobserved. Later on it was manned by arty observers as well whose concern for fieldcraft was less and consequently the OP had to be abandoned very shortly after.

The ground on this sector was so very open that securing and reaching OPs was very difficult. One method, which is dangerous but was successful, is to employ a tk which goes fwd

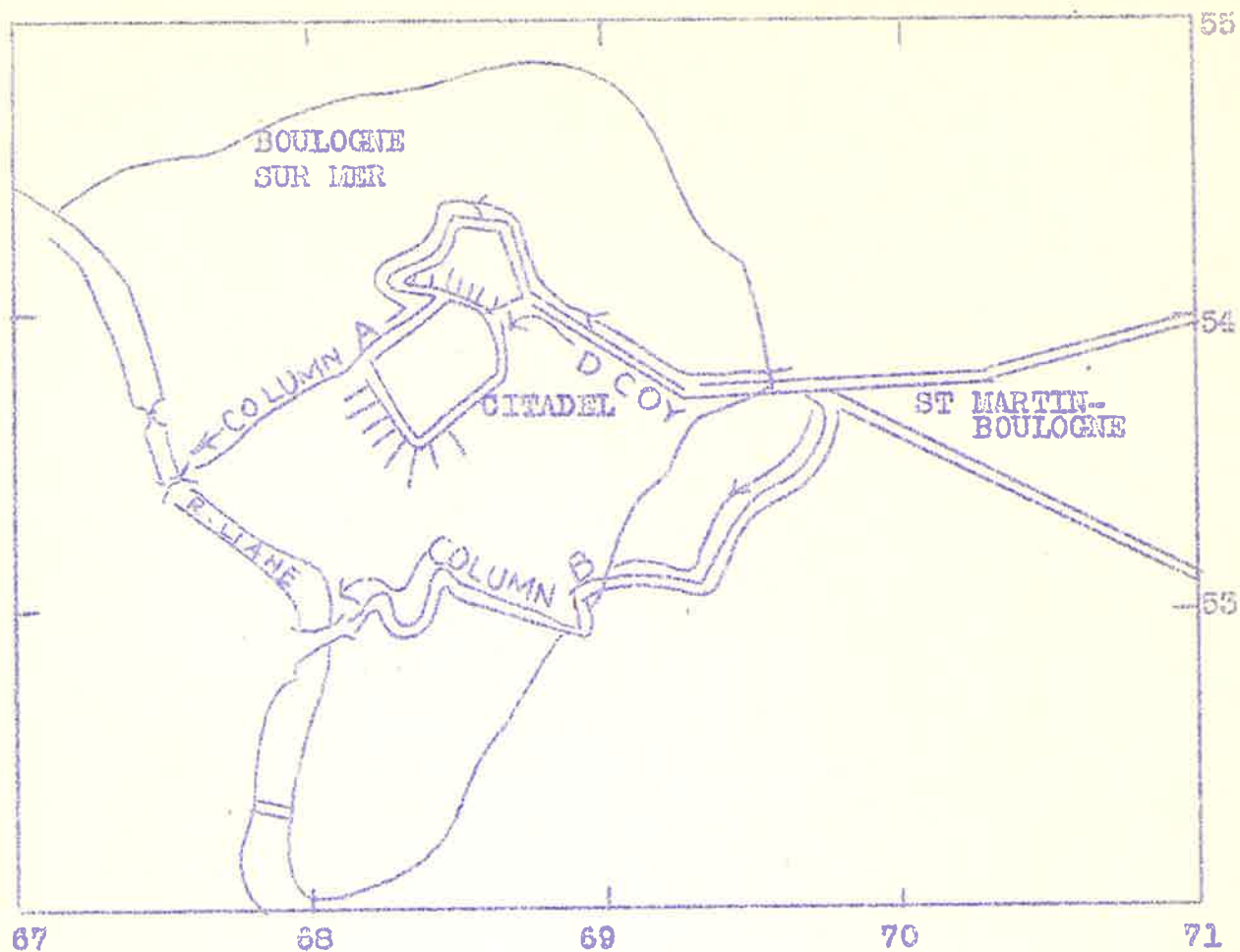
to drive away the enemy snipers. The observer can ride fwd on the back of the tk and crawl the rest of the way through the wheat. Another point of value to the scout, who is anxious to pin-point enemy posns, is to remember the relief he feels when enemy arty fire ceases. Since our arty is heavier Jerry's relief is probably greater than ours when the fire ceases. Hence, if an observer can get up fwd immediately following our arty barrage so that he is near the enemy immediately after it is over, he is likely to find that Jerry is indulging in a lot of chatter from trench to trench discussing near misses and so forth.

The chief thing the scouts have learned around VERRIERES is that the first function of an OP is to enable patrol personnel to know the ground. Unless the ground is known, thoroughly studied, and known by day, men on patrol will be lost by night. This happened on several occasions but is best illustrated in one case where a patrol was surrounded and the get-away man was told to return to our lines. He was not a scout and did not know the ground and soon came back to the patrol as he was unable to decide in what direction our lines were. In flat wheat fds a study of the ground can only be obtained from an OP. Moving by compass or along known features such as rds and tracks is not possible as you are certain to be floundering among enemy tps.



SKETCH MAP TO ILLUSTRATE OPERATIONS OF
S.D. & G. HIGHS AT BOULOGNE (PHASE I).

OPERATIONS OF S.D. & G. HIGHERS AT BOULOGNE
(PHASE II)



(PHASE III)

