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CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

6 Nov 44

CANADIAN OPERATIONS - NORTH-WEST EUROPEExtracts from War Diaries and Memoranda (Series II)

1. Further to my 24/AEF/1/2 (Hist), dated 30 Oct 44, attached are additional Extracts from War Diaries and Memoranda dealing with Canadian Operations in North-West Europe.

2. These Extracts are circulated for general information only, and opinions stated are not to be considered as necessarily expressions of official doctrine.

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

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CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE

JULY - OCTOBER 1944

EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARIES AND MEMORANDA

(SERIES II)

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1. EXPERIENCE OF AN ARMoured CAR REGIMENT (EXTRACTS FROM "REPORT OF OPERATIONAL METHODS - FRANCE & BELGIUM" BY O.C. 18 CDN ARMD C. REGT, 4 OCT 44)

EQPT

This unit is fully equipped with the Staghound armd c as respects its armd c WE. There has been, previous to ops, considerable controversy regarding the ability of this hy armd c (13½ tons) to operate in all types of going. It is gratifying to report that the Staghound, as expected, has turned out to be a magnificent veh capable of going anywhere that a lighter type armd c can go. It has proven mechanically reliable and has operated for periods of weeks with no more maint than refuelling.

It was not previously appreciated what fire power could be developed by the veh but it is now evident that it is well able to take care of itself in engagements with enemy weapons up to and incl lt A tk guns.

The Lynx scout car has not proven mechanically reliable and this unit is attempting to secure replacement by the Humber scout car in lieu of the Lynx. A small number of Humbers are now on issue and have proven satisfactory.

SQN TACTICS

Experience has dictated very little change .... The one item of maj interest which was not previously appreciated, is that considerably more actual fighting has had to be undertaken than was thought would be necessary. Many instances have arisen of armd cars, incl sqn HQ armd cars, completely emptying their large stock of amn in a day.

Considerable night activity incl constant standing patrols have been found necessary although wherever possible the sqns have been concentrated at last lt and have taken up a self-contained def posn, often deep in enemy territory.

On numerous occasions a sqn has been detached from the unit under comd of another fm, usually providing close recce. On these occasions, as, in fact, on all others, the conduct of ops is entirely in the hands of the sqn leader upon whose initiative and trg the greatest confidence must be placed.

The regt comd must study and appreciate the personality, character, and abilities of his sqn leaders like his own children as these factors will, in the long run, determine the success or failure of an op. Tasks must be allotted which are compatible with the personality and ability of the sqn comd selected.

TP TACTICS

(a) Comd - There is, more than ever, justification for the original theory that an armd c regt is a series of "offr patrols".



Time and care spent on selection and trg of tp leaders pays the highest dividends. Here again the personality and ability of the tp offr must be appreciated in the allotment of tasks and care must be taken to avoid the temptation of overworking the capable and willing horse. This will only result in undue exposure of the best offr to the risk of cas with a consequent lowering of the standard of efficiency of the unit. BUT if a task is of importance the best tp leader is the man selected regardless of the physical condition of himself or his tp.

(b) Order of March - The old principle of fire and mov holds true to the highest degree. Flexibility within the tp is essential and the order of march will vary with the tac situation and, of course, with the vehs available. Immediate infm available will decide which veh leads and decision is entirely in the hands of the tp leader on the spot.

(c) Fighting - Originally considered only for self-protection but now found to be almost a daily requisite if the tp is to get on in a recce or pursuit role. Actual inf and gun posns have to be engaged and often, as a precautionary measure, likely enemy posns are sprayed with co-ax as the cars adv. Lt tks, armd cars, SP guns, tp carriers, A tk guns and inf have, on occasions, all been successfully engaged and destroyed. It is of interest to note that the appearance, size, and fire power of the Staghound armd c has been sufficient to invoke a state of panic in the enemy on many occasions. The roar of the engine, fire from both co-ax and hull MG with an occasional round of 37 mm HE both aimed and sprayed, have had a discouraging effect on enemy morale out of all proportion to the actual number of tps involved. The principle in this unit is that where fire is necessary it should be a continuous and concentrated as possible. It has been found wise to engage only one armd c at a time in a tp with the other "laying back" in a posn to sp by fire and smoke and to gd the flanks and rear of the car engaging. Such a precaution has saved the lead car on numerous occasions.

The mounting of a Bren or a .30 Browning on the scout car in front of the crew comd has proven to be of utmost value.

(d) Smoke - Not as much use has been made of the 2" smoke discharger and bomb as was expected but occasions have definitely arisen infrequently in which cars have been extricated from a pinned posn by the use of the smoke weapon and its possibilities and emp should not be overlooked. It is desirable to have a flexible weapon for smoke, capable of traverse, as often pt of origin of smoke is NOT co-axial with fire.

(e) Towns and Villages - It has been found impossible to accurately ascertain whether the enemy is holding a town or village except in the cases where previous warnings were given by civs. Without such warning only one veh should be committed at a time, others supporting, and in NO case should anything be taken for granted and cars should be ready for instant engagement at every window regardless of the presence of civs. It has been found preferable to stay outside of a village until it has been thoroughly checked and adequate posns recd for the vehs as such defiles are invariably targets for enemy arty and mortars.

On no occasion have armd and scout cars closed down their hatches when moving through a village as vision is impossibly restricted and cas must be accepted in compensation for this necessity. Steel helmets must be worn by those crew members whose heads are outside the armour and even with this protection crew comds have been killed or wounded by second storey snipers. A cupola, embodying all-round vision, but capable of being left open, would save cas, particularly in hostile countries.



(f) Tp Co-Operation - Sqn leaders have found that there is considerable virtue in op a "battle gp" consisting of two armd c tps working together with a sec of the sp tp under comd. This has great advantages in increased fire power and sp, coverage of an area, uplift in morale and extrication of veh cas, but inevitably reduces the frontage which a sqn can cover. The regt comd has accepted this and met the situation by employing more sqns up than might normally be considered necessary for the frontage to be covered. Such a gp is now almost normal within the unit in all cases where close contact is expected.

(g) Dismounted Recce - Has been found even more essential than originally anticipated. Usually carried out by the tp leader with co-dvrs dismounted in sp to an advantageous posn. Offrs are trained to not hesitate a moment in dismounting to secure the best posn of observation in which case the old principles of inf patrolling and stalking apply.

(h) OPs and Standing Patrols - Numerous occasions have arisen, particularly in the latter stages of ops, in which OPs and standing patrols must be manned by a tp for extended periods of time. In Belgium particularly, the flat country rendered selection of OPs difficult and usually the obvious church steeple has to be selected. Nine times out of ten this is an old German OP, complete with eqpt and range cards which have been turned to our advantage. In these occasions the minimum number of personnel should be employed in OPs with fd tele laid to the tp leader and all wireless sets in the tp except one to sqn HQ shut down.

(i) Grenades - Very little use has been made of the No 36 Grenade and it has not been found particularly effective when employed from an armd c or scout car. However the No 77 phosphorous smoke grenade has been found particularly effective against enemy pillboxes, dug-outs and slit trenches and is, in such a condition, a very effective weapon. Very seldom has the enemy failed to come out of his slit trench, in which he cannot be engaged by co-ax, after a No 77 Grenade has been lobbed into the trench.

(j) 37 mm - The original amn scale laid down for the Staghound armd c called for a total of fourteen rounds 37 mm HE out of a total carrying capacity of one hundred and one rounds. Experience has shown that this scale is out of all proportion to tac requirements and the unit is presently aiming at a scale of sixty per cent HE and forty per cent AP. The 37 mm has been principally used in fire against pillboxes, soft vehs and dug in inf with considerable effect. When using the M61 APCBC, adequate penetration has been achieved incl three Mk III tks knocked out with flak hits. A considerable amount of fire by 37 mm has been employed for moral effect and has, on such occasions, achieved satisfactory results.

(k) Brs and Demolitions - The class five trackway which the unit carries on the second armd c in each tp has been satisfactorily employed on two occasions, one of which has justified the emp of these trackways inasmuch as it allowed a sqn of the unit to cross a river making use of a partially demolished br with the assistance of trackways, thus forming a covering party for engrs to build a satisfactory crossing for an armd div to follow, without delaying the div. On numerous occasions also the trackways have been used to span craters, mines embedded in rdways, and rly tracks. Present scale is, however, lavish as two sets, carried in sqn HQ should be sufficient.



Each tp carries a demolition kit of which the basis is the No 75 Grenade. These have not been used as much as was expected although cases have arisen which they have been employed to construct booby traps and to improve harbour entrances. It is, therefore, a question whether the value of the demolition kit outweighs the hazard of explosion in the event of the car being penetrated and it is possible that the No 77 Grenade will be removed from the vehs and carried henceforth in the sqn amn lorry.

(1) Mines - These have not been found in the quantity expected although cas both to vehs and personnel have been incurred. It has oftentimes been necessary for tac reasons to boldly accept the risk of mines in order to take up advantageous OPs or fire posns. The trg of the tps in neutralization of mines is reasonably satisfactory and has proven of value.

(m) Resistance Mov and Civ Infm - Whilst op in France and Belgium too great importance cannot be laid upon the value of infm given and assistance rendered by personnel of the resistance mov and by ordinary civs. Sqn HQ and tp leaders accepted div aid and advice on every occasion although it must be clearly and distinctly pointed out that infm from civs is ALWAYS reported as such and never sent in as a unit report until it has been confirmed by the individual recce of the tp leader. Civs have, daily, warned of enemy posns, given rd advice, assisted in lifting mines and even ridden on the backs of armd cars while reports were being confirmed. On several occasions the civs have att themselves to sqns for extended periods of time and have proven of the greatest value. Ops in Germany, with possible hostile civs, may make for slower recce.

The unit practice of allotting at least one French speaking soldier to each tp has been of great benefit .....

## 2. THE AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION AGAINST THE REAR OF THE "BRESKENS POCKET", 9 OCT 44.

(a) ACCOUNT OF THE LANDING OF 9 CDN INF BDE, GIVEN  
TO HIST OFFR 3 CDN INF DIV BY MAJOR R.T.  
WILTSHIRE, O.C. 80 SQN, 5 ASLT REGT, R.E., 16 OCT.

1. An interesting example of the recurrence of a beach assault in the course of a long-established land operation is afforded by the landing of 9 Cdn Inf Bde across SAVOJAARD PLAAT on the south bank of the WEST SCHELDE. This operation was launched in conjunction with the bridgehead earlier formed by 7 Cdn Inf Bde over the LEOPOLD CANAL. Both assaults had as their ultimate objective the clearing of the enemy from the area bounded by the LEOPOLD CANAL and the sea, which at the time of writing is still in progress.

2. 9 Cdn Inf Bde had played the role of reserve brigade in the division's assault on the NORMANDY beaches on 6 Jun 44. The present attack was therefore its first essay at this technique under actual battle conditions.

3. Several factors conditioned the choice of the area to be assaulted. Of these, the notable absence of the defense fortifications which disfigure the shores of most of northwest Europe was most important. This seemingly curious omission on the part of the enemy has two explanations. First, no seaborne invasion would conceivably aim at this area since its well-guarded approaches from the NORTH SEA, principally FLUSHING, would have to be dealt with in any case. The main coastal



defences were placed, roughly, as follows: WALCHEREN ISLAND, to the north, was well fortified, but on the southern bank of the SCHELDE the heavier defensive constructions extended not far east of BRESKENS. Beyond that the strength of beach could show only few prepared positions. Secondly, the enemy apparently considered that the mud flats which line the shore would effectively defeat any effort to make a landing there. In this assumption he was mistaken. The precise nature of the beach was determined from aerial photographs and from details supplied by a Dutch engineer. It was therefore judged that the mud flats were not impassable, especially since grass covered much of their surface.

4. The actual assault was first scheduled to take place at an early hour on the morning of 8 Oct 44. 7 Cdn Inf Bde had already carried out its assault on 6 Oct, and its bridgehead over the LEOPOLD CANAL still remained small. The element of surprise was important and the loading was therefore to be done at some distance from the actual scene of the operation. For landing craft 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to make use of Buffaloes (Landing Vehicles Tracked) and Terrapins operated by personnel of 5 Assault Regt RE. A brief description of these vehicles is appended to this memorandum. The regiment had previously employed AVSRE with 3 Cdn Inf Div at such places as BERNIERES-SUR-MER, CARPIQUET, and CAEN. The amphibious vehicles were new to them, however.

5. The assault was to be made with two battalions up - Nth NS Highrs on the right and HLI of C on the left. The regiment possessed about 100 Buffaloes and into these had to be loaded the two battalions, complete with FOOs and fighting vehicles. Two squadrons carried a battalion.

6. The base for the LVsT was at COSTACKER 2185. Loading of the assaulting battalions was done in VELDSTRAAT CREEK 2085. First went the infantry, then the priority vehicles - Wasps, carriers, jeeps and 6 pounder anti-tank guns. At 1730 hours, 7 Oct, the Assault Group set out, swimming up the TERNEUZEN CANAL. The first difficulty was encountered at SAS VAN GENT 2599 where the craft had to be passed through the locks, which was found very arduous. They then went on through the darkness, with only dim tail-lights showing, past SLUISKIL 2805. Near the ferry 272111 it was found necessary to construct ramps and climb out of the canal around the damaged locks. This process consumed considerable time and holed several of the craft and it was eventually decided to postpone the operation.

7. The danger now arose that the enemy might see the concentration of craft and other evidence of activity and all surprise in consequence be lost. During the night 7/8 Oct, however, all craft were concealed in harbour and all marking lights and beacons removed. They were not discovered during the 24-hour delay.

8. At 0030 hours, 9 Oct 44, the convoy left the mouth of the canal (the Voorhaven) at NEUZEN and sailed westwards through the NEUZEN Channel, skirting the mud flats of SAVOJAARD FLAAT.

9. It was quite dark, for the moon was not yet up. The convoy was headed by a RE motorboat in which rode an officer with a compass and a Naval Lt Comdr. The convoy now took the shape of two flotillas of two columns each, each flotilla consisting of forty-eight craft. The two columns, moreover, were staggered, the right hand one (Nth NS Highrs) being slightly in advance of the left so that both might touch down simultaneously, the beach being oblique to their course.

10. Two beaches had been selected. The left beach (Amber)



was the harbour 208130. This was the goal of HLI of C, who were carried by 26 and 79 Sqn. The right beach (Green) straddled the groyne at 192144. On this beach were directed Nth NS Highrs, borne in the craft of 77 and 80 Sqn.

11. H hour, which was defined as the time when the leading craft touched down, was set at 0200 hours. At H-15, as the assault group neared its objective artillery marked the two landing beaches with coloured flare shells. These places had been previously registered by day. Then followed more markers fired at random points in enemy territory to put him off the scent. At H-5, as the craft now were standing off, the beaches were once again pin-pointed by flare shells.

12. At 0205 hours, i.e., about five minutes late, the leading craft touched down, and the infantry leapt out. All the assaulting infantry were ashore in half an hour or less, because it was not necessary for their craft even to reach dry land. But the Buffaloes carrying guns or vehicles had to get clear of the water and some trouble was experienced by them. On Green Beach it was found that the going was reasonably good on the left of the groyne, but that many LVST were bellied and bogged on the right. All were got away by 0500 hours. Fortunately, during all this off-loading period, no sign of enemy opposition appeared. On Amber Beach slight machine gun and 20 mm fire greeted the invaders, but with very little effect. The element of surprise had not been lost. Only at dawn did shelling of the beaches begin, when the guns at FLUSHING went into action.

13. On leaving the water the Buffaloes had to cross first a mud flat (see (a) on diagram) and then a slope in which were placed wooden pickets set in stones (b); this was followed by a level grassy stretch (c) before the dyke (d) which descended sharply to a drainage ditch (e) some six or seven feet across. The Buffaloes easily mounted the dyke and descended to the ditch; this was then filled with fascines and the guns and vehicles crossed it to proceed inland. But the Buffaloes were unable to make the steep gradient back over the dyke and had to proceed to the left along its landward side until an exit was found. Later recce showed that it was possible for them to ignore the dyke and debus their load on the level grass in front of it (c). The vehicles and guns could then proceed inland through an exit.

14. By this method the most efficient procedure was evolved. When the first wave was completely discharged the LVST returned to the NEUZEN area where SD&G Highrs, supporting arms, and Tactical Brigade HQ were loaded about 0900 hours. This second lift (the Follow-Up Group) made a convoy of about 45 craft, which proceeded as a whole to Green Beach, where all went ashore in about 10 minutes, for the beach was now thoroughly familiar and landing had become a drill.

15. Then followed the transporting of the Build-Up Group, for which a different route was taken. Returning from the beachhead, the LVST turned south down the eastern channel of SAVOJAARD PLAAT and made a landfall about half-way down the NIEUVWE NEUZEN POLDER. They then made a wide circle overland to load near PARADIJS 2311, ran north along the flood bank and dived in again near the landfall to swim to the beachhead. The enemy was now much more active and commenced to shell the exit ramp, causing a few casualties.

16. Subsequently 5 Assault Regt merely continued to make fourneys as often as craft were needed to carry the Residue Group. The demand for LVST was easily kept up with, although there was little sleep or food for the sappers during the next few days. During the remainder of 9 and throughout 10 Oct, craft



were merely despatched in groups of the required number. Later the system of working by troops (6LVsT) or squadrons was resumed. Each squadron had a runner with the Embarkation Staff Officer at PARADIJS and demands were sent out in order of squadrons.

17. Unexpected requirements now arose. 7 Cdn Recce Regt was borne across the water during the night 10/11 Oct. This was accomplished in two lifts. Then followed the infantry battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde - N Shore R, R de Chaud, and QOR of C - in that order. The return trip was not always made empty-handed. The first seven PW were ferried back on the morning of 9 Oct. Later loads included more PW and hosts of refugees, who brought with them as much as they could carry, as well as cats and dogs.

18. The squadron of Terrapins began its work on the third day, 11 Oct. For five days they carried rations and ammunition to the beachhead.

19. Buffaloes and Terrapins. LVST (Buffaloes) are of two types. Both are armoured and tracked; their armament consists of one Browning machine gun. In water traction is provided by scoops projecting from the tracks which also serve to grip firmly in mud or sand. Mark II carries only infantry and stores, there being no access to its open central compartment save over the side. The engine is at the rear. Mark IV is similar, but carries the engine forward and has a door at the back to serve as a ramp for guns and vehicles. Terrapins are not armoured and are load-carriers only. They are in effect 8-wheeled amphibious lorries, of curiously clumsy appearance owing to one pair of wheels being set higher than the rest.

20. The normal regimental establishment calls for 20 LVST and 8 Terrapins in each squadron. For purpose of this operation however the vehicles were re-allotted so as to form four squadrons of 25 Buffaloes each and one squadron of 40 Terrapins.

(b) ACCOUNT BY LT.-CDR. R.D. FRANKS, R.N. (NAVAL LIAISON OFFICER, H.Q. FIRST CDN ARMY) GIVEN TO HIST OFFR, H.Q. FIRST CDN ARMY.

1. The operation was originally planned for the night of the 7/8th and I arrived in the TERNEUZEN area soon after dark, to watch and help as required. The LVTs had swum down the canal from GHENT during the evening and I passed some of them completing the journey, with their twin rearlights showing and their engines making a noise like aircraft. The enemy, in fact, from the opposite shore, fired his flak spasmodically.

2. At TERNEUZEN itself I found an unhappy situation. The LVT had to climb out of the canal to get past the lock, and then enter the sea the other side. The ramps built for this purpose were proving unsatisfactory and each LVT was being hauled out by the combined efforts of a bulldozer and its own engine. In spite of skilful handling and driving this took time and by midnight - the planned time of departure - only about half the LVTs were ready. It was not until 0300 hours that the majority were lined up ready and there were about 15 non-starters due to minor defects. In these circumstances it was decided to postpone the operation until next night and the LVTs, the other vehicles and the infantry were dispersed about the farms and orchards in the neighbourhood of TERNEUZEN. A cordon was put around the area to restrict civilian movement. As was proved, these measures proved effective and there was no loss of surprise.



3. Circumstances had left the force without any navigational experience, so I volunteered and was accepted. I spent the day in obtaining a suitable compass (from the R.A.F.), in making a careful "recce" of what I could see of the river from peeping over the dykes, and in studying the chart, assessing the tide and all the usual preparations.

4. The plan was for the 96 LVTs to proceed in two flotillas of 48, each carrying a battalion, and led by a navigational leader consisting of R.A.S.C. "bridging" motor boat. The leading flotilla was for Green Beach at 192143 and the other flotilla for Amber Beach at 214129. I was to lead Green flotilla and Amber would follow. H hour was to be 0200 hrs and we allowed  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours for the trip, which was almost exactly 5 sea miles.

5. By 0030 hrs we were lying off the sea ramp in our little motor boat showing two dim red lights astern. Well on time the first LVT waddled down the ramp and splashed into the water. We led slowly out of the canal entrance as more and more took to the water and formed up astern. It was a nearly ideal night, calm and quiet with a half moon behind light cloud, but a bit of haze which restricted visibility to a mile at the most. We were quite invisible from the north shore of the Scheldt, where all was quiet.

6. We soon reached the main part of the river and turned west along the coast, keeping about half a mile off until we reached NIEUW NEUZENPOLDER. We went slowly, and as far as could be seen, all our LVTs were formed up and following. I then set course due west across the entrance of the SAVOJAARDS PLAAT. Just as we cleared the land, our artillery barrage started up, "plastering" the far beaches and other targets. The noise effectively blanketed our sounds and was generally most heartening.

7. Our "landfall" on the far side was satisfactory and we set course up the channel between the coast and the large sand bank, at a distance of about half a mile from the shore. There was supposed to be a prepared position on the northeast corner of the island and momentarily I expected enemy fire, but we continued unmolested, with the artillery barrage still thundering away and occasionally putting down star shell, which I personally found of little use.

8. Our touch down was planned to be on either side of a groyne which proved to be a good landmark and we were able to identify it and then lie off flickering our lamps to guide the LVTs in. They deployed and thundered in past us, looking, and sounding most impressive. Landing was successful and I could see, through my binoculars, the infantry disembark on dry land and form up and move off. The artillery barrage had by now, of course, ceased and there was silence except for the rear of the engines and an occasional rifle shot.

9. Amber flotilla similarly made a mainly successful landing, and the two battalions were ashore in their right places practically without opposition.

10. It was now planned that the LVT should return independently to PARADISE BAY (240115), there to pick up the third battalion and brigade headquarters, and to land them in the bridgehead. To assist the returning LVT, the motor boats placed hurricane lamps on convenient buoys. This seemed to draw a little fire and we spent no longer than necessary lighting and fixing these.

11. We then gave the usual assistance in towing, firstly the other motor boat and then a broken down LVT. Just before dawn I considered my duties over and landed from my motor boat, and this narrative ends, except for what I saw from the shore in daylight that forenoon.



12. The third battalion, the headquarters and stores went over in one large convoy at about 0900 hrs. The voyage was skilfully screened by smoke from the far shore by DUKWS and stormboats operating with smoke floats in the river. I admired their efforts, which were drawing the enemy battery fire. However, it ensured a safe crossing for the LVT as the enemy were only able to shell "blind", and dropped most of their shells at 216127 and also in TERNEUZEN.

13. And so I returned to my duties, much impressed with the LVTs which had carried out a difficult operation with complete success. I was proud to be the only naval member of yet another successful "combined operation".

REPORT ON THE EVACUATION OF SURVIVORS OF 1 BRIT AIRBORNE DIV  
ACROSS THE NEDER RIJN RIVER AT ARNHEM 25 SEP 44 (APPENDIX TO  
WAR DIARY. 23 FD COY, R.C.E., SEPTEMBER, 1944).

This report is intended to cover the activities of 23 Cdn Fd Coy in connection with the evacuation of 1 Br Airborne Tps from their bridgehead at Arnhem and to bring out some of the lessons learned in that operation.

Major M.L. Tucker, O.C. 23 Cdn Fd Coy, was called on to attend an "O" Group of CRE, 43 Div at 1000 hrs 25 Sep 44. At this meeting it was stated that it had been decided to bring off as many as possible of the survivors of 1 British Airborne Division from their bridgehead. No information as to the number of men to be brought off could be given and only a general idea of the area from which we were to operate could be suggested. It was definitely established that we should use stormboats for the operation and that we should count only on our resources for the off-loading and carrying of the stormboats to the launching sites. The only action that could be taken on this information was to recce the probable area in which the operation might take place and to select an advanced marshalling area to which personnel and equipment might be moved to make them more readily available for the operation. Further instructions were to be issued at an "O" Gp to be held at 130 Bde at 1700 hrs.

Major M.L. Tucker, who was accompanied by Lt. R.J. Kennedy, went forward to recce for an advanced marshalling area in the vicinity of VALBURG. The whole of this part of Holland is low-lying and the roads, which are built up well above the level of the surrounding terrain, are separated from the fields by wide, deep ditches. The roads are narrow with soft shoulders and totally unsuitable for heavy military traffic. Entrances to fields are also narrow and difficult to negotiate, even in the daytime when clear visibility may be had. The railway yard, however, had a considerable area of hard standing and this was chosen as the advanced Coy area. A tree-lined street with a reasonably wide verge was chosen to accommodate the bridging vehicles.

On return to Coy H.Q. at Nijmegen, arrangements were completed for the movement of personnel and bridging vehicles to the advanced positions. Lts. Kennedy and Tate were sent ahead to obtain all possible information on dispositions of own and enemy troops from 130 bde who occupied the area in which our operation was to take place and to recce the most likely sites for the operation. Lt. Kennedy had already made preliminary recces of most of this area when he had been attached for 2 days to 104 Fd Coy and when it was expected that this Coy would support 43 Div in an assault crossing of the river. The information gained in these earlier recces was of great assistance to him in this present task. The two officers were ordered to report back to advanced Coy H.Q. at VALBURG at 1730 hrs.



Information on the scheme was so limited that no plan for the operation could be formed at this time. It was decided, however, to move all available working personnel and the bridging vehicles forward in plenty of time to get them into the advanced harbours before darkness threatened. The Coy vehicles to be taken were cut to a minimum and consisted of 3 jeeps, 2 scout cars fitted with wireless, 2 kitchen lorries and the 12 section 3-tonners. The remainder of the Coy personnel and vehicles were left behind in command of Capt. McIntyre. It was a bitter blow to him to have to remain, but so little was known of the proposed operation that it was felt to be essential that some thoroughly responsible officer be left to take charge.

The convoy, which included in addition to the vehicles listed above, 1 3-tonner carrying 12 fitters and equipment repairers attached from 10 Cdn Fd Pk Coy, the 2 formation padres and 17 bridging vehicles, moved off from Nijmegen at 1400 hrs. The column was very carefully controlled, since the route was a perilous one. The roads were narrow and winding and the corridor held by our troops was a narrow one. Many vehicles including a convoy of assault boats intended for an operation which was to have taken place the previous night had missed a turning and had driven straight into the enemy lines to be captured or destroyed. We reached VALBURG intact at 1545 hrs and all vehicles were dispersed and parked by 1630 hrs.

Major Tucker proceeded to 130 Bde HQ and Lts. Kennedy and Tate reported to him there at 1715 hrs. Lt. Kennedy reported that they had found only two sites in the area which he considered suitable for the proposed operation. He gave details of work required to make the sites satisfactory for use and outlined his plans for conducting operations should these sites be chosen. CRE 43 Div was unavoidably detained and it was 1745 hrs by the time his "O" Gp convened. The sites for the nights operation had been selected and turned out to be the two that Lt. Kennedy had figured would be best. 260 Fd Coy was ordered to operate assault boats and we were ordered to use stormboats from a site to the NE of Driel, MR 694764 Sheet 6 NW/W. For this operation we were allotted 14 stormboats and 17 Evinrudes, the balance of the bridging equipment which we had brought up was to be turned over to 20 Cdn Fd Coy for operation on the other site. A route forward was designated and orders given that no bridging vehicles were to proceed beyond Stavaste Bridge prior to 1930 hrs. It was believed that the centre of the bridgehead held by the Airborne troops was directly across the river from the site to which were being directed. We were called on to have our first stormboat report to the north side of the river at 2140 hrs. There was still no indication of the number of troops which we might be required to bring off, but orders were that we should continue until the beach was cleared. A heavy barrage was to be laid down by our artillery, commencing at 2100 hrs, to drown any noise that might result from the off-loading and carrying up of the stormboats. A feint was to be made a few miles West of us in an endeavour to distract the enemy. The "O" Gp was dismissed at 1815 hrs.

It was fortunate that Lts. Kennedy and Tate had been so thorough in their recce and in sizing up a proposed plan of operation. Even with this it seemed unlikely that we could get up to our site in time. On return to Valburg, Lt Tate was ordered to proceed with a section from 2 Pl to construct a bridge from the road into the orchard we were to use as an off-loading point. This party got away at 1845 hrs. The bridging equipment was broken down into lots as designated by the CRE, and was lined up on the road with the equipment to be used by this Company in front. Our operation was to commence two hrs ahead of the 20th's. Coy vehicles to be taken forward were cut to 3 jeeps, 1 scout car and 3 section personnel lorries. All personnel not carried in these vehicles were loaded into the bridging vehicles. The Protestant Padre and 6 of the maintenance crew supplied by the Fd Pk Coy were transferred to 20 Cdn Fd Coy. The RC Padre and the remainder of the maintenance crew came with us. No motorcycles were to be taken since the roads were so dangerous. Lt Aspler was left in charge of the party at Valburg.



The column moved off from Valburg at 1915 hrs. Point men were dropped at each cross-roads along the way so that no vehicle might go astray. The head of the column reached and passed Stavaste Bridge at 1940 hrs. The enemy sent up flares and shelled the road as we moved up, but only one minor casualty was sustained. The head of the column reached the off-loading site at 2010 hrs. All vehicles had come to this point without loss or accident excepting that the 3 personnel lorries which were tailing the column followed the bridging vehicles going to the 20th in error. No vehicles could be sent for them until all of our own bridging vehicles had cleared the road, since it was scarcely wide enough to take one vehicle. One of the bridging lorries slipped partly off the road and caused further delay in our being able to pick up our missing personnel.

This mishap was unfortunate, as all available personnel had to be called up to get on with the job and there was never an opportunity to segregate one platoon from another. The effectiveness of many NCO's became nullified and a far greater burden was thrown on those responsible for directing operations than would have been the case had the NCO's been in control of their own men. It is doubtful, though, if this detracted from the success of the operation, since everyone was quick to respond to orders given by the man in charge of the job.

Lt. Kennedy was put in charge of the off-loading of vehicles and the carrying of stormboats to launching sites, about 500 yards ahead. Lts. Martin and Cronyn were delegated to clear and tape routes for moving the stormboats from off-loading points to launching sites. Subsequently Lt. Martin was detailed to proceed to the far bank to determine the situation there and Lt. Cronyn was placed in charge of the beach on our side of the river. This beach had two bays, one on the western end, about 20 yds wide, and one on the eastern side about 60 yds wide. The two were separated by a groyne built of rock and projecting about 30 yds out into the river. The small bay was used for the launching of boats and the wider one and the groyne as operating bases for the craft. Lt. Tate was slated to assist Lt. Kennedy and to supervise the setting up of advance petrol dumps and RAP.

Two floodwalls blocked the path from the off-loading area to the launching sites. The first of these was about 20 ft high with banks sloping to about 45 degrees, the second one was about one-half the height and the slope of the banks was much less severe. These obstacles became most difficult to negotiate. The heavy rain softened the ground and the churning of men's feet as they struggled over with the stormboats soon created a slippery mess which lent no footing whatsoever. Hand ropes were fixed, but even with these the going was extremely difficult.

The first boat was launched at 2130 hrs, but it had been badly holed when the men carrying it slipped coming down, the side of the floodwall and the stream of water which poured into it would have sunk it before it could have completed a crossing. The next boat was launched at 2145 hrs and set off with Lt. Martin in command. This boat did not return and neither Lt. Martin nor any member of the crew has been seen or heard from since. Two witnesses report having seen it break apart and sink as the result of a direct mortar hit. They cannot be positive of this however, as visibility was very bad. Cpl. McLachlan captained the 3rd boat to be launched and soon returned bearing the first load of Airborne troops to be evacuated by us. He continued and completed 15 trips before he was relieved by a fresh crew. The fourth boat, in charge of Cpl. Smith, S.F. was launched twenty minutes later, at 2235 hrs. This boat made its way safely to the bridgehead, but swamped when a mortar bomb fell close by on the return voyage. Cpl. Smith, although not a swimmer, floated back on his open greatcoat to the far side. Four of his passengers also got back, but all other occupants of the boat appear to have been lost. Succeeding boats were launched at intervals of about 20 mins and all 14 boats were in the water by 0330 hrs. None of these boats were sunk in the channel, but several of them eventually holed by



enemy fire or submerged obstacles and had to be abandoned on reaching shore. An enemy mortar was observed firing from directly opposite the launching site during the time that the first four boats were being launched but was not seen afterwards, so that it is presumed that our troops in the bridgehead must have cleared it up.

The night was intensely dark, but fires started by our bombers in the afternoon and the numerous flares sent up by the enemy must have revealed a great deal of our movement to him. These fires helped us greatly too, since they provided beacons by which our boat crews could direct their craft. Intermittent bursts of Bren were fired across to mark the limits of our beach boundaries, but in view of the fact that the fires provided stationary and constant light the crew did not resort to observation of the incendiary bursts from the Bren. Heavy rain was accompanied by a bitter wind which made things most unpleasant, but the bad weather was probably less to the liking of the enemy than it was to us and most surely resulted in our having had less casualties than we should have done had the night been clear and fine. The rain caused the Evinrude motors to give endless trouble and was responsible for their failing altogether in many cases. Something must be done to protect the electric circuits of these motors if they are to continue to be used for such purposes. E. & M. Personnel and our own fitters worked ceaselessly to keep the motors in running order, but they never could keep up to the breakdowns.

There was a great deal of enemy fire during the night. Machine guns set on fixed lines swept the river and beaches on both sides. Fortunately most of the fire was high, at least it was on the operating site on the South side of the river. When daylight came the machine guns up on the hill above the bridgehead rained a murderous hail of bullets on those craft which were still operating, but the downward angle of the fire was much less effective than it would have been had the guns been in position to make more horizontal sweeps. Mortar and 88 mm fire fell everywhere. Many casualties were reported from the bridgehead, but on the river and on the South bank they were light. Three men were wounded in the off-loading area and one between there and the beach. Enemy snipers were also active and it was reported that some of the Airborne troops spotted the positions of two of them in crossing the river and proceeded to liquidate them when they reached the South shore.

It was found impossible to keep complete records of the crossings made and the passengers carried. Paper turned to pulp in the driving rain. There was no point, either, from which a picture of what was going on along the whole beach could be seen and in many cases passengers were landed well outside the limits of the beach when stalled motors had allowed craft to stray off line. It was impossible to regulate the number of passengers carried in boats at times. The maximum lifted at one time was 36. All of these men were packed into his boat by Lt. Kennedy on his last trip, the last trip made by anyone in this operation. The minimum lifted was 6. A corporal operating a boat which was leaking badly decided he could make one more trip and bring off a few men before his craft went down. It sank as it approached the South shore, but fortunately the water was shallow at this point and they were all able to wade ashore safely. It is estimated that approximately 150 boatloads were brought back by the stormboats' crews and that the average load carried was about 16 passengers. Thus, approximately 2400 to 2500 troops were brought off.

No forward facilities were provided for the care of wounded, beyond what was available in the FAP's set up by 260 Fd Coy and this Coy. Many of the rescued men were wounded and our own RAP dressed 69 stretcher cases as well as attending to over 100 walking wounded. Greatcoats and other clothing were used to improvise stretchers and were given to men who were in desperate need to cover from the elements. Caring for all of these casualties proved a great drain on the manpower of the Coy and prevented adequate reliefs for the boat-carrying parties and boat crews. RAMC facilities were available in rear of our off-loading area, but these were only designated to cope with casualties which it was expected might arise within the personnel of the two Fd Coys employed in the operation.

The work of all personnel employed in this operation was of a very high standard, but there were those who rose beyond that level. Lt. Kennedy, in addition to making the recce, planning the operation and supervising the off-loading and delivering of stormboats to the launching site, took command of a boat when these tasks were completed and brought off 125 men from the bridgehead under the very trying conditions which prevailed with the advent of daylight. Cpl. Robinson did a tremendous nights work. With his section he constructed a bridge by which access was made possible to the orchard which was used as our off-loading area. With the arrival of the bridging lorries, he took charge of a party and was responsible for the safe and prompt delivery of many stormboats to the launching sites. On delivering the last boat, he took command of it and completed 6 trips before the boat was put out of commission. All of the boat crew were magnificent, and only gave up their ferrying when their boats were no longer operable or else when they were exhausted and had to be ordered from the beach. Of these L/Cpls. Albright and Gunness and Sprs. LeBouthillier and McCready were outstanding. H/Capt. Mongeon, the R.C. Padre, came under fire for the first time in his career and acquitted himself nobly. In addition to the normal duties of attending wounded and bringing courage and cheer to the exhausted men, he helped with the carrying of stormboats, carried petrol to the beach and seemed to be always present where he was most needed. The E & M personnel attached from the Fd Pk Coy rendered excellent service in keeping the Evinrude motors running.

The casualties suffered by the Company in this engagement were as follows:- (One officer and 10 O.R. missing, presumed killed in action).

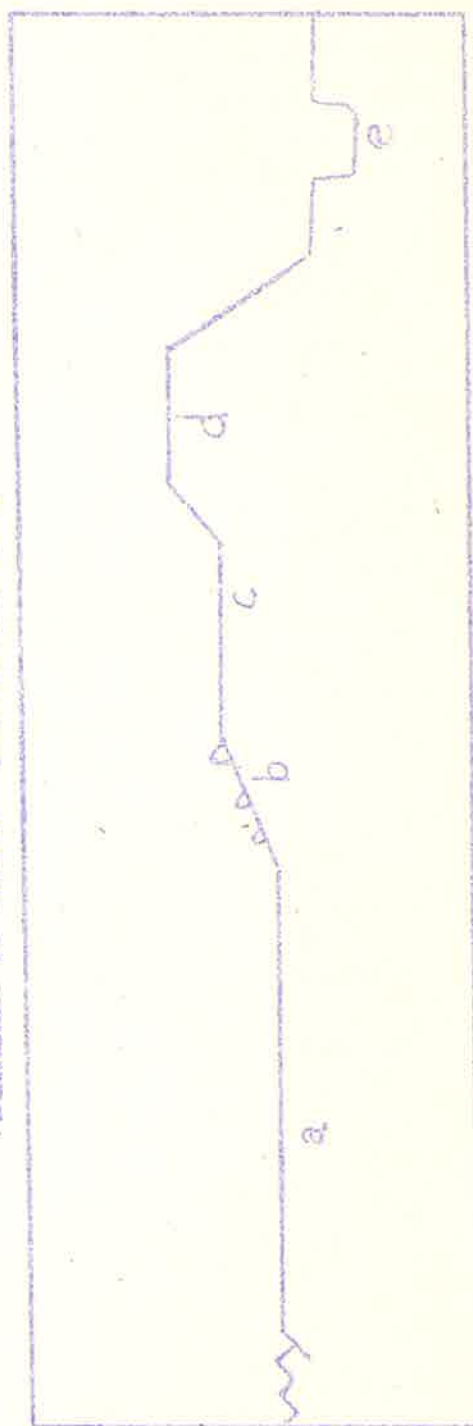
CRE 43 Div ordered cessation of operations at 0545 hrs, when it became evident that any further attempts to bring off men would be suicidal for the boat crew.

The Coy with attached troops repaired to the off-loading area and embussed for the advance harbour area at VALBURG. Lt. Aspler and his party had breakfast ready and took care of the feeding of many of the returned Airborne troops in addition to our own personnel.

Lt. Cronyn was left behind in the off-loading area to pick up and bring in any stragglers who might come in after the main body had moved off. He remained there until 1030 hrs., but none of the above reported missing came in and there was little chance of anyone showing up until darkness fell again.



DIAGRAM OF BEACH (CROSS SECTION)



NOT TO SCALE

(See Serial 2)

20 GRID LINE

10 GRID LINE

SOUTH BEVELAND

OPERATION AGAINST

THE REAR OF THE

"BRUSKENS" POCKET

(See Serial 2)

TO FLUSHING

HOOFDPLAAT

GREEN  
BEACH

BRUSKENS  
POCKET

SANDBANK

SAND BANK

SAND  
BANK

ROUTE OF FIRST ASSAULT

ISLAND

ALDER BEACH

A V O J A A R D

SUSPECTED  
ENEMY  
POSTS

L A A T

NIEUWE  
NEUZEN  
POLDER

PARADISE  
BAY

TERNEUZEN  
(NEUZEN)

Dispersal  
Points

CHIENT

CANAL

