Second World War: Memoirs

by

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IN LATE 1938 the Peeblesshire Advertiser where I worked as an apprentice compositor carried an announcement inviting young men in Peebles to see The Gap, a propaganda film seeking to show what would happen to British cities in the event of a German air attack. Organised by Colonel William Thorburn, DSO, the last of the First World War Battalion Commanders of the 8th Battalion The Royal Scots, he told us he was trying to get the War Office to re-form the 8th Royal Scots as a Territorial battalion and to support him many present signed an undertaking to join. To honour that commitment, I became a Territorial Army soldier in May 1939, aged 18 (born 22 March 1921).

1939. Dress uniform. Note sling with the gas mask worn at the back. Also, it was compulsory to carry steel helmets. We wore heavy boots not shoes.

Attending training camp that year was a dreadful experience. July 1939 was a very wet month and produced a quagmire of mud throughout the large tented area which accommodated 1,500 men of the 7th/9th and 8th Royal Scots camping in several fields in Strathpeffer (a small spa town with sulphurous springs in Ross and Cromarty in the North of Scotland). Pathways had to be covered each day with fresh straw, the material you had to collect and use to fill a palliasse (an under-mattress) and this with three blankets was a soldier's bed. The ablutions were in an open area and had a large wooden bench with several cold water taps and a collection of tin basins. The primitive toilets were on the edge of the camp behind canvas screens, and consisted of a wide slit trench with a single wooden pole over it and you had to keep your balance or you would end up in the mess below! The rain was incessant and the mud so intolerable that it was decided to move the whole of the camp to higher ground. There were fatigue (working) parties galore as we took down the bell tents and marquees and re-erected them in their new location.

Despite the sea of mud, you had to keep your web equipment clean by wetting it all over with a dusty green khaki blanco. After hanging it up to dry, there followed a longish period sitting on your mattress in the crushed atmosphere of a small bell tent polishing brass buckles and end-pieces whilst carefully keeping metal polish from staining your newly-cleaned webbing. It was not the simplistic webbing introduced early in the Second World War with two Bren-magazine pouches but the style used in 1914-18 with several small pockets to store point-303 ammunition, each with a fastener to be polished. It was not the easiest of jobs, but needed to be done for the next day's inspection.

We also had to polish the brass buttons on our old-style uniform which was replaced at the start of the War with the more simplistic 'battle-dress'. During the fourteen days you were for ever changing dress: parade dress to fatigues (overalls) or to shorts and vest for physical training.

I was heartily sickened by the whole experience, and storing my equipment at home, I hoped it would be a long time before I had to wear it again. Nevertheless, when the call came I did not hesitate to report to the Drill Hall in Peebles on the 1 September 1939 (three days before War was declared) just as my three brothers did as they joined their Royal Artillery gunner troop in the adjacent Gun Shed. I remember I had just returned from a cycle run with a friend and we were in the swimming baths when we were told we had to report to the Drill Hall where the doctor would be examining us from 6 o'clock onwards.

I was passed fit for service. Two phrases now defined my position: I was 'embodied', a constituent part of the Army (not just the 8RS) and liable to be sent to any battalion or unit; and (b) would serve 'for the duration' no matter how long the War would last. For the first three weeks of the War the Peebles company of the 8RS reported daily to the Drill Hall as other companies did in Edinburgh, Haddington, Musselburgh and Innerleithen - a total of about 500 men. We were given point-303 rifles and equipped as regular soldiers. The older lads exploited the gullibility of the youngers ones like myself to examine his rifle [the 'soldier's best friend'] to see if there were any blood stains remaining from the First World War. Certainly, the equipment had not changed much from that used by my father in 1914-18. The three weeks at the Drill Hall were spent drilling, weapon training and route marches to get us fit. We quickly mastered stripping and reassembling the Bren machine-gun and regularly practised the 'art' as it was grandly called of crawling across ground, hugging it and keeping our weapons clear of the dirt.

The Royal Scots

When we did leave Peebles there were crowds of local people to see us off and tears were shed at our departure. But to everyone's astonishment, including our own, we were back in Peebles that same week-end on leave; we had only moved to Earlston in the Borders.

I was billeted in a house above a corner street store-cum-sweet shop and two attic rooms on the second floor were allocated to sleep eight of us. It was a memorable experience as we shared the deprivations of washing and shaving at an outside cold water tap during the wintry weather; the banter and talk as the moonlight streamed through the attic window and once, when we could not get to sleep, we put on our greatcoats over our night clothes and went for a walk in the snow along a hill road in the moonlight talking about what we imagined the War might have in store for us.

Now that the battalion had been mobilised and was a regular unit, it reorganised and the Peebles lads found they were now HQ Company and along with thirty others I was selected for the Signal Platoon. This proved fortunate for me as it started a life-long interest in all forms of communication and in this strange environment away from home it gave me an absorbing occupation that filled most of my time with new horizons: to send and read morse code, lay telephone lines and use field telephones, operate long-range signalling lamps, use signal flags and semaphore, as well as operating and repairing wireless sets whilst working as a group of out stations to a central control station [referred to as a wireless net]. On one occasion we used heliograph during a night exercise

and with the light of a bright moon were able to transmit and receive signals, being told that during the years between the Wars the heliograph was used by the British Army to transmit football results throughout their Far East stations!

We had to pass an examination which was set according to regulations and conducted by Royal Signals officers and NCOs to ensure we could read morse telegraphy at ten words a minute and lamp signals at eight words. After passing these tests at Melrose on the 29th April 1940 I was qualified as a signaller and wore crossed signal flags on the lower left arm. On the 31 January 1942 when I passed a signal instructor's course at the Infantry School of Signals at Wetherby, Yorkshire, was required to wear them above my corporal's stripes.

15th Scottish Division

As the more experienced and trained Infantry Divisions moved to France to join the British Expeditionary Force, the 15th (Scottish) Division moved south. The Division consisted of three Brigades and the 8RS was in 44th Infantry Brigade along with the 4th and 5th KOSB (this was eventually changed to avoid casualties during an operation being suffered by battalions from the same local recruitment area).

Our first location outside of Scotland was at Marlborough in Wiltshire. Whilst there we helped to put out a major fire in Savernake Forest.

The 'phoney war' [not phoney for the RAF or Royal Navy or for the Merchant Seamen who bravely helped to keep us armed and fed!] came to an end for the Army in the early weeks of May 1940 when the German blitzkrieg speedily overran Holland, Belgium and France, stopping only at the Channel where they prepared to invade us by sea and air assault. Despite stubborn resistance to the advancing enemy forces, the British had to gallantly fight their way back to a beachhead formed around the port of Dunkirk from where a large part of the British Army (including my three brothers) were evacuated by the Royal Navy and a fleet of small boats. Whilst this was going on, I was in a slit trench with another signaller manning a No. 18 wireless set to keep the rifle company in touch with Battalion HQ. We were located near the village of Bradwell-on-Sea and overlooked mined beaches two hundred yards to our front. We were holding an important and vulnerable defensive position around the River Blackwater on the Essex Coast, lying south of Clacton-on-Sea and north of Southend-on-Sea . It was thought to be a line of attack if the Germans landed on the east coast, either to attack London or by-pass it and cut it off from the rest of the country.

Squatting in the slit trench where we spent most of our time, we occasionally switched the wireless receiver to pick up music but on the evening of 18 June 1940 we tuned in to hear the stirring words of Winston Churchill: "The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war". My partner and I just stared into the darkness and now more anxious than ever, watched the beach ahead. We accepted what Churchill had said, like we accepted the War, and silently hoped we could play our part when the time came. Sadly, only a year of life lay ahead for my signalling partner. He was killed during a bombing raid on 13 June 1941 when we were in Lowestoft and he was on duty as a signal corporal attached to a rifle company near to the foreshore. He was a close friend, the first of many that would be remembered for the rest of my days with sadness and with joy to have known them.

It was one more event which we seemed powerless to change and army life went on as before. When I was a corporal, had responsibility for platoon training and administration. I also trained local units of the Home Guard to use wireless sets. They were inspiring lads to work with -- young men and not so young -- but all were very keen and eager to learn and clearly ready to fight to defend their locality.

The battalion meantime was in and out of 'front line beach positions' whilst in between times we trained and were generally at notice to be ready to move as a mobile reserve to repel whatever form of German attacked was launched, either by sea or air. Churchill at this time was advocating the strategy of keeping mobile reserves in readiness to deal with any attack no matter from where it came. The most likely invasion area was believed to be in the region of the south coast rather than the east side of the country which was thought to be a formidable undertaking for an attacker.

Late in 1941, the Battalion Signals Officer (S.O.) told me about a letter sent to all company commanders asking them to submit the name of anyone considered suitable to go to an Officers Selection Board. He said he would like to put my name forward, kindly saying he believed I would be a good officer. Such a thought had never occurred to me. It seemed miles above what I could ever aspire to, however after he had mentioned the possibility my mind raced forward excitedly at the idea and later replied that I would be agreeable. However, before being called to the Officers Selection Board I was selected to go with a small cadre being seconded to the Royal Air Force for the training of what proved to be the first echelons of the RAF Regiment. This followed a decision by Winston Churchill in June 1941, after the fall of Crete, that Air Force ground personnel at aerodromes should have to undergo "sharp, effective and severe military training in the use of their weapons and in all manoeuvres necessary for the defence of the aerodromes." I went as a corporal with an officer and two sergeants to train the ground staff at Waterbeach Airfield near Cambridge, a part of Bomber Command.

The idea of this assignment was to give me a chance to gain more experience as an instructor in basic weapon training and field tactics before appearing in front of the Officers Selection Board. It was just what I needed as most of my experience lay in signalling, and shows how well the Army plans things; clearly the 8th Royal Scots wanted me to succeed and my success would reflect on them. However, the assignment also proved to be dangerous. One day whilst assisting the training of senior RAF warrant officers to throw Mills 36 grenades, one Warrant Officer whilst aiming at the target let his grenade leave his hand sideways which struck me on the side of the head.

As I went into unconsciousness I heard shouts of "Oh!" When I became conscious again in the airfield's underground hospital, an RAF officer wearing a DFC ribbon, was looking down into my face said aloud: "Oh, this 'brown job' is going to live!" 'Brown job' was the derogative description used by the RAF to refer to the khaki-clad Army. I was left with a scar and my first grey hairs began to show! It was the first association I had with Cambridge, but later returned in 1944 to attend an Aerial Photographic Interpretation Course to enable Intelligence Officers to interpret aerial photographs. Much later and in peace time, became a director of the local evening newspaper and my son was at Cambridge University .

I attended the No. 2 War Office Selection Board and after the usual tests of leadership was sent to a preliminary training unit on 15 September 1942 for six weeks hard preparatory training and then posted to 163 Officer Cadet Training Unit located in a former holiday camp in Morecambe. As

officer cadets we discarded former badges of rank and wore a broad white ribbon on our epaulettes (shoulder straps) and around our hats. The training concentrated on the duties and responsibilities of an infantry officer and involved field tactics and command. We would take it in turn during the various field exercises to command either the company or one of the three platoons or even be one of the nine section commanders or just be a rifleman or the machine-gunner and do as you were told. Whilst commanding, you had a training officer at your side and he would question you about your thinking and about anticipatory orders you might have to give for deployment, say, whilst advancing to contact the enemy. It was good coaching and I particularly remember the major who would be with you when you commanded the company; he had a Military Cross awarded during the first tank battle at Cambrai in November 1917.

There was a regular weeding out of 'unsuitables' during the course but I survived and preparatory to receiving a commission had to list three regiments I would prefer to join, choosing The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) and King's Own Scottish Borderers. I considered myself most fortunate to be commissioned into The Royal Scot (The Royal Regiment), although my first posting was to 9th KOSB. It was unusual to have been in the ranks and be commissioned into the same regiment, except on the field of battle or as a senior warrant officer to be captain-quartermaster. I like to think it was because my father had served with The Royal Scots in 1914-18.

In the last week at Morecambe we received our Second-Lieutenant's pips and wore these covered by our shoulder ribbons until our names appeared in the Royal Gazette. I was listed as commissioned on the 9 April 1943 after a ceremonial passing out parade. The night before a boyhood friend from Peebles, John Lowrie, a Pilot-Officer in the RAF, came to spend an all too short twenty-fours hours celebrating! I never saw him again as he was killed in action on 23 January 1945; this was most grievous news, as we had been close friends from our 'toddler days'. He was only 22.

Reflecting back on those early years when we first came together as civilian-soldiers, I remember we had great difficulty in not calling our local sergeants Jake, Geordie and Jock; we had grown up with them and their families. I also remember how upset I was when leaving the 8RS and taking leave of so many good friends; in our time of shared uncertainty we had developed a kinship which endured in the post-War years. It was the same at OCTU; a close, brotherly friendship has endured for over 60 years. We had hoped to serve together, opting to be commissioned into the same regiment; however, I became a Royal Scot whilst my friend became a KOSB but the vagaries of the army initially posted me to the KOSB and he to serve with the Black Watch! Nevertheless, by the end of the War, we ended up as 'highlanders' and wore the kilt; I a Lowland Scot and he a Yorkshireman!

Second-Lieutenant

I reported to the adjutant of the 9th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers at Worstead Park Camp, near North Walsham, some miles west of Norwich in Norfolk. It was a holding battalion for training and posting reinforcements to the lowland regiments of the RS, KOSB and the RS Fusiliers. I was posted to 'A' Company and given command of one its training platoons. The most memorable aspect of my seven months with 9th KOSB was having responsibility for a platoon of young men who previously served with the disbanded Royal Scots Young Soldiers Battalion. These lads were a lively lot but we got on well together after the usual period of sizing each other up. In

due course they were posted to the Far East and soon after the notice of their posting, the Officers' Mess Sergeant came one evening to say three men were hoping to have a word with me. They were from my training platoon, and told me they had just come from a meeting of the platoon and it was their wish that I should be approached to see if I could go overseas with them as their officer. I was deeply touched. Regretfully, I had to tell them no matter our joint wishes, it would be most unlikely we would be able to keep together as a platoon but be sent as individuals or as groups to reinforce other units. Later my feelings of pride were thrust aside by overwhelming humility that the lads want me to be with them as they embarked to meet the unknown.

I said I hoped that some of us would eventually serve together but we never did; occasional airmail lettercards arrived for a while keeping me posted on their progress but sadly they had been separated and ended up with various units in the Far East.

Then my time came to be sent on embarkation leave, but half way through my stay in Peebles a telegram advised it had been cancelled and to report back in due course. My return to the 9th KOSB was to take up an appointment as their Signals Officer, but this lasted only a few months as the battalion was disbanded and I was subsequently posted to the 7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots. They were one of three battalions in 155 Infantry Brigade which was part of the 52nd Lowland Division, known as the 52nd Mountain Division. We had a number of Norwegian officers and non-commissioned officers in the battalion and they were supervising our instruction in high altitude warfare which included snow training, skiing and fighting in mountainous terrain. I was issued with wind-proof clothing, string vests, mitts and gloves, special boots and soft ski caps; speedily told that frost-bite was a military offence and that rapid fire had to be controlled at high altitudes as gasses could distort barrels! The division had an Indian mule company which supplied us with mules and handlers to carry our operational equipment, signalling gear, 3-inch mortars, and also the Division's mountain artillery guns.

52nd Lowland Division

I readily settled into the ways of the battalion and was appointed 'understudy S.O.', then after a couple of months commanded 18 Platoon in 'D' Company whilst waiting for a vacancy on the Infantry Signals Officers Course at Catterick. When I returned to the battalion after successfully completing the course I was appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer (I.O). It was explained that in the event of battle casualties the S.O. would replace the Adjutant and I would become S.O. My Intelligence Section of a sergeant, corporal and six men were required to know about the arms, equipment, formations and unit identities of the German Army and be fully informed about the deployment of our own troops. Later I also became the battalion's sniper officer and when the battalion occupied defensive positions it fell to me to deploy snipers in 'hides' across our front. This worked well because it provided additional observation points to watch as well as harass the enemy using telescopic sighted rifles. I had a sergeant and corporal to help position the snipers who had been recruited from amongst the best shots in the rifle companies.

Experience told us how devastating enemy sniper fire could be, but our snipers did not like their task and were frequently rested to allow them to recover from what they thought was a cowardly and demoralising aspect of warfare.

It was my responsibility to make sure we had all the necessary maps and available aerial photographs; sometimes to arrange sand models to prepare and brief the officers and others about the terrain and location of enemy positions. My operational role was tactical staff officer to the Commanding Officer (C.O.). I attended Brigade HQ when he was receiving orders from the Brigade Commander and be separately briefed by the Brigade I.O. about the enemy. During the attack I would be at the C.O.'s side.

It was a matter of deep disappointment to everyone in the Division that we were not earmarked for the assault on Europe but nevertheless we were the first British Division to establish its headquarters on German soil on 18 January 1945. The Division had previously been to France, landing at Cherbourg, but was almost immediately ordered back at the time of Dunkirk 'for the final defence of the Realm'. Later we were known to the Germans as the infantry division being intensively trained for arctic and mountain warfare, and concluded that we would be the spearhead of a left-hook landing in Norway. It was revealed from captured documents that one of Hitler's 'intuitions' was that Norway was going to be a 'sphere of destiny'.

As D-day approached we intensified our activities to feed the German radio-intercept and detection monitors with data that could lead them to interpret the Division was on the move and concentrating near ports preparatory to embarkation. We were not told at the time but it transpired much later that this was a part of Operation Fortitude, which was intended to mislead the Germans about the Allied invasion intentions and create confusion about where the main and/or subsidiary assaults would be made. Unwittingly we contributed to this strategic deception through our normal activities as it was known that the enemy in Norway were intercepting our wireless signals as we carried out training in the Cairngorms. We exploited this by taking part in a major exercise directed by Division HQ which involved manoeuvring officers in vehicles towards Scottish ports. I was one of the officers involved from the battalion along with a company commander. 'Operation Fortitude North' was directed to strengthen the German assumption that we were to land in Norway; 'Operation Fortitude South' was to encourage the idea that a major Allied force was already assembled ready to land in the Pas de Calais.

By creating these possibilities major German forces (150,000 troops in Norway plus other units in reserve throughout Europe) were not immediately deployed to counter-attack the invasion forces in Normandy. It was estimated that even after six weeks, many of these units remained uncommitted and held back from Normandy.

Part of Airborne Army

Once the D-day landings on the 6 June 1944 were under way we were immediately given a new role and became air-transportable infantry which involved two brigades of the Division, the third brigade and heavy transport were dispatched to France to be ready to join us after we had made our airborne assault. We were now part of General Brereton's Airborne Army; he was a American general. His force included 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions and 1st and 6th British Airborne Divisions, with 52nd (Lowland) Division in Dakota aircraft and the Polish Parachute Brigade. It was regarded as a powerful strike force ready to land behind the enemy lines whenever the Allied Army was held up, for instance in getting across the River Seine. It was necessary to become acquainted with 'Dakota pay-loads' and how to organise the battalion and its equipment on and off these planes.

We were ordered to prepare and brief officers and men on an air operation to land on the other side of the River Seine; a landing site was selected close to the Forest of Rambouillet, the estate surrounding the country residence of the French President. However, the Allied ground forces moved so fast they did not need this assistance and we then became involved in the planning for Arnhem (Operation Market Garden). The early phases of the operation ran into unexpected difficulties, and unable to a secure an air-strip to land our two brigades. We were not committed to the battle but quickly dispatched to Belgium where we met up with our third brigade and heavy transport, the 52nd (Lowland) Division coming under command of the Canadian Army.

On disembarking at the newly liberated port of Ostende, I went with the C.O. for a short stay with the 1st Glasgow Highlanders who were in action south of Breskins, and for the first time came into close contact with a German fighting unit. Our visit was to gain a quick appreciation of the quality of Germans troops that we were to face as we prepared to embark in landing-craft and assault the beaches of Walcheren Island in the Scheldt Estuary.

It was now vitally necessary to clear the passage of the Scheldt to allow the recently liberated port of Antwerp to be used to bring in ammunition and other stores to support our advance across the Rhine into Ruhr. However, it would remain closed until the heavy coastal defences on the island, like those at Westkapelle - described as "some of the strongest defences in the world" - had been destroyed or captured. (Hist Sec file C.O. H.Q./Y/3: C.O.H.O. Bulletin Y/47, April 45: Combined Operations against Walcheren)

The West and South sides of the island were protected by underwater obstacles, wire and infantry positions on the dykes and dunes, with gun batteries in support behind. Flushing had a perimeter defence system, including two anti-tank ditches. The strong points on the SW Coast, as far North as Westkapelle, were fairly heavily fortified, though less heavily than those at Flushing. (21 Army Gp Report).

Intelligence indicated further that no fewer than eighteen batteries covered the approaches from the sea. The strength of the garrison was estimated between 6 ,000 and 10,000 men, mostly from 70 Inf Div.

Lt-General Simmons, commander 1st Canadian Army, appreciated that the greater proportion of the land surface of Walcheren lay below sea level and if the dykes could be cut, salt water would flow in and flood the interior, thus isolating and demoralizing the enemy and enabling our troops to take full advantage of their amphibians. That was why it was decided to bomb the dykes and flood the island.

So under the command of the 1st Canadian Army, 52nd (Lowland) Division went into battle to liberate Walcheren.

Hotel Britannia, Flushing

No. 4 Commando, 4th and 5th KOSB went across ahead of the 7th/9th RS. I went over some hours ahead of the battalion as an advance party to reconnoitre where the companies would go when they landed and to guide them into their positions. I sank up to my waist as I jumped out of the assault craft and was covered in mud but thankfully clear of enemy fire which was busy elsewhere. My task along with a major was to reconnoitre positions for the companies and then select a site for

Battalion HQ and to do this in time to meet the rest of the battalion as they 'beached' from their landing craft in the pitch darkness.

The C.O. with myself in attendance were soon called to Brigade HQ where he received orders to undertake a night attack and capture the heavily fortified German Command Post in the area of the Hotel Britannia on the sea front. The assault would be made through sea water flooding much of the island from the breach made in the sea-wall by the RAF. At high tide it could be up to our waist and at times could be chest-high! Normally the C.O. would reconnoitre the approach to the objective and determine the best forming-up place to launch the attack, but this could not be done because of the flood conditions and had to make use of aerial photographs and information provided by the Dutch Resistance.

Wearing lifejackets and holding our weapons and wireless sets out of the water we advanced in single-file in the eerie moonlight through the deep flood water towards in the Hotel Britannia. The German Command Post had a network of 14-foot concrete positions surrounded by a steep bank and a 4-barrelled 20mm gun supported by machine guns located in an impregnable position on the hotel roof able to bring devasting fire on all the approaches on to the objective. As we made our way through the muddy sea water we came under heavy artillery fire and this proved to be shellfire from our medium guns firing from the area of Breskins and shots were falling short of the objective and landing on us. Our wireless sets were all shut down because of the flood water, and despite the efforts of the Royal Signallers attached to Battalion HQ they could not be made to work and were unable to get through to Brigade HQ to stop the medium guns. We sustained casualties but fortunately our wounded were kept afloat by their lifebelts and tended by our stretcher-bearers.

During the shell fire, the C.O. told me to go forward and tell the two company commanders leading the approach march to keep pushing forward so we would not get too far behind our original time-plan which was to have artillery fire supporting us during the first wave of our attack. I remember making my way forward amidst the shell-fire as the shells were exploding in the water near me, throwing up green fluorescent spray. I saw casualties being helped into nearby houses.

We were able to put the artillery fire support plan back by thirty minutes and again I surged through the flood-water to the head of the column to let the Company Commanders know about this change. The battalion continued its advance and as we approached the area where we planned to launch our attack on the objective, the C.O. ordered me to set up Battalion Tactical HQ in some houses nearby. Along with the S.O., I broke down the door of a house and as I led the way into the flooded ground floor I sank into a deep pit normally covered by a metal grid but this had been removed. I thought for a moment I had been booby trapped, but jokingly clambered my way back on to my feet and we all climbed indoors. Subsequently it proved that the house next door had German snipers and they were to become most troublesome.

The two leading company commanders formed their troops as square to their objective as possible despite the swirling, fast-flowing tide of flood water sweeping around them. At Battalion HQ we heard the stirring battle-charge of 'Up the Royals!' as 'D' Company's 16 Platoon made the first assault and they courageously and quickly captured two pill boxes and 35 prisoners. When we heard the sound of the ancient battle-charge echoing in the darkness of the night -- sounding like it must have done in many courageous assaults in the long history of the First Regiment of Foot -- the C.O. said aloud to all within his hearing: "It's going to be all right now!" So it was, but only after a

gruelling and bravely fought battle, with sections and platoons of our three rifle companies and the two sections of the dismounted Carrier Platoon persistently and relentlessly forcing their way forward by sheer determination and bravery, bringing about the surrender of Oberst (Colonel) Reinhart and 600 prisoners; 50 Germans lay dead on the battlefield.

During the battle we were without wireless contact to Brigade HQ, and the Brigade Commander was unaware of the very heavy resistance we were encountering. When that resistance was at its most difficult, the C.O. said to me: "Joe make your way back to the Brigadier and give him an outline of our position as you know it. Tell him we require our other rifle company (it had been left out of battle safeguarding civilian refugees as it was thought to be unnecessary as we would only meet sixty Germans on the objective)."

The C.O. also instructed me to outline to the Brigade Commander two tactical alternatives that he might wish to consider. Clearly we were in danger of running short of ammunition, so I was ordered to bring back supplies.

I immediately set off back along the route of our approach march, being initially accompanied by my batman to give protection whilst I relentlessly made my way forward and came under rifle fire from windows of houses by-passed by the battalion on their way to the objective. Later when I analysed my reactions, I was totally dedicated to the vital urgency of my mission and kept moving despite the enemy's fire which had become like the flood water troublesome and needed to be overcome by all the available energy I could muster. I did not attempt to return the fire. At one point I remember crawling through a graveyard that was only partially flooded and taking shelter between piles of destroyed gravestones as I came under fire from two possibly three snipers/riflemen deployed to cover what I assumed was an important approach junction leading to the main German defensive position. As I crawled through the graveyard I notice with a shudder the scattering of bones unearthed by mortar or artillery fire. When two-thirds of the way back, I was met by one of our water-borne Buffaloes. Two officers, one from brigade and the other from the battalion, had come forward to contact the battalion and were able to get me back in quick time. Whilst I reported to the Brigade Commander, they loaded the vehicle with ammunition ready for the return journey.

With another officer from the battalion I directed the Buffalo back to where it could make its way forward to supply our rifle companies with ammunition. I then sought out Battalion Tactical HQ but the snipers had been active and forced it to move. I located it in a house not too far away, only to be told later I had nearly been shot by one of the signallers who had thought I was one of the snipers sneaking in through the window: such is war. We had so many casualties on the way towards the objective that only one stretcher-bearer was on the battlefield and did courageous work looking after the wounded and rightly awarded the Military Medal.

The S.O. told me that immediately after I had left on my mission to report to the Brigade Commander, the C.O. had gone forward to try and visit one of the rifle companies and the one forward wireless set working to Battalion HQ reported the C.O. appeared to have been severely wounded and was lying in the flood water, his signaller and runner beside him. If he had not sent me to Brigade HQ to report on the battle situation, I would have been by his side. He was at first feared dead but later established he had been wounded with several bullets in the chest, his life-jacket saving him from drowning. His runner was also severely wounded, and to the sorrow of S.O.

and myself, the signaller had been killed: he was one of the best, that was why he was the 'C.O.'s Signaller'.

Later we were to learn that as the C.O. lay in the flood water within the sight of the enemy and despite his wounds had raised himself up to shout "Up the Royals!" to his men in the near-by rifle company. The men were so angered when they saw and heard their C.O. had been wounded, some had believed him to be killed, they reacted and made a ferocious surge forward . . . and that did it! The objective was overrun and the Germans came pouring out with their hands held high above their heads in surrender. It was a moment as proud as any I have ever read about in the annals of our ancient history.

Twenty of our lads lay dead on the battlefield, including two company commanders; twice as many officers and men were wounded. It was bitter news for me that five men of my former platoon were amongst the dead; their keen, young faces and distinctive personalities remain in my memory.

On patrol to Middelburg

On the evening of November 4, our newly-appointed C.O. (he was previously Second-in-Command of the Battalion), was ordered by the Brigade Commander to stand-by to lead a white-flag party to negotiate the surrender of the German garrison in Middelburg. The next morning I went with him to join the Brigadier to observe 4 KOSB advancing up both banks of the canal towards Middelburg, the capital of Walcheren. Although the approaches to Middelburg were being shelled, the advance was extremely difficult with a large number of concrete positions to be overcome.

The Brigadier thought the possibility of heavy casualties could be avoided and decided to send a patrol consisting of the Brigade Liaison Officer with myself and the Reconnaissance Officer of "A" Squadron 11th Royal Tank Regiment (which provided the Buffaloes: amphibious tracked vehicles) to reconnoitre a route to the west towards the main road leading in to the north of Middelburg and determine whether it was possible for a battalion transported in Buffaloes to get into a position to attack Middelburg from the north.

We set off in a Buffalo at about 1445 hours, and it became quickly evident that the difficulties that would face the patrol were the heavy level of flood water surrounding the approaches to Middelburg as well as the extensive minefields and numerous anti-landing devices. These devices consisted of wooden stakes with explosive charges placed above the flood-level and were interconnected by wires and named by the Dutch Resistance as 'Rommel asparagus' after Field-Marshal Rommel who had ordered them to be erected. Initially the progress was slow but we reached Koudekerke, some four kilometres south-west of Middelburg, without encountering enemy resistance. After taking time to explore the approaches to the north of Middelburg, the failing light made us decide to return and report to the Brigade Commander that it would be possible in daylight for an infantry force in Buffalos to follow our route and with careful navigation through the various hazards to reach the outskirts of Middelburg and be in a position to attack.

On the way back we ran into difficulties at about 1750 hours when the Buffalo, manoeuvring to avoid 'Rommel asparagus', got one of its tracks jammed on a concrete bridge that was totally submerged and unseen under the grubby flood water. A motor-cycle was jettisoned along with other heavy 'non-essentials' but this did not help to dislodge and re-float the Buffalo and we remained stuck on the bridge. The Dutch Resistance had contacted our patrol when it first entered

Kouderkerke and now they came to our assistance, rowing out to rescue both the Brigade L.O. and myself. We explained to the Resistance that we needed to get back to Flushing as quickly as possible and although they readily agreed to guide us, they advised we would have to wait for first light to avoid the heavy tidal surge of flood water returning to the sea through the breached sea wall as the nearest crossing point back to Flushing was very close to the gap.

We sheltered in different houses and I shall always remember the kind and warm welcome extended to me. After receiving hospitality I was shown to a bedroom at the top of the house and experienced a few hours rest in the luxury of white sheets!

Two Resistance men called for us in the last hours of the night's darkness and we set off to begin our wade through the flood water on what proved to be a most hazardous journey. They had made the crossing before and knew how to attempt it, directing our efforts in handling and positioning large lengths of wood which enabled us to reach an area of submerged ground that the four of us could just about manage to stand and at that stage we were half-way across the gap. We stood there for a moment to draw breath, clutching one another to keep balance as the tidal waters swept past us; if we had slipped we would surely have been swept into the Scheldt Estuary! With anxiety we viewed the distance still to be crossed but under the leadership and skill of our two friends of the Dutch Resistance and deft use of those valuable logs -- we made it!

The Brigade Commander issued orders for "A" Company of the 7th/9th RS and a machine-gun platoon of the 7th Manchester Regiment to be transported in Buffaloes and following the route taken by our patrol they had to get into position at the rear of Middelburg ready to attack. They surprised the German garrison by this unexpected approach of amphibious track vehicles crammed full of Jocks, and quickly sent to the General's HQ a 'white flag' party accompanied by a Norwegian officer as interpreter. They enforced the surrender, General Daser handing over his pistol along with his Chief-of Staff's map-case showing all the German troop positions on Walcheren. Later OC "A" Company thoughtfully and kindly presented the map-case to me as a remembrance of my part in the reconnaissance patrol. Our force of eleven Buffaloes moved into the main square of Middelburg and orders given to the German officers to bring their men into the square and pile their armaments. We had taken 2,000 prisoners with a force of 140 men and as the Germans began to realise this there was signs of unrest. However, this was kept subdued during the hours of darkness by a vigilant 'A' Company 7th/9th RS and having positioned well-sited machine-guns of the 7th Manchester Regiment in the four corners of the square. Sadly during the advance over the route the patrol had taken, one Buffalo struck a mine which killed one man and wounded another.
As footnote I add that when I met the OC "A" Company after his epic successful operation, he presented me with the map case of the General's Chief-of-Staff, saying: My heartfelt thanks for your splendid and very brave job. Without your recce patrol the day before my 'navy' might still have been wandering about somewhere out there!

In January 2011, Mr Jan H. Wigard, a retired academic librarian and a leading historian on War-time Walcheren kindly sent me copies of the 7/9th Battalion War Dairies which were written by myself during the action by the Battalion to liberate Flushing and Walcheren. These are available on pages 24 to 31.

It is ironic that we were trained for mountain warfare and fought our first battle up to our chest in sea water! We were proud and pleased that at long last we had made a contribution by our part in

the liberation of the Scheldt Estuary, regarded as "a victory of the first importance". "Flushing" was awarded as a Battle Honour and proudly takes its place with the Honours of The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), Britain 's oldest infantry regiment raised in 1633.

It is a remarkable coincidence, subsequently discovered, that the route taken by myself and the Brigade L.O. as we waded our way back from Koudekerke to Flushing, was the same route taken by the 3rd Battalion The Royal Scots when they were part of an expedition force under Lord Chatham. In 1809 when Napoleon was seeking to bring the Austrians to a decisive battle on the Danube, the Austrians urged Britain to try and prevent the French from moving reinforcements to the Danube. The British Government decided the best way to help was to send an expedition force to hold down the considerable French forces in the Scheldt Estuary. The 3rd RS landed at Domburg on Walcheren on 30 July 1809, advanced to Koudekerke and became involved in the siege of Flushing.

On the River Maas

We then moved on to 'hold the line' on the lower reaches of the River Maas, centred on s'Hertogenbosch. Not 'in the line' as our fathers experienced in 1914-18, occupying rows and rows of trenches behind barbed wire and in conditions that can only be described as 'hell-like'. We occupied slit trenches sited to defend important and commanding features on the ground deemed necessary to secure the area from enemy penetration. We actively patrolled between these points and towards the enemy's positions. A notable event occurred when one of our patrols to the River Maas detained two civilians they suspected of having just crossed the river. We had a reasonably fluent German linguist in the Intelligence Section and after a preliminary interrogation we alerted Division HQ that they appeared to be more than 'just two civilian refugees' and handed them over for more expert questioning. Subsequently I was told that they were identified as members of the Brandenburg Sabotage Division, an elite German formation, and these three men were the first to be captured on our front. As they were to be picked up by boat near to where they had been captured, we prepared a reception party at the spot but were obviously misled about the response signal to be made and the Germans opened fire which we returned and the next day an upturned boat was seen floating further down the river.

We had a Polish infantry unit on the left of our brigade position and they frequently started up their own battles. They were understandably impatient to get to grips with the enemy and we always had to check when fighting flared up on their sector to be assured it was not the first-stage of a co-ordinated German attack that would involve us.

The Division now under command of the Second Army moved on 7 December 1944 to Stein, north of Maastricht. The German's Ardennes Offensive began on the 16 December and on the 17th the Battalion moved to Gillrath just three miles north of Geilenkirchen and now within the frontiers of the Reich (the first battalion of The Royal Scots on German soil). The 52nd Lowland Division was now positioned to the south of the Heinsberg salient which had to be held to prevent an 'Ardennes type' of assault which could threaten the British Second Army. The Battalion had been hurriedly moved forward to take over this sector of the line manned by a make-shift battalion of troops formed from drivers, cooks and administrative personnel. During the first few nights, enemy patrols penetrated through all our positions right up to battalion headquarters but we quickly organised ourselves to counter this aggressive patrolling with fighting patrols. It was here that we first used our two patrol dogs and whilst they would ignore dead bodies they quickly picked up other human

scent and this alerted the patrol leader to take cover until he could determine whether friend or foe, giving him time to decide to intercept or not.

In Lysander over the German lines

It was during this time of intense patrolling by ourselves and the Germans [apparently German commanders had been told to keep the British troops busy and fully committed during the Ardennes offensive] that I was unable to persuade the commanding officer to allow me to try and get a seat in the Lysander aircraft based at Division HQ which regularly reconnoitred across the divisional front. He thought it was too dangerous! I had proposed to try and get answers to some of the patrol tasks that were set down for that night and hopefully to confirm the information we had about enemy positions and their defensive wire.

On 30 December we were re-deployed to strengthen the Division's defences when a major German attack was launched at Geilenkirchen. We took up a defensive position based on Bruggerhof, on the right flank of the Second British Army ('Right of the Line!') and linked up with the American Army. The C.O. had direct orders from Commander XII Corps 'no matter what happens, no withdrawal'. It was here that our forward platoons came under heavy and demoralising fire from a Nebelwerfer rocket projector, referred to as the 'Screaming Minnie'. It had not been encountered too often but it must be remembered that 'rocket technology' was in its early stages of use but this formidable weapon had a range of 10,000 yards and could rapidly fire ten high explosive shells. I knew it was towed behind a half-track vehicle and its role was to dart in and out of prepared firing positions to launch surprise demoralising attacks and thereby exploit their devastating and deadly high-explosive fire power. We only located the Nebelwerfer through the alert observation of our forward infantry platoons taking compass bearings of enemy fire and in this particular case the quick reaction and appreciation of the situation by myself at Battalion HQ.

I had just started my two-hour shift as duty officer (shared with the S.O., Adjutant and Battalion Second-in-Command) at Battalion HQ, when an anxious voice on the field telephone asked "Is that Mr Broon, sir? Well I have a compass bearing of a mortar firing tracer!" I noted the bearing and contacted a number of other forward positions and they, too, had used their compasses because of the impact of the Nebelwerfer's fire. When I charted the bearings on the map there was a clear intersection where the air intelligence map had noted '(?) possible site of Nebelwerfer'. I asked the artillery officer attached to us if we could have some fire on the target, and then quickly woke up the C.O. when our artillery regiment in support decided it would make it a major target and use all its field guns not already committed to fixed targets. Our response had to be quick as the Nebelwerfer could speedily re-locate itself.

The C.O. now gave permission that I could try and arrange to go up with the Lysander aircraft the next morning and see if I could determine the effect of our artillery fire on this target. I undertook my third flight in the air: the first was on a five-shilling trip during an air circus when I was 17 years of age and flew round the hills of Peeblesshire; the second was made in a glider when we were being trained for our air-transportable role; and now this trip in a Lysander. It was an eerie feeling flying over the enemy in such a flimsy aircraft; I was careful about how I moved my heavy army boots in case they pierced the thin-skin of the aircraft's frame. I was able to gain information about the extent of the German defensive wire and then we looked for the previous night's Nebelwerfer; there was a clear pattern of shell craters but it was not possible to determine if we had

caught the Nebelwerfer in its firing site but it looked as we might have as the location was totally pulverised. We were about to turn away from the 'target scene' when the pilot spotted some partly obliterated tracks in the snow and spotted enemy tanks in a wooded area near-by. The pilot circled round the area to confirm that there were no more about, and in doing so attracted some ineffective fire.

At the time of the Ardennes break-through a number of officers were called to a briefing by General Montgomery. We gathered in a large hall and after being warned not to smoke, we were called to attention as Montgomery arrived. He then told us to have a good cough, and then no more of it! In his clipped form of speech he expertly reviewed what the enemy hoped to achieve by their Ardennes offensive and how the Supreme Allied Commander had asked him to take charge of the area and to deal with the break-through. I remember him adding that when you go back to your units tell all your men "that I, Monty, am in charge and all is well." I believed that if I were to tell the Jocks that, they would just be wryly amused; but I was wrong, the information impressed and reassured them. Later, when adjutant, I met Monty when he came to inspect the Battalion; I also received his C-in-C Certificate for meritorious service.

Wounded in Germany

In January 1945 we experienced very severe wintry weather which delayed our next operation: to clear the last German salient which extended from the Seigfried Line into Holland and to capture Heinsberg, which would be the largest German town to be taken by the British Army up to that moment in the campaign. We knew the salient would be strongly defended because the longer they could delay us the more chance they had of strengthening their defence of the Rhine . So it proved, as some twenty-fours hours before we captured Heinsberg, the C.O. and I, along with his 'protection section' equipped with one Bren machine-gun, shared an unforgettable experience of being sniped at by an 88mm dual anti-tank/aircraft gun (4.3 ins) as we manoeuvred across a large stretch of open ground. We had encountered an enemy force dressed in their snow smocks with at least one Tiger tank supporting them. We got across the stretch of open area by 'fire and movement': as the C.O. moved with the rifle group I stayed with the machine-gun giving fire, then the rifle group opened fire and we then crossed the open area to join him. We were trying to link up with the 4th KOSB on our right and when we came into contact with their rifle company nearest us, we discovered a lone signaller in a slit-trench and he was all that was left of an almost completely destroyed Company HQ. He had been severely wounded with both legs almost severed, but not only was he conscious but valiantly directing artillery fire by wireless to help his comrades in the platoons in front of him. We crawled forward and asked if we could help him but he waved us on and I thought he would surely succumb to his wounds. He somehow survived and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal; many, including myself, having witnessed his bravery thought he should have received the Victoria Cross. I was honoured years later to meet him when he was one of our guests at a 7th/9th RS Battalion Re-union.

I went into my last battle, a night attack: to capture the German town of Heinsberg. It necessitated an approach-march of some 13 miles, carrying all our equipment, and after a brief halt for a quick meal we divided into two columns and then proceeded to encircle and complete the capture of Heinsberg. As we consolidated on the high ground beyond the town and prepared for an enemy counter-attack, the C.O. went to check the siting of the forward companies and I went with him. After visiting the area where "D" company was digging-in, the C.O. was about to return to Battalion

HQ when the company commander asked me to look at a platoon area to advise whether I thought they were on the edge of a minefield. The C.O. asked whether I wanted any of his protection section to stay with me but replied it would not be necessary as I would quickly follow him back to Battalion HQ.

Having checked and given my opinion, I was about three or four hundred yards behind the C.O.'s party which had reached the cross-roads at the bottom of a hill and knew they were about to turn towards Battalion HQ. Walking alone down the slope with thoughts faraway, I was amazed to suddenly see a mere foot-step in front of me that the ground had opened up and earth, stones and shrapnel flew around me; immediately thought minefield! I knew I had been wounded but as I fell to the ground heard the whine of a shell -- apparently the second artillery shell -- followed quickly by another. I counted the next two or three shell-bursts and decided to try and get out of the target area and staggered towards a row of damaged houses. I lunged through a window-space as the final shell(s) struck the building. The RSM (Regimental Sergeant-Major) had witnessed some of what was happening and quickly rushed forward to assist me. When he found I had been wounded he lifted me up on his shoulder and ran towards the first-aid post. I was wounded on the morning of the 25 January 1945 by shells fired from heavy artillery guns in the Siegfried Defence Line supporting the defence of Heinsberg and now engaging and seeking to delay the British advance. Later, to my great sorrow, it became known to me that a close boyhood friend had been shot down and killed a few hours before and would be buried only 12 miles from the place where I had been wounded.

Evacuated by ambulance from the battalion's first-aid post, sharing the journey with a German prisoner-of-war who had been shot in the stomach by his own officer when he had attempted to surrender. He was in great pain as we bumped our way across the rough terrain made worse by ruts of ice and snow. I spent a few days in this 'forward' hospital, and the surgeon who operated on my left leg and right arm had previously been stationed at the Peebles Hydro which had become a war-time Royal Army Medical Corps training unit and hospital. His wife had stayed on in Peebles, so he asked her to call and see my mother and father to put their minds at ease and to reassure them that I would not lose my leg or arm. They had received the usual telegram merely saying I had been wounded.

I was eventually moved back to a general hospital in Brussels; not a very good place to be as it had become a target for the flying 'doodle bombs' which Hitler had developed as a new weapon. You could hear them as you lay in bed. After a few days I was taken by stretcher and air ambulance to an airfield in Wiltshire, and then by stretcher train to a Ministry of Pensions Hospital in Worcester, near to Malvern. All the voluntary helpers swooped down on our stretchers at every place we had to wait and wonderful ladies kindly made sure we had filled in a post-card to our loved ones to say we were now in this country and being well looked after. They also supplied us with tooth brushes, soap and shaving kit, and if our labels allowed it, we were given cups of tea.

At the conclusion of extended leave to recuperate, I was posted to a holding battalion at Redford Barracks in Edinburgh . The War with Germany now over, I was appointed to set up a holding unit in the Duddingston area of Edinburgh which would be a staging camp for men on their way to Norway . It was a vacant camp site with Nissen huts and I was provided with a small staff to get it organised. After a couple of weeks, telephoning Scottish Command to whom we had to report, I was mistakenly put through to the staff officer responsible for officers' postings. I said that although it was a wrong connection nevertheless it was providential and could he please help me to get back

to the 7th/9th Battalion. On hearing my story that I had been wounded, he replied that "I can help, but do not say anything to anybody." He did help and my posting was quickly approved.

Back to the Rhine Army

Within forty-eight hours I was on my way back to the battalion. Crossing by ferry, I reached a holding camp in Ostende and within a couple of hours of arriving there was approached by two senior warrant officers wearing the 52nd Mountain Division signs asking if they could have my permission to see what they could do to get a 15-cwt truck to transport them and myself back to the Division. There is nothing so powerful in the Army as warrant officers and their 'old boy' network of fellow warrant officers. Within an hour they advised that all was ready for an early morning departure and so we set off for Bremen where we believed the battalion was located.

Alas, they were no longer in Bremen as the 52nd Mountain Division had moved eastwards and the 7th/9th Battalion was located in Magdeburg, some miles west of Berlin. We went in pursuit, arriving to a marvellous reception. I was immediately appointed signals officer and within a few weeks had the job of handing over the battalion's telephone lines to the Russian Army as the Mountain Division was to become part of the Imperial Strategic Reserve and, therefore, to be ready to go where necessary; we thought this would be to the Far East! However, the war with Japan came to an end on 14 August 1945, after atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and 7/9th were re-deployed in the army of occupation (BAOR).

In due course I became Adjutant of the battalion and this coincided with the appointed of a new C.O. A very able professional soldier who had been the senior major (Battalion Second-in-Command) with the Black Watch and captured at St Valery during the 51st Highland Division's heroic rearguard action at the time of Dunkirk. After being at locations in Detmold and Oldenburg (the latter where we took over from the Canadian Army GHQ returning to Canada), we eventually received orders to place the War-time battalion in 'suspended animation' and this involved posting all our officers and men to other units and to return all our arms, transport and equipment. Much of the work fell to me as Adjutant and when completed and the War-time battalion no longer existed, I was appointed Staff-Captain Rhine Army GHQ 2nd Second Echelon and given responsibility for posting reinforcements from two large holding barracks in Bielefeld, Westphalia, as and when these troops arrived from the United Kingdom.

The Army Commander waiting for Me !

Part of my duties was to post parties of men within the 21st Army Group to camps sited in various forests so that they could cut down trees to provide wood for shipment back to Britain. This was part of the 'reparations' agreed in the settlement at the end of the War by the Allies and Germany. I had encountered delay in securing accommodation because an RAF unit refused to move from a hutted camp that had been ear-marked for occupation by a detachment of Army tree-fellers!

21st Army Group

Certainly unaware of any political sensitivity concerning the matter, but I nevertheless went (as a day out!) to GHQ at Hamburg to report the situation to my superior Staff Officer, a major in the ATS. It subsequently became clear she had not done enough about it.

I had heard that the Army Commander was visiting the Holding Camps at Bielefeld (where I was attached to the Camp Commandant's staff) but had not been told it would involve me. Apparently the Commander of the Rhine Army, the G.O.C.-in-C., had arrived 15 minutes before the time he was expected. I was given this information after speaking to two sentries about the 'Present Arms' salute which they extended to me but not entitled to receive. I assumed as I spoke to them that they were on edge waiting for the G.O.C.-in-C. to arrive but to my amazement they exclaimed "He's here, Sir!: earlier than expected", adding "Caught everyone on the hop!" I quickly reasoned I was too junior to be missed, and leisurely walked through the barrack gates and as I did so I saw in the distance a group of officers standing outside the Camp Commandant's office. When they saw me coming they signalled me to 'double-up' but I thought it was a leg-pull; however, I increased my pace as I began to sense their panic. When I reached them I was told you are wanted in there and was bodily pushed through the door of the Nissen hut. The room was dark, crowded and seemingly jammed full of red-tab generals, brigadiers and full colonels. The Colonel Commandant of the Holding Camps on my arrival, turned to the G.O.C.-in-C. and said 'Sir, this is Captain Brown!'

I saluted the Army Commander and apologised for keeping him waiting, which he just brushed aside. He then asked me about the hold-up being caused by the RAF and what had I done about it. When I had put him in the picture, he reached for the field telephone and asked to speak to the Chief-of-Staff at Rhine Army Headquarters and in angry tones he outlined to him what I had just told him. Question after question was fired at the Chief-of-Staff about why GHQ had not taken action on the report made by Captain Brown. He paused in the middle of his tirade to confirm a brief point and then ordered the Chief-of-Staff to have a full report on his desk by the time he returned to GHQ. As he abruptly terminated the telephone call he turned and looked in my direction and grunted his thanks. I saluted as he stormed out of the Nissen hut followed by his retinue of generals and brigadiers.

Later I was told about the political background that had made the matter so sensitive and urgent. The newly elected Labour Government were anxious to keep up the momentum of their house-building programme which was in danger of being held-up because of the shortage of wood. Consequently they were breathing down the neck of the War Office and they in turn were putting pressure on the Commander of the Rhine Army to get a move on! It provided a distinctive high-note to end my War-time service by keeping the Commander-in-Chief of the Rhine Army waiting for about ten minutes - for me!

Finally my War service was over. On the 30 December 1946 I reported to the demobilisation unit in the United Kingdom and handed in my revolver. I still have the receipt given to me by the quartermaster for my 'Pistol Revolver point-38 Smith & Wesson No. 819442'. I was fitted out with a blue pin-strip suit and given a first-class rail warrant to Peebles; returning not as a callow youth of 18 but as a man aged 25. No matter what the years ahead would have in store, I knew I had to try to live in a decent way and never by my actions or reactions to life dishonour my fallen comrades.

Note: I have since added Pages 21 and 22 to record Padre Wood's Remembrance of the men of the 7th/9th at Flushing;

Page 23 to record the last Public Commemoration Service held in Walcheren and the Tribute by The Royal Scots Colour Party to our Fallen Comrades of the 7th/9th;

Pages 24 to 31 when I rediscovered copies of the Battalion's War Diary covering the Walcheren Campaign (November 1944);

Pages 32 to 51 with notes from my Battalion Intelligence Officer's War-time file about the German Army;

Page 53 to 74 my time as an Infantry Signaller: Infantry Battalion's Signal Platoon.

Biography:

Joe Brown born 1921; began newspaper career 1936 with Peeblesshire Advertiser published by the Neidpath Press, Peebles: served with the local Territorial Battalion 8th Royal Scots (May 1939-43) and 7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots (1943-46). Post-War: executive posts with The Scotsman Publications, Coventry Newspapers and Birmingham Post & Mail; CBE for services to British Newspapers. Honorary Callant of the Royal Burgh of Peebles Callants' Club. Warden of Neidpath 1983. BA(Hons). Publications: History of Peebles: 1850-1990 (J. L. Brown and I. C. Lawson) Mainstream 1990.

7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots
(The Royal Regiment)

Eve of Battle: November 1944

by the Rev. James S. Wood
Battalion Chaplain

That night a group of lads, a score maybe,
Came shyly to me with a strange request,
Or was it strange? Well acting for the rest
"Padre" their spokesman said "Think you that we
might of the sacrament partake tonight?"
Could I refuse? So there by candlelight
In a darkened cellar – not an upper room –
We shared communion in the shadowy gloom
The broken bread was passed from hand to hand
The outpoured wine served in the common cup,
Was drunk in silence by that little band.

And when at last they each did eat and sup
All silently and thoughtfully they went away
Knowing full well within that very day
The sacramental words that I had spoken
And this red wine "My blood is shed for you"
Might well be said of them. Alas! 'Twas true
For ten of them their useful lives did give
I owe to their dying that I live
Those lads I knew and loved – I see them yet
And long as life shall last I'll ne'er forget
The sacramental service with the men
Who sacrificed their lives on Walcheren.

This unforgettable little service was held very close to the enemy lines, Flushing, November 2, 1944.

The Rev. Dr James S. Wood, MA, DD. Born 1908, Banffshire, Scotland; University of Aberdeen; Christ's College, Oxford; Chaplain 1st Battalion Glasgow Highlanders, 7th/9th Highlanders Battalion The Royal Scots; Minister Church of Scotland Newtonmore 1947-53, South (now St Mark's) Aberdeen 1953-73; honorary degree Doctor of Divinity University of Aberdeen 1973. Published: *For Heaven's Sake* (1989), *The Wind on the Hills* (poems).

Sixty-five Years On !

Return to Walcheren: November 2009

The gallant action of the

7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)

Capture of the German Garrison Headquarters in Flushing

Forcing the Surrender of the German GOC-in-C in Middelburg

Remembering Twenty-two Royal Scots Killed in Action

Lance-Corporal G. Arbuthnot Private B. Bain

Private T. Butchart Major G. A. Chater Private J. Currie

Private A. McN. Holborn Corporal R. Irvine

Private J. McGhee Private T. Heald Private B. McQueenie

Private G. O'Kada Private R. Page Private W. Parker

Private W. Ross Private R. Scott

Lance-Corporal J. Shields

Private A. Smith Captain W. G. Thompson

Lieutenant F. B. Walker Private S. Wallbridge

Private W. Wheeldon Private W. Whitworth

We Will Remember Them

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung,
There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there!

"How Sleep the Brave" : William Collins

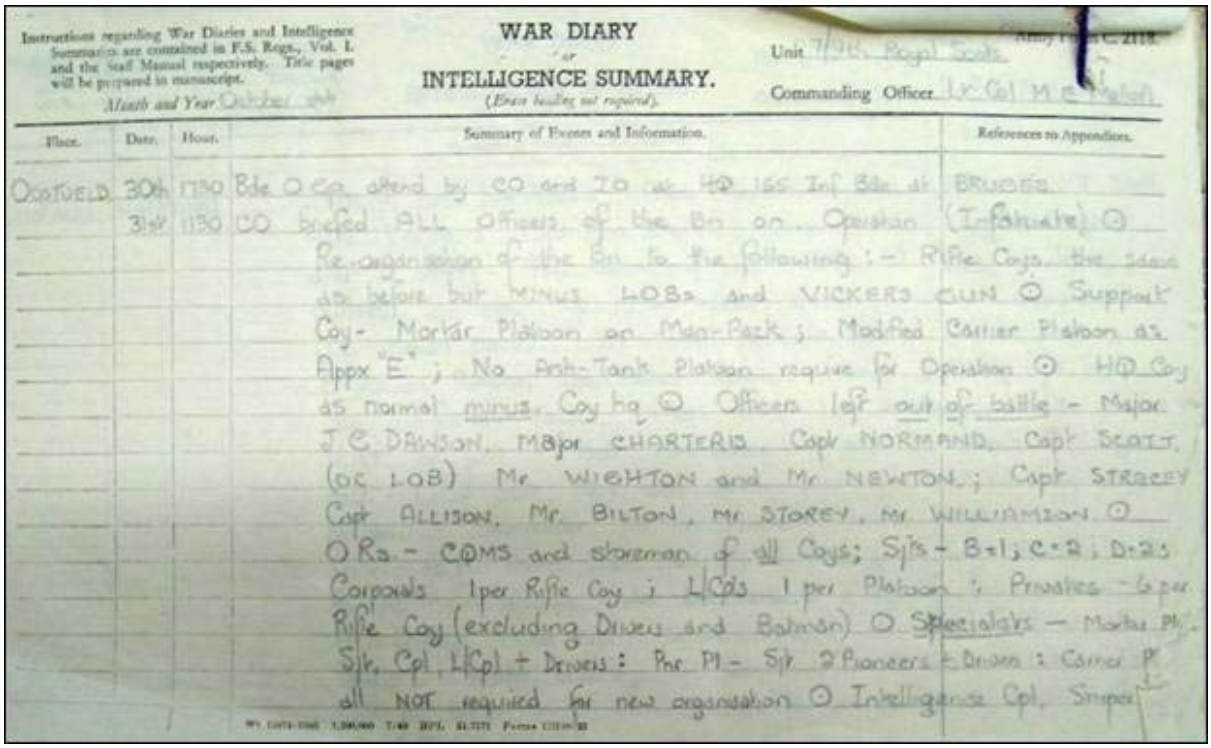
WAR DIARY:

7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots.
October and November 1944.

Written during operations when I was the Battalion's Intelligence Officer, then aged 23 years, these accounts were countersigned by the Commanding Officer and sent by dispatch rider to 155 Infantry Brigade Headquarters and then forwarded to the Headquarters of 52nd Scottish Division.

Embarking on 16th and 17th October 1944 at Southampton with our transport boarding at Tilbury, we landed at the recently liberated Ostend and assembled in Waereghem, Belgium (a small town a dozen or so miles from the French frontier). Now under the command of the Canadian II Corps the battalion was ordered to concentrate in the area of Oostveldt, Holland, preparatory to crossing The Scheldt to liberate the Island of Walcheren.

The War Diary records the Battalion's move from Oostveldt to Breskens where we embarked on Landing Craft Assault (LTA) boats to cross The Scheldt, subsequent landing on the assault beach at Flushing. They also record the attack on the German Headquarters in Flushing where 50 Germans were killed and 600 prisoners taken including Oberst Reinhart the German commander; and forcing the surrender in Middelburg of General Daser, Commander 70th German Infantry Division and Fortress Walcheren, with 2000 of his men.



Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. I. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

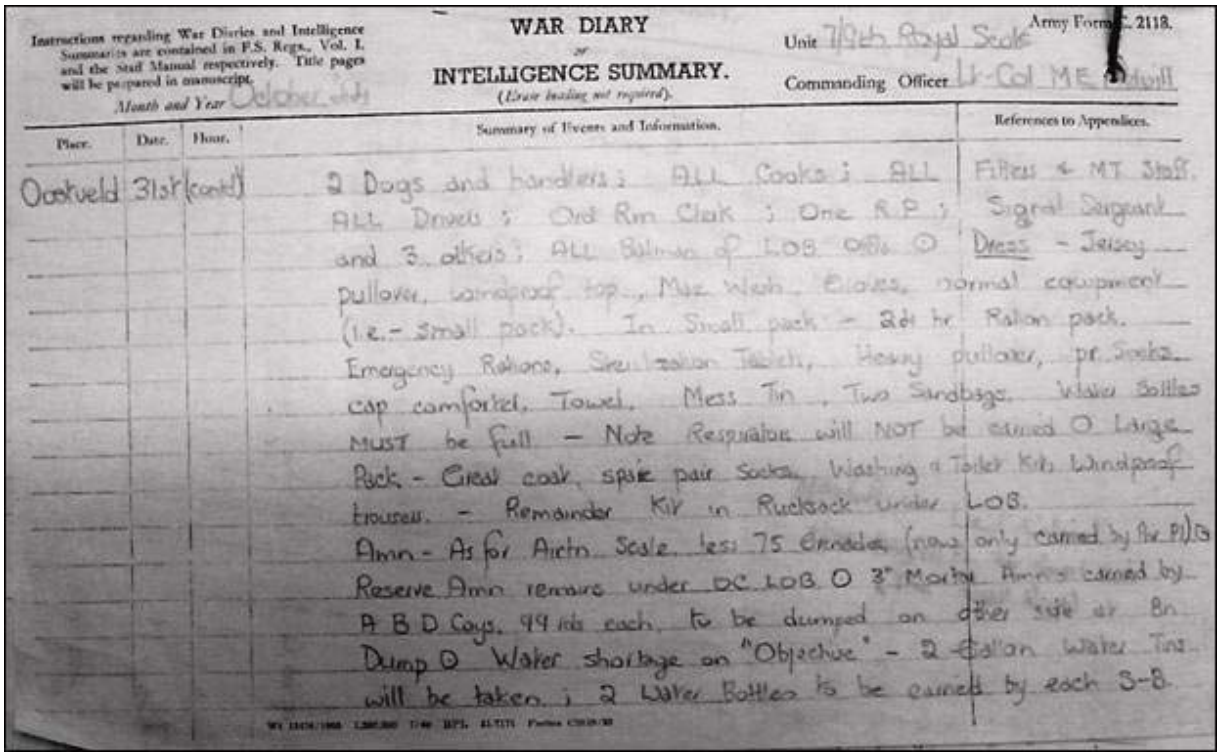
WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.
(Erase heading not required).

Unit 7/9th Royal Scots

Commanding Officer Lt Col M E Nelson

Month and Year October 1944

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	References to Appendices.
OOSTVELD	30th	1130	Bde O Gp attend by CO and IO at HQ 155 Inf Bde at BRUGGE.	
	31st	1130	CO briefed ALL Officers of the Bn on Operation (Infatuate) ○ Re-organisation of the Bn to the following :- Rifle Coys. the same as before but MINUS MORs and VICKERS GUN ○ Support Coy - Mortar Platoon on Man-Pack ; Modified Carrier Platoon as Appx "E" ; No Anti-Tank Platoon required for Operation ○ HQ Coy as normal minus. Coy hq ○ Officers left out of battle - Major J C DAWSON, Major CHARTERIS, Capt NORMAND, Capt SCOTT, (OC LOB) Mr WIGHTON and Mr NEWTON ; Capt STREET Capt ALLISON, Mr BILTON, Mr STOREY, Mr WILLIAMSON ○ O Rs - CQMS and storeman of all Coys; Sjts - B-1; C-2; D-2; Corporals 1 per Rifle Coy ; L/Cpls 1 per Platoon ; Privates - 6 per Rifle Coy (excluding Drivers and Batman) ○ Specialists - Mortar Pl - Sjt, Cpl, L/Cpl + Drivers : Pnr Pl - Sjt 2 Pioneers + Drivers : Carrier Pl all NOT required for new organisation ○ Intelligence Cpl, Snipers	



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WAR DIARY
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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.
(Erase heading not required).

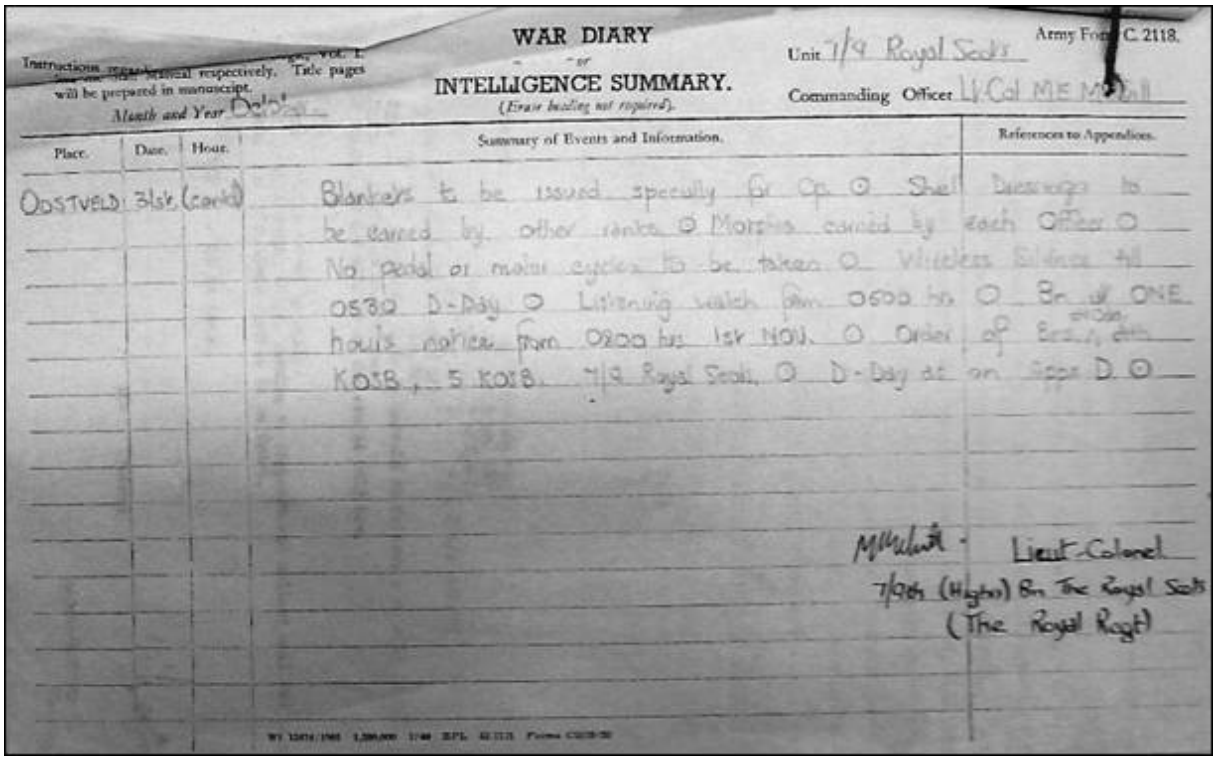
Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 7/9th Royal Scots

Commanding Officer Lt-Col ME [illegible]

Month and Year October 1944

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	References to Appendices.
Oostveld	31st (contd)		2 Dogs and handlers; ALL Cooks; ALL ALL Drivers; Ord Rm Clerk; One R.P.; Signal Sergeant and 3 others; ALL Batmen of LOB offs. O Dress - Jersey pullover, windproof top., Mae Wash Gloves, normal equipment (i.e. - Small pack). In Small pack - 24 hr Ration pack. Emergency Rations, Shaving Tackle, Heavy pullover, pr. Socks cap comforter, Towel. Mess Tin., Two Sandbags. Water Bottles MUST be full - Note Respirator will NOT be carried O Large Pack - Great coat, spare pair Socks, Washing & Toilet Kit, Windproof trousers. - Remainder Kit in Rucksack under LOB. Amn - As for Arctn Scale less 75 Grenades (now only carried by Pl/Cs Reserve Amn remains under DC LOB O 3" Mortar Ammo carried by A B D Coys. 99 rds each. to be dumped on other side of Bn Dump O Water shortage on "Objective" - 2 Gallon Water Tins will be taken; 2 Water Bottles to be carried by each S-B.	



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Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 7/9 Royal Scots

Commanding Officer Lt-Col ME [illegible]

Month and Year Oct 1944

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	References to Appendices.
OOSTVELD	31st (contd)		Blankets to be issued specially for Op O Shell Dressings to be carried by other ranks O Morphia carried by each Officer O No pedal or motor cycles to be taken O Wireless Silence till 0530 D-Day O Listening watch 6pm 0600 hrs O Bn at ONE hours notice from 0200 hrs 1st NOV. O Order of Battle etc KOSB, 5 KOSB, 7/9 Royal Scots. O D-Day as on Appx D O	

M[illegible] - Lieut-Colonel
7/9th (Highland) Bn The Royal Scots
(The Royal Regt)

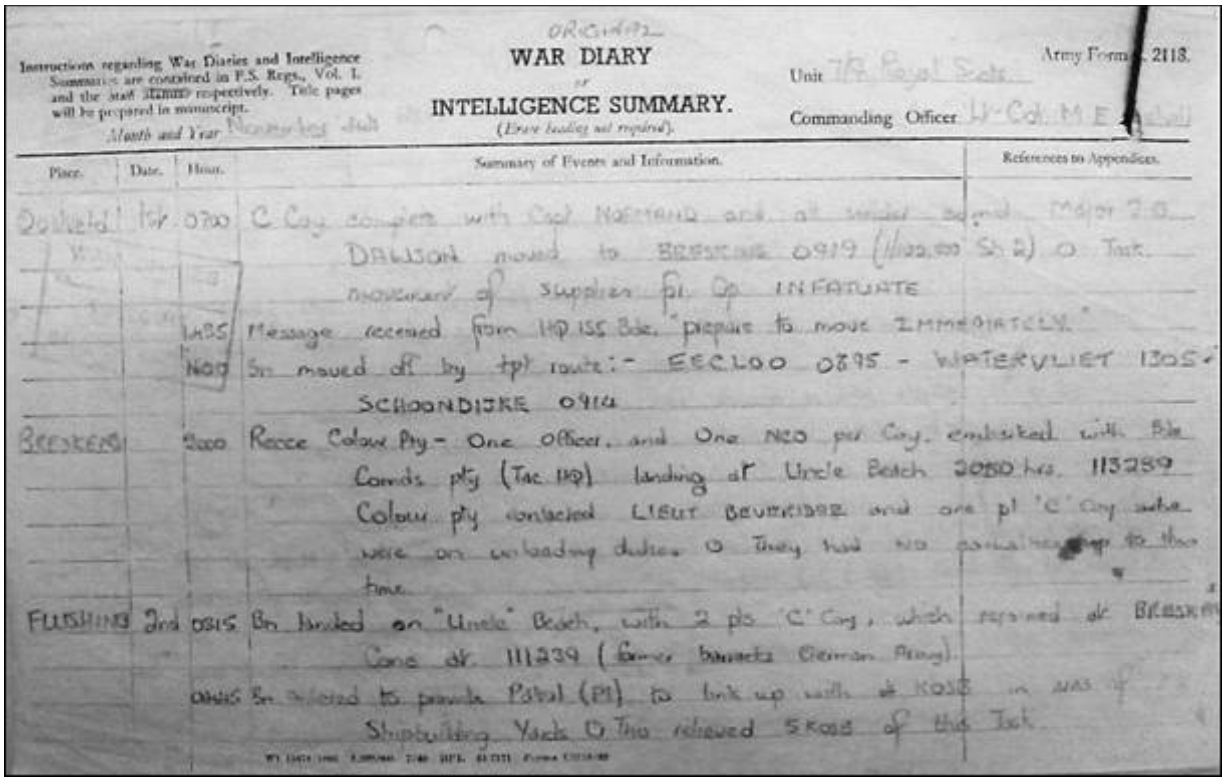
It is of interest to note the list of those to be left out of battle (LOB). These key personnel would form the nucleus of the re-building of the Battalion if heavy casualties were sustained. LOBs include 2 majors (Battalion Second-in-Command and a senior company commander), 4 captains and 5 lieutenants. The 4 Rifle Companies left behind 5 sergeants, 4 corporals and 12 lance-corporals. A range of specialist NCOs and men from Signals Platoon, Intelligence Section, Sniper

Section, Mortar Platoon and the whole of Anti-Tank Platoon, those members of the Carrier Platoon not required for the operation as well as all Company Quartermaster Sergeants and Storemen listed to remain out of battle.

Dress for the operation was jersey pullover, windproof top (issued to Mountain Division troops), Mae West, gloves and normal infantry webbing equipment with side small packs would be worn.

Also interesting is the administrative details issued as orders. The small haversack worn at the side, was to contain 24-hour ration pack as well as emergency rations, sterilization tablets, pair socks, cap comforter (soft hat), towel, mess tins, and 2 sandbags. The large pack carried on the back to contain greatcoat, spare pair of socks, washing and toilet kit and windproof trousers. Other items of personal kit would be in our rucksack which was the normal equipment of Mountain Division troops.

Because of an anticipated shortage of water, two-gallon water tanks were to be taken and each of the Battalion's stretcher-bearers to carry 2 water bottles. All ranks would have shell-dressings and officers would carry morphia.



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WAR DIARY
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(Erase headings not required).

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 7th Royal Scots

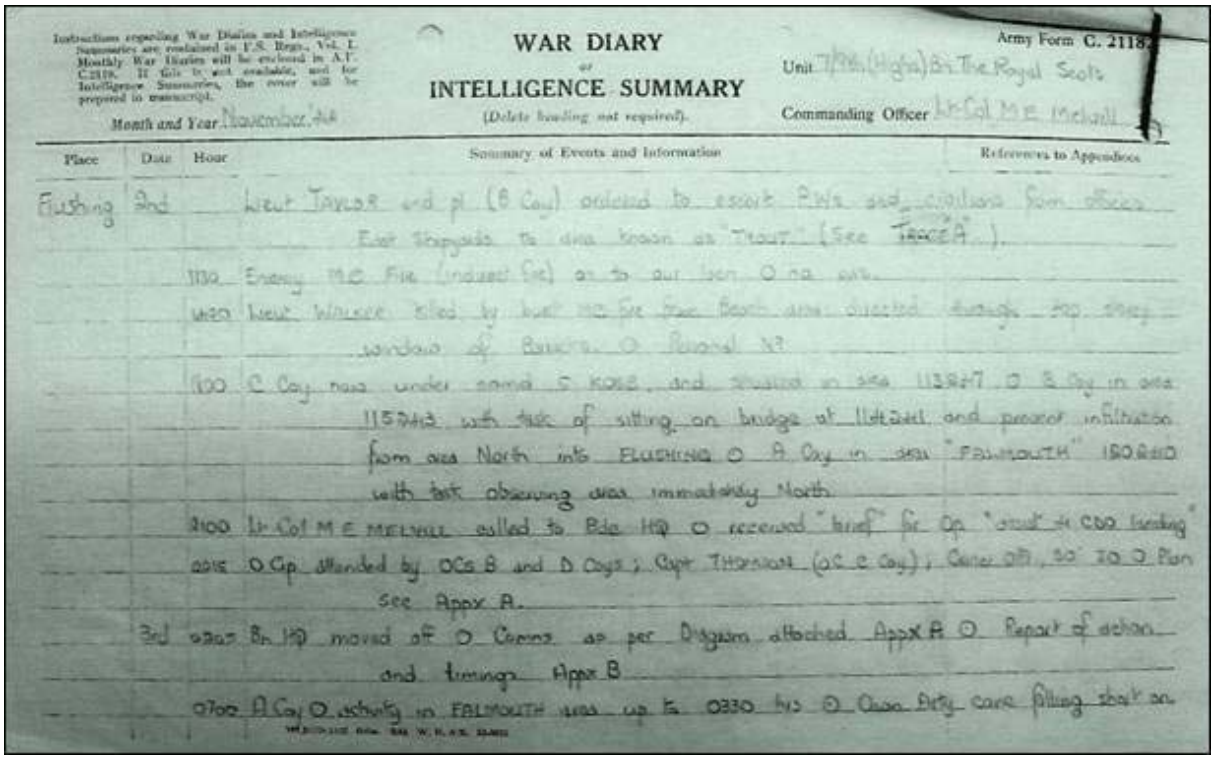
Commanding Officer Lt-Col. M E [illegible]

Month and Year November 1944

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	References to Appendices.
Dodfield	1st	0700	C Coy complete with Capt Norrand and at [illegible] Major T.D. Dawson moved to Breskens 0919 (1/22,000 Sh 2) O Tac. movement of Supplies pl. Op. INFATUATE	
		1435	Message received from HQ 155 Bde. "prepare to move IMMEDIATELY."	
		1600	Bn moved off by tpt route:- EECLOO 0895 - WATERVLIET 1305 SCHOONDIJKE 0914	
Breskens		2000	Recce Colour Pty - One officer and One NCO per Coy. embarked with Bde Comds pty (Tac HQ) landing at Uncle Beach 2050 hrs. 113289 Colour pty contacted LIEUT BEVERIDGE and one pl 'C' Coy who were on unloading duties. They had no [illegible] to the time.	
Flushing	2nd	0315	Bn landed on "Uncle" Beach, with 2 pls 'C' Coy, which remained at Breskens Cone at 111239 (former barracks German Army).	
		0445	Bn ordered to provide Patrol (Pl) to link up with 4 KOSB in area of Shipbuilding Yards. This relieved 5 KOSB of this task.	

The order 'prepare to move immediately' to Breskins was received from Brigade HQ at 1435 hrs and the Battalion moved off at 1600 hrs. At Breskins a recce party (which included the Battalion Intelligence Officer) embarked in assault craft ahead of the Battalion at 2000 hrs to reconnoitre locations for the companies and when seven hours later at 0315 hrs their LTVs hit Uncle Beach to speedily guide them off the beach into prepared positions.

At 0445 we had linked up by patrol with 4KOSB in the area of the shipyards in Flushing.



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WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
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Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 7/9th (Highs) Bn The Royal Scots

Commanding Officer Lt-Col M E Mellell

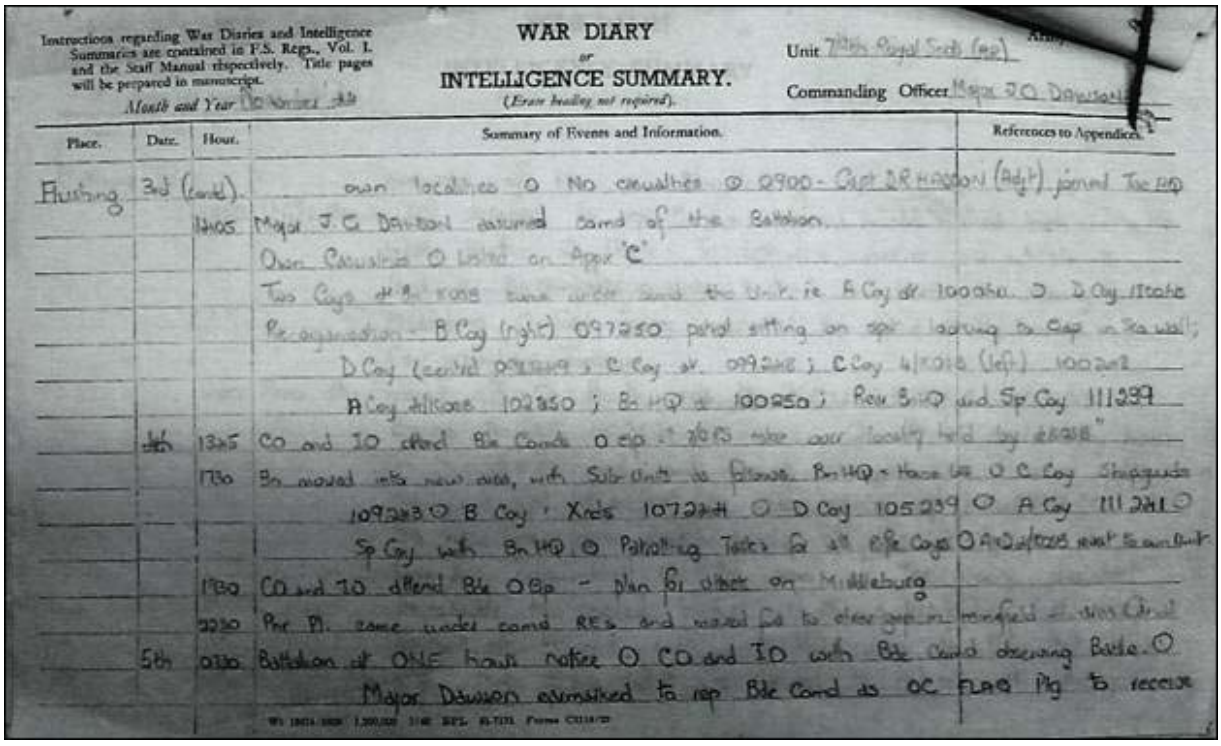
Month and Year November '44

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Flushing	2nd		Lieut Taylor and pl (B Coy) ordered to escort R/Cs and civilians from officers Mess Stopgate to area known as "Trout" (See TRACE A).	
		1130	Enemy MG Fire (indirect fire) on to our Bn O Gp area.	
		1420	Lieut Wilmore killed by hvy MG fire from North area. Bullets entered through top right window of Battn. O Room.	
		1700	C Coy move under comd S Hqrs and situated in area 113947. D & B Coys in area 115943 with task of sitting on bridge at 113941 and prevent infiltration from area North into FLUSHING. O & A Coys in area "FALMOUTH" 120940 with task observing area immediately North.	
		2100	Lt-Col M E MELVELL called to Bde HQ & received "brief" for Op "Infatuate" & CO's leaving	
		2215	O Gp attended by OCs B and D Coys; Capt THOMSON (OC C Coy); Comd Offr, 30 to O Pun See Appx A.	
	3rd	0205	Bn HQ moved off O Comms as per Diagram attached Appx A & Report of action and timings Appx B	
		0700	A Coy O activity in FALMOUTH was up to 0330 hrs & Coys fully concentrated on	

At 1420 hrs we sustained our first casualty when an officer was killed by machine-gun fire.

Commanding Officer (C.O.) received orders from the Brigade Commander at 2100 hrs to attack and capture the German Command Headquarters located in the Grand Hotel Britannia, which was to be carried out at the same time as 4 Commando launched an assault on the objective by crossing the gap in the sea wall. It subsequently transpired that 4 Commando were not able to proceed and the 7th/9th carried out the attack on its own. The C.O. held his orders group 2215 hrs and the Battalion attack force moved off at 0205 hrs.

The objective was approached through sea water flooding much of the island from the breach made in the sea-wall by the RAF. At high tide it was 0.6 metres deep and sometimes chest high. Everyone wore life-jackets with weapons and wireless sets carried shoulder high. After a fierce and bloody battle lasting from H-hour 3.30 hrs until about midday the heavily fortified German Command Post in the Grand Hotel Britannia, Flushing, was captured. 50 Germans were killed and 600 prisoners taken, including Oberst Reinhart the German commander in Flushing. 21 Royal Scots were killed.



WAR DIARY
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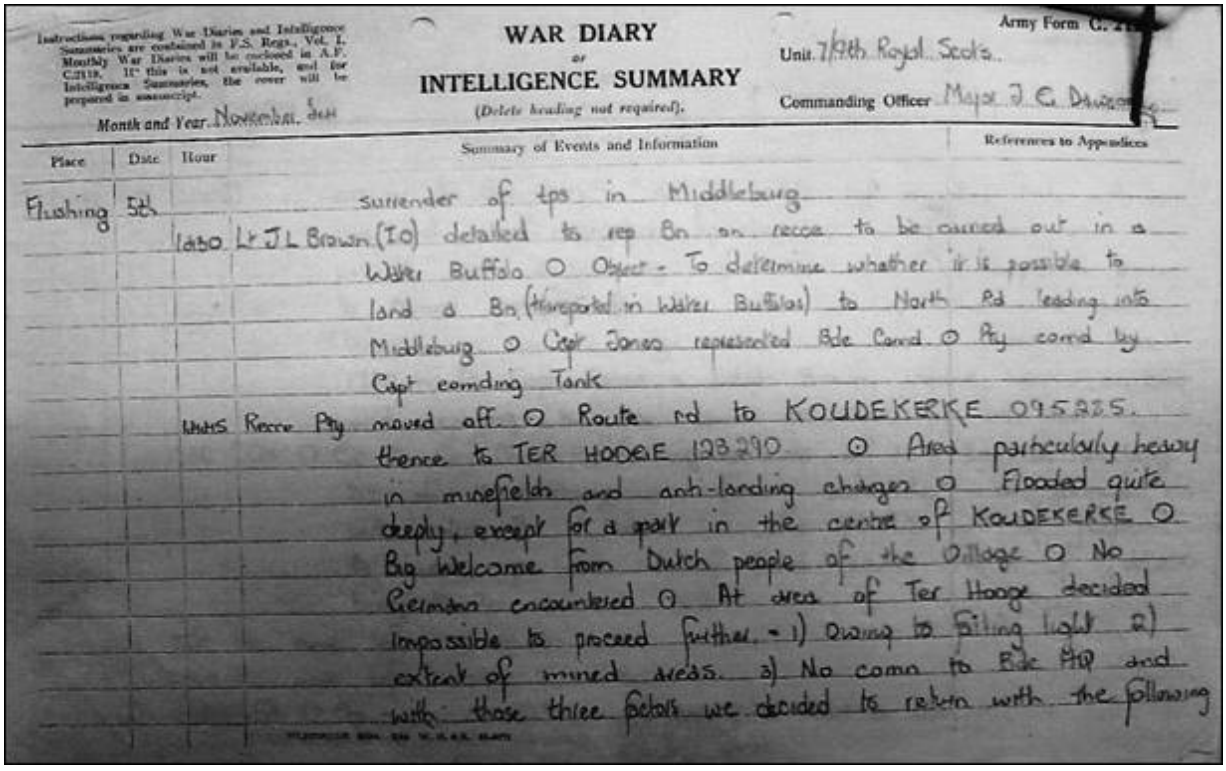
Unit 7/8th Royal Scots (Regt)

Commanding Officer Major J.C. Dawson

Place.	Date.	Hour.	Summary of Events and Information.	References to Appendices.
Flushing	3rd (contd).		own localities. No casualties. 0900 - Capt D.R. Haddon (Adjt) joined Tac HQ	
		1405	Major J.C. Dawson assumed comd of the Battalion.	
			Own Casualties. listed on Appx "C"	
			Two Coys of 8th Irish came under comd the Unit. ie. B Coy at 100280. D Coy Ittoke	
			Reorganisation - B Coy (right) 097250 patrol sitting on spit looking to Cap in the wall;	
			D Coy (centre) 098249; C Coy at 099248; C Coy 4/5018 (left) 100248	
			A Coy at/near 102250; Bn HQ at 100250; Rear Bn HQ and Sp Coy 111239	
	4th	1345	CO and IO attend Bde Comds O Gp. "Plan for clearing area now held by enemy"	
		1730	Bn moved into new area, with Sub Units as follows. Bn HQ - Haze [illegible] O C Coy Shipyards	
			109283 O B Coy; Xrds 107284 O D Coy 105279 O A Coy 111281 O	
			Sp Coy with Bn HQ O Patrolling Tasks for all Rifle Coys O A/Cs/Tanks sent to each Coy	
		1830	CO and IO attend Bde O Gp - Plan for attack on Middelburg	
		2230	Pnr Pl. came under comd RE's and moved fwd to clear gaps in minefield - then Canal	
	5th	0230	Battalion at ONE hour notice O CO and IO with Bde Comd during Battle. O	
			Major Dawson earmarked to rep Bde Comd as OC FLAG Pty to receive	

The C.O. was seriously wounded in the action and at 1405 hrs the Battalion Second-in-Command arrived to take over command.

The Acting C.O. with Battalion I.O. joined the Brigade Commander to observe the 4KOSB advancing from Flushing on both sides of the Canal towards Middelburg. Acting C.O. standing by as OC Flag Party if and when the enemy in Middelburg seek to surrender.



WAR DIARY
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Army Form C.

Unit 7/8th Royal Scots

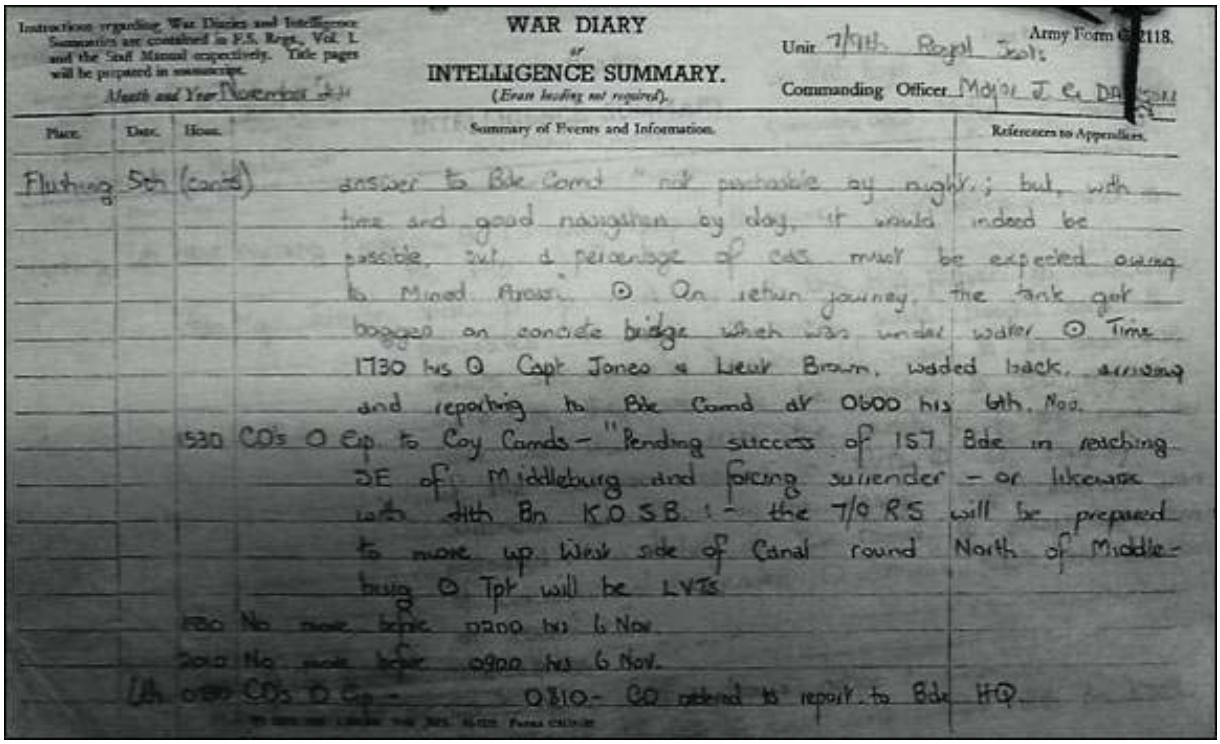
Commanding Officer Major J.C. Dawson

Month and Year November 5th

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Flushing	5th		surrender of tps in Middelburg	
		1450	Lt J.L. Brown (IO) detailed to rep Bn on recce to be carried out in a Weasel Buffalo O Object - To determine whether it is possible to land a Bn (transported in Weasel Buffalo) to North Rd leading into Middelburg O Capt Jones represented Bde Comd O Pty comd by Capt coming Tank	
		1445	Recce Pty moved off. O Route rd to KOUDEKERKE 095235. thence to TER HOOGE 123290 O Area particularly heavy in minefields and anti-landing charges O Flooded quite deeply, except for a part in the centre of KOUDEKERKE O Big welcome from Dutch people of the Village O No Germans encountered O At area of Ter Hooge decided impossible to proceed further. - 1) Owing to failing light 2) extent of mined areas. 3) No comn to Bde HQ and with those three factors we decided to return with the following	

The Brigade Commander was concerned at the strength of the opposition 4KOSB were encountering during their advance on Middelburg. The War Diary records the Brigade Commander then decided to order a reconnaissance patrol consisting of three officers (Senior Brigade Liaison Officer, 7/9th Battalion Intelligence Officer and the commander of the Buffalo Troop attached to Brigade) to determine whether it was possible for a battalion transported in Buffalos to get in position on the road north of Middelburg to launch an attack on Middelburg.

The patrol had to negotiate its way forward through heavy flood water, minefields and an extensive network of explosive devices positioned 5 to 6 feet above the ground erected to deter airborne landings.



WAR DIARY
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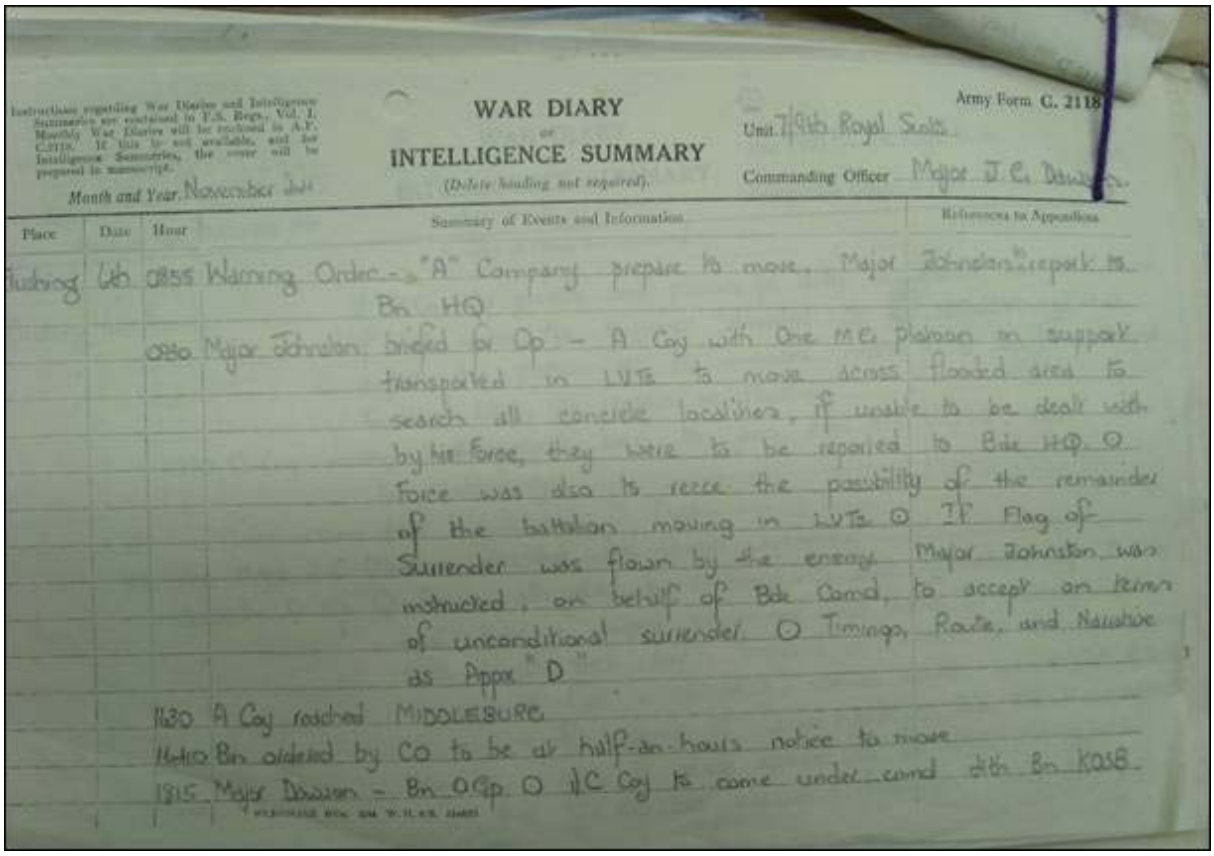
Army Form C. 2118.

Unit 7/9th Royal Scots

Commanding Officer Major J. E. D[illegible]

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Flushing	5th	(contd)	answer to Bde Comd "not practicable by night; but, with time and good navigation by day, it would indeed be possible, but a percentage of casualties must be expected owing to Mined Areas. ⊙ On return journey, the tank got bogged on concrete bridge which was under water. ⊙ Time 1730 hrs Capt Jones & Lieut Brown, waded back, arriving and reporting to Bde Comd at 0600 hrs 6th. Nov.	
		530	CO's O Gp to Coy Comds – "Pending success of 157 Bde in reaching SE of Middleburg and forcing surrender – or likewise with 4th Bn K.O.S.B. :- the 7/9 R.S. will be prepared to move up West side of Canal round North of Middleburg ⊙ Tpt will be LVTs	
		730	No move before 0200 hrs 6 Nov.	
		2000	No move before 0900 hrs 6 Nov.	
			0810 – CO ordered to report to Bde HQ.	

Having decided that it would be possible with good navigation in day light hours for a force to get into a position north of Middelburg to launch an attack, the patrol began making its way back to report to the Brigade Commander. However, the Buffalo manoeuvring to avoid overhead explosive charges got marooned on a concrete bridge that could not be seen under the dark, murky flood water. Efforts to dislodge the Buffalo having failed, the Brigade Liaison Officer and the 7/9th Battalion Intelligence Officer were rescued by the Resistance and taken by rowing boat to Koudekerke where they were advised they would have to wait until the tide was favourable before a crossing of the gap in the sea wall could be attempted. Before first light they began wading their way through the flood waters back to Brigade Headquarters, being guided and helped by the Resistance as they undertook the hazardous crossing over the substantial breach made by the RAF in the sea wall, encountering fast flowing tidal water which precariously swept around them as it made its way back into the Scheldt Estuary.



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Army Form C. 2118

Unit 7/9th Royal Scots

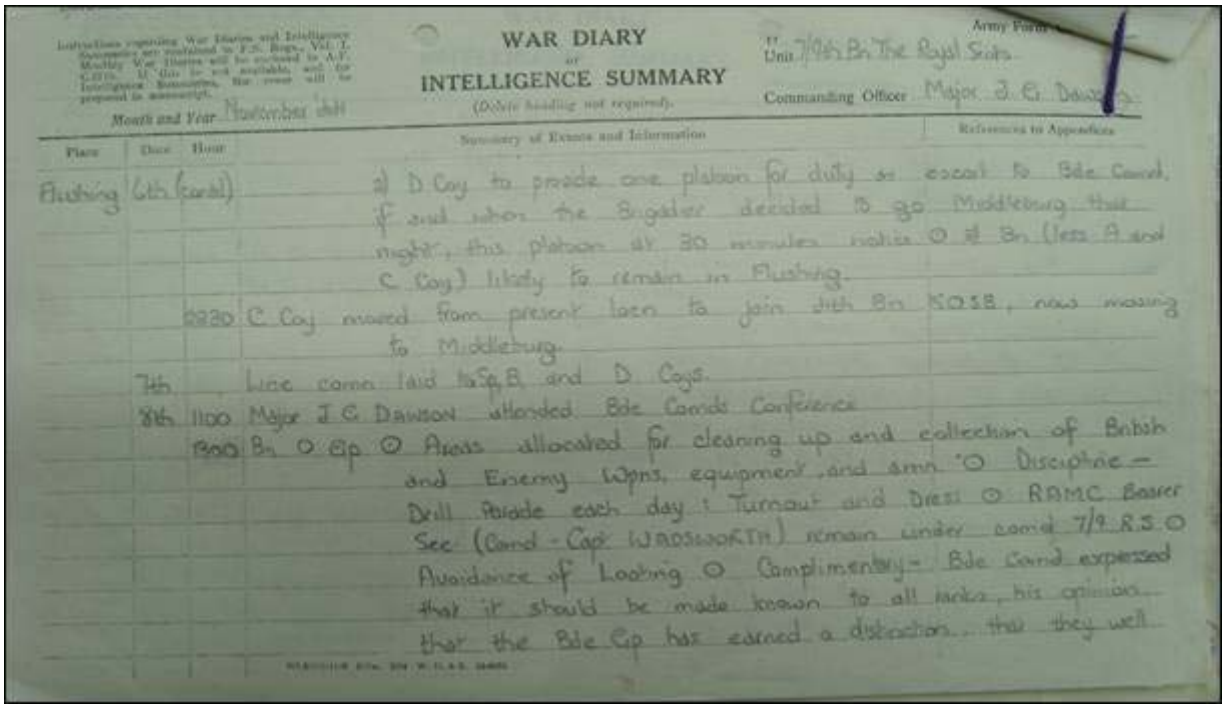
Commanding Officer Major J. C. Dawson

Month and Year November 194

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Rudwog	4th	0855	Warning Order - "A" Company prepare to move. Major Johnston reports to Bn HQ	
		0930	Major Johnston briefed for Op - A Coy with One MG platoon in support transported in LVTs to move across flooded area to search all concrete localities, if unable to be dealt with by his force, they were to be reported to Bde HQ. O Force was also to recce the possibility of the remainder of the battalion moving in LVTs. O If Flag of Surrender was flown by the enemy Major Johnston was instructed, on behalf of Bde Comd, to accept on terms of unconditional surrender. O Timings, Route, and Narrative as Appx "D"	
		1630	A Coy reached MIDDELBURG	
		1640	Bn ordered by CO to be at half-an-hours notice to move	
		1815	Major Dawson - Bn O Gp. O 'C' Coy to come under comd 4th Bn KOSB.	

The Brigade Commander ordered "A" Company of the 7/9th Battalion the Royal Scots to undertake the task to liberate Middelburg. It became known as 'Task Force Johnston' being named after Major Hugh Johnston, OC "A" Company. He had under his command 11th Machine Gun Platoon 7th Battalion The Manchester Regiment and ‘A’ Squadron 11th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment.

They moved through the flood water in Buffalos and overcoming mines and overhead explosive charges and advanced on the western flank of Middleburg. This unexpected approach of amphibious track vehicles filled with Jocks forced the surrender of General Daser, Commander 70th German Infantry Division and Fortress Walcheren, with 2000 of his men. One Royal Scot was killed in the battle.



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Army Form C.2118

Unit 7/9th Bn The Royal Scots

Commanding Officer Major J. G. Dawson

Month and Year September 1944

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
Flushing	6th (contd)		a) D Coy to provide one platoon for duty as escort to Bde Comd, if and when the Brigadier decided to go Middelburg that night, this platoon at 30 minutes notice to Bn (less A and C Coy) likely to remain in Flushing.	
		2230	C Coy moved from present loca to join 4th Bn KOSB, now moving to Middelburg.	
	7th		Line comm laid to Sp, B and D Coys.	
	8th	1100	Major J G Dawson attended Bde Comds Conference	
		1500	Bn O Gp ⊙ Areas allocated for cleaning up and collection of British and Enemy Wpns, equipment, and ammo ⊙ Discipline – Drill Parade each day : Turnout and Dress ⊙ RAMC Bearer Sec (Comd - Capt WADSWORTH) remain under comd 7/9 R.S ⊙ Avoidance of Looting ⊙ Complimentary – Bde Comd expressed that it should be made known to all ranks, his opinion that the Bde Gp has earned a distinction... that they well	

Detailing the consolidation. Battalion (less "A" Company in Middelburg and "C" Company attached and under command of 4KOSB as they reinforce Middelburg) detailed to collect all German and British weapons, equipment and ammunition. Orders issued for the avoidance of looting, attention to the turnout and dress of all ranks of the Battalion and drill parades each day.

NOTES of a War-time Infantry Battalion Intelligence Officer

Looking through a collection of Second World War memorabilia, I read again a file started when appointed Intelligence Officer (I.O) of the 7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots and thought some extracts may be on interest and have added then to my War memoirs.

To read in Battalion Orders I was now the Battalion's Intelligence Officer came as a complete surprise. I had just returned from a Signal Officers Course at the School of Signals at Catterick and anticipated I would resume command of No. 18 Platoon in 'D' Company. I was very happy there and felt fulfilled as a young officer, having a fine Platoon of just over thirty men with an excellent sergeant, in a superb Rifle Company with good atmosphere of friendly rivalry between the three Platoons. I was also part of a team of four officers that bonded well together and had respect and high regard for our Company Commander who was a professional soldier and an excellent leader. It was great and what I had been trained for.

It was the second platoon I had commanded after being Commissioned: the first was thirty young Royal Scots destined as reinforcements for the Lowland Regiments and they and I expected to be sent to the Far East. I had been with them for just over three months and when they received their posting they held a platoon meeting and three lads came to the Officers Mess to ask me to go on the draft with them as their officer. It was a rare honour and a deeply treasured moment for a very young officer with only one pip.

When I joined the 7/9RS I commanded 18 Platoon and felt well content to stay with them and pleased my Company Commander wanted to keep me but the Commanding Officer wanted an officer with a signals background to be one of his officers at Battalion Headquarters. I realised I was going to miss the close contact - a special relationship - that exists between the officers and men of a rifle company and the only solace the change would bring I would be at the centre of things, playing my part at Battalion Headquarters supporting the C.O. as he commanded the Battalion. I had experience of working at Battalion HQ when Signal Corporal of 8RS as I was usually in charge of the Signals Office. I doubt whether my Colonel would have remembered the occasions I had to deal with his telephone calls when he was Brigade Major and wanted to speak to the Colonel or the Adjutant of the 8RS! I guess my appointment to join Battalion HQ was 'horses for courses', being available as a trained Signals Officer if the Commanding Officer was confronted with reorganising his officers if and when there were casualties.

The Intelligence Section was a small unit with just myself, a sergeant, corporal and six men with responsibility to know as much as possible about the arms, equipment, formation and unit identities of the German Army. Initially I had a lot of reading and research to do and also set about establishing a close relationship with the Brigade I.O. and the two other Battalion I.O.s in 155 Infantry Brigade. I read all the available restricted and sometimes secret reports about the enemy made available through general intelligence gathering and from reports on our operations in the Western Desert and Italy.

We trained as a Section in setting up observation posts (O.Ps.) and manning these over a period of time to record incidents and movements [we had an excellent O.P. overlooking Dyce Airport], practised map reading which was an essential element of our work as was sketching terrain. We collecting and filed identification data about German Army grenadier units and their support troops along with detailed information and photographs of Germans arms and equipment; spent time

studying and familiarised ourselves with the kind of documents that would provide information about enemy deployment and intentions; and rehearsed procedures for dealing with P.O.Ws. But, sadly for me, there was no longer platoon bonfires in the Cairngorms with their banter and rivalry between 16 and 17 Platoons!

As Intelligence Officer I had to be ready to brief those concerned about the enemy and what was known about their objective and any special enemy weaponry and, of course, always be fully knowledgeable about the Battalion's operational plans, whilst my Section would record the progress of any battles and keep a War Diary (see pages 24 to 31). An example of their work is below: it is a plan of the battle area sketched by the Intelligence Section after the capture of the Hotel Britannia, recording enemy positions and the obstacles we had overcome and this would be sent to Division HQ attached to the War Diary.

When the Battalion were occupying a defensive position, the Section would keep a record and map all enemy occurrences and observations reported each day by rifle companies, snipers and observation posts. Whenever possible the Intelligence Section would set up its own forward Observation Post; page 74 shows on the signal diagram an Int OP sited in the Battalion's defence positions on the west bank of The Rhine at Xanten. My time along with the Intelligence Sergeant would be to appraise the information we had collated from these sources as significant incidents would form part of our Situation Report to be sent back to Brigade Headquarters. The information we had gathered could also have a bearing on any patrols needed to be sent out that night. Along with the Second-in-Command, Adjutant and Signals Officer I would share with them the important duty of staffing the Battalion Command Post throughout the twenty-four hours but always had to be ready at short notice to accompany the C.O. if he was called to Brigade Headquarters or visiting the Rifle Companies or neighbouring battalions.

The Intelligence Section had to make sure the Battalion had all the maps and aerial photographs needed for every operation. I would try to get a copy of any aerial interpretation maps for use in the Command Post, as it showed the latest aerial reconnaissance intelligence about enemy positions and possible weapon sites on our front. Having been trained to use a stereoscopic viewer at an Aerial Interpretation Course in Cambridge, I always tried to get a set of aerial photographs covering our objective for the Intelligence section office and be prepared to examine them to supplement the information we had already been given.

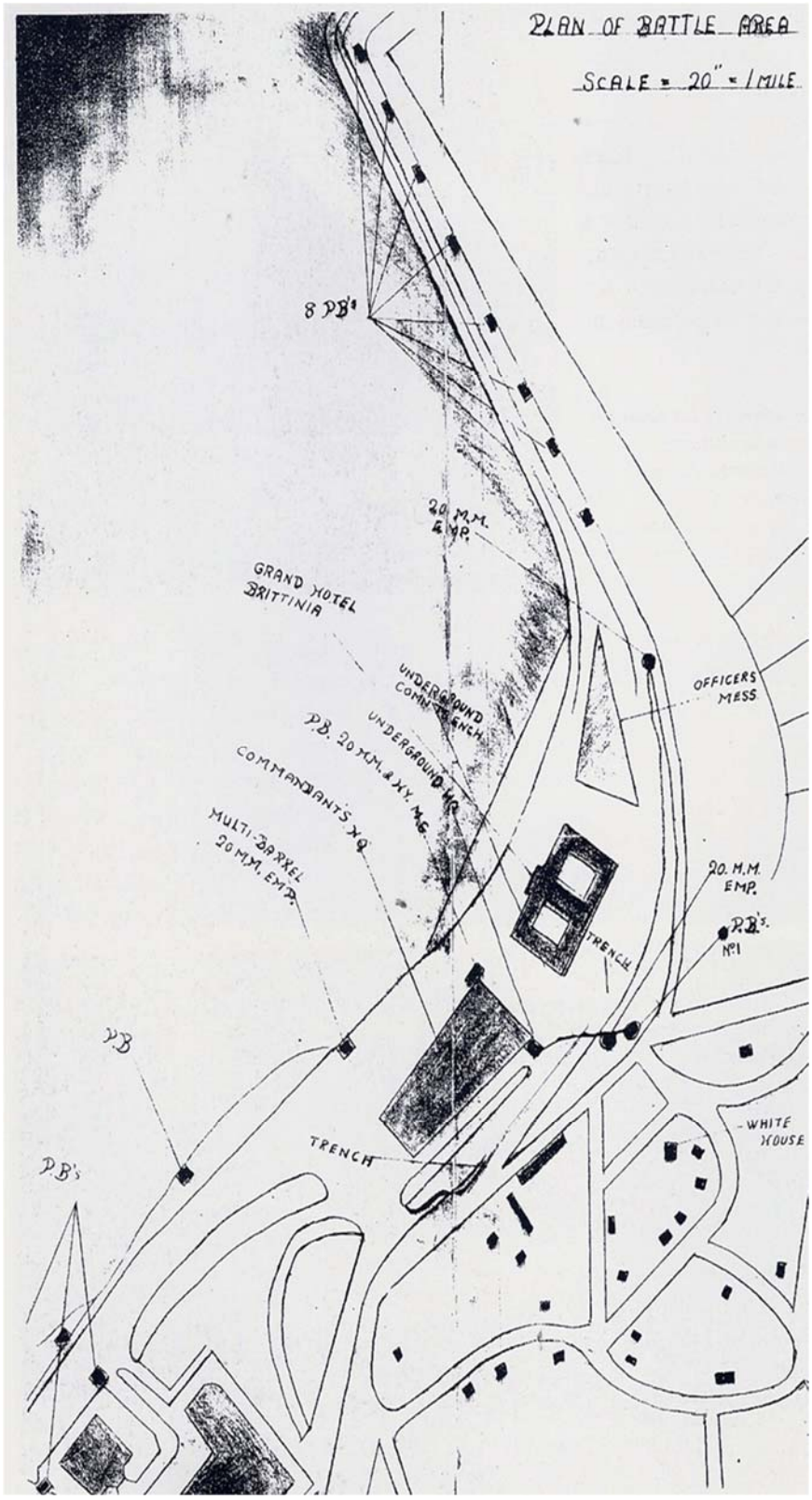
We would built sand models to assist in the briefing of officers and men about major operations such as that planned for our part in the airborne landing in the Forest of Rambouillet when we were part of General Brereton's Airborne Army. However, for our assault on Walcheren we used aerial photographs, and these proved to be excellent in putting everyone in the picture about our objective and the terrain we would have to deploy. A great development in the latter stages of the Second World War was the availability of low oblique views as they were an excellent way of orientating troops about to attack a position: the equal of a visual reconnaissance right up to the objective.

This view of Flushing clearly demonstrates the immense facility of aerial photography as an aid to briefing officers, non-commissioned officers and men preparing to assault an important enemy position. It graphically shows the location where our Assault Landing Craft had beached [1] and visually relates this to the Battalion's objective of the German Garrison Headquarters of Flushing located in the Hotel Britannia [2] being the centre of a heavily defended stronghold of concrete positions. It pin-points the nest of pillboxes north-east of our objective [5], that have to dealt with before attacking the main position.

The visual scope of the aerial view relates how near to our objective was the gap [3] where the sea water from the Scheldt Estuary came flooding into Flushing, breached by the RAF prior to our landing. The sea water was tidal and could reach waist high and sometimes reaching up to the chest. Although the aerial photograph cannot show the depth of the flooding, information from the Dutch Resistance led to a decision to wear Mae-West lifebelts, despite their disadvantage during the assault. It will be seen from the aerial photograph that our capture of the objective would only be

complete when the eight pillboxes on the sea dyke north-west of the Hotel Britannia [6] had been captured and our patrols had reached the sea wall gap [3] and visual contact with the Royal Marine Commandos had been made across the gap.

The aerial pin-points the site of a key pillbox, code-named 'Dover' [4], covering the beach and sea-frontage area of the Hotel Britannia; and the Water-tower, code-named 'Snipers Tower' [7], useful as a point of reference during our night advance but possibly occupied by snipers and to be dealt on our way to the forming-up position where we will launch the attack.



Plan of the Battle Area drawn by Private R. Marr of the Battalion Intelligence Section after the capture of the German Command Post in Flushing. It shows the Hotel Britannia and its defensive positions. November 1944.

My operational role as I.O. was tactical staff officer and would accompany the Commanding Officer (C.O.) when he received orders from the Brigadier, being briefed separately about the enemy by the Brigade I.O. During operations whenever he left Battalion HQ I would be with him and prepared to set up a Tactical Headquarters when ordered to do so. My role required me to be fully informed about the objectives of the Rifle Companies and Support Arms [Carrier Platoon with Bren machine-guns and flame-throwers; Mortar Platoon with 3-inch mortars; Anti-Tank Platoon with six 6-pounder anti-tank guns; and the Pioneer Platoon with their mine-clearing skills]. I had to be au fait with Artillery fire-plans, the extent of co-operation with Armoured Units, and have map references of neighbouring forces on the Battalion's flanks. My map-board would be marked with code-words for objectives and timings.

My map-board was an important 'tool' and often used to 'brief' groups of men whenever I had an opportunity to show them what was going in our immediate sector and also let them know about the other operations being undertaken by the British and American Armies: 'Putting them in the picture' was an edict of Field-Marshal Montgomery. I used to keep on the reverse side of the board a small-scale map of the Far East and keep myself up-dated with the progress of the War in Burma and the American island-by-island advances against the Japanese. The lads were always immensely interested and usually lots of questions near the end and there was always 'You haven't told us when we are going home, Sir!' and our little briefing session ended laughing with that happy thought that one day it would all be over and we could go home!

As infantry troops we were the first link in the chain of intelligence about the enemy's Order of Battle: it started at Battalion level. The enemy's Order of Battle was an important consideration when Corps and Divisional Commanders prepared their tactical plans. It was a special aspect of our job in the Intelligence Section to keep the Battalion's mind focused on obtaining intelligence about the enemy. The Intelligence file we started in 1943 was worth all the time spent in up-dating it with information from 52 (Lowland) Division Intelligence Section. It proved to be an excellent aide-memoire when we were faced with identifying specialist units and their weapons.

To the credit of the Battalion, the alertness of our forward troops led to an important enemy identification. A 7/9RS platoon occupying a defensive position on the River Maas was patrolling towards the river and became suspicious of three civilians they suspected of having just crossed the river. They were detained and from a preliminary investigation at Battalion HQ appeared to be enemy infiltrators. I told Division Intelligence Officer when we sent them back for expert questioning that they seemed to be more than 'just two civilian refugees'. I was delighted when they were subsequently identified as members of the Brandenburg Sabotage Division, an elite German formation, and the first of their unit to be captured on our Divisional front. It was an important enemy identification and a feather in the cap for our alertness.

German Unit Identification

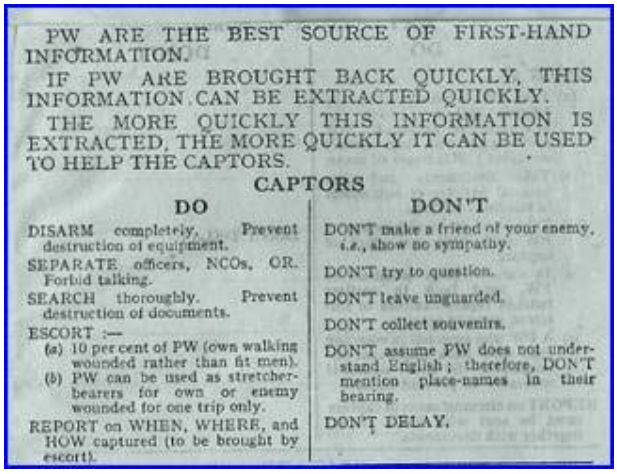
I was regularly briefed by the Brigade I.O. about the enemy on our front. Daily reconnaissance missions were flown across the Division’s front by a Lysander and any enemy movements were appraised. Orders could be received at Battalion for a fighting patrol to bring back prisoners to confirm whether enemy unit changes had occurred.

We had Divisional Standing Orders for recording data about the capture of specific prisoners:

(a) Name of prisoner:	SCHMIDT
(b) Time and Date of Capture:	1130 hrs 27 Jan
(c) Place of Capture:	Pill Box 1234
(d) Directions of Prisoner's movement at time of capture:	North
(e) In what strength was enemy from where prisoner captured:	Company

We were trained to ensure that captured officers and non-commissioned officers would be searched first and their documents taken. We also removed P.O.W.'s shoulder-straps and would send them back with the escort and if a particular individual was not wearing any identity he would be especially noted. Paybooks with brown covers were important and those belonging to officers showing their unit, sub-unit and personal number on page 4. When we captured 600 P.O.Ws. at the Hotel Britannia in Flushing and 2000 in Middelburg we were overwhelmed but kept to the basic fundamentals of separating officers and NCOs.

My notebook details how we had to handle and treat P.O.Ws; the golden rule was 'Separate - Search - and Send Back Quickly'.



PW ARE THE BEST SOURCE OF FIRST-HAND INFORMATION.

IF PW ARE BROUGHT BACK QUICKLY, THIS INFORMATION CAN BE EXTRACTED QUICKLY.

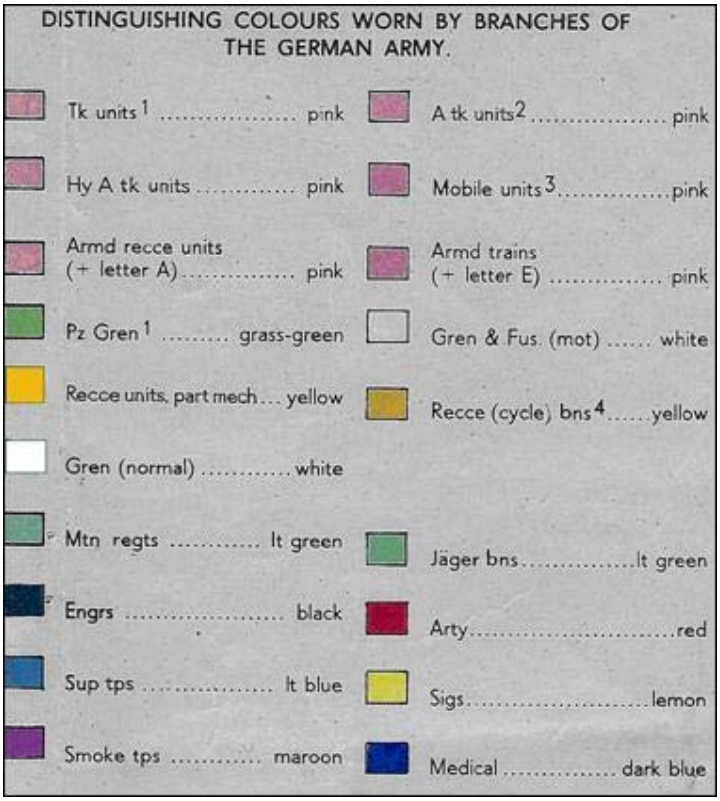
THE MORE QUICKLY THIS INFORMATION IS EXTRACTED, THE MORE QUICKLY IT CAN BE USED TO HELP THE CAPTORS.

CAPTORS

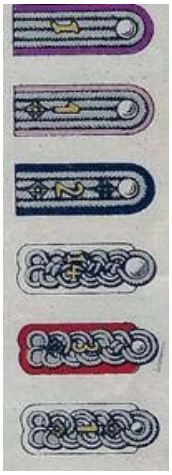
DO	DON'T
DISARM completely. Prevent destruction of equipment.	DON'T make a friend of your enemy, i.e., show no sympathy.
SEPARATE officers, NCOs, OR. Forbid talking.	DON'T try to question.
SEARCH thoroughly. Prevent destruction of documents.	DON'T leave unguarded.
ESCORT :— (a) 10 per cent of PW (own walking wounded rather than fit men). (b) PW can be used as stretcher-bearers for own or enemy wounded for one trip only.	DON'T collect souvenirs.
REPORT on WHEN, WHERE, and HOW captured (to be brought by escort).	DON'T assume PW does not understand English; therefore, DON'T mention place-names in their hearing.
	DON'T DELAY.

Enemy identification is made through the colour patches they wear, indicating arm of service. The panel below shows the colour distinctions. As infantry we expected to confront greenish uniforms with the white patches of the infantry (grenadiers) or green patches of Panzer grenadiers, and/or the pink patches of armoured personnel when attacked by German 'battle groups' of infantry and/or artillery and tanks.

If other colour patches were identified, they had to be reported. For example the blue of support troops, red of artillery (possibly forward observation men), black of engineers, the lemon of signallers, maroon of smoke troops. If they were in the forward areas that was important intelligence.



OFFICERS' RANK:



Leutnant (2nd Lieutenant) [Smoke Unit]

Oberleutnant (Lieutenant) [Tank Regiment]

Hauptmann (Captain) [2 Engineer Battalion]

Major [14 Infantry Regiment]

Oberstleutnant (Lieut-Colonel) [3 Artillery Regiment]

Oberst (Colonel)

WARRANT OFFICERS, SERGEANTS, CORPORALS: Piping around shoulder strap indicates arm of service; whilst numerals on button shows Company, Troop or Squadron but these not worn in forward areas.

Unterfeldwebel
(Lance-Sergeant)
[6 Medical Unit]

Feldwebel or Wachmeister [Sergeant]
1 Company,
3 Engineer Bn

Oberwachtmeister
[Squadron Sergeant- Major]
17 Recce Unit

Unteroffizier
[Corporal or Bombardier]
3 Artillery Regiment

LANCE-CORPORALS and PRIVATES: Insignia worn on the left sleeve

Oberschütze
(Private more than one year's service)

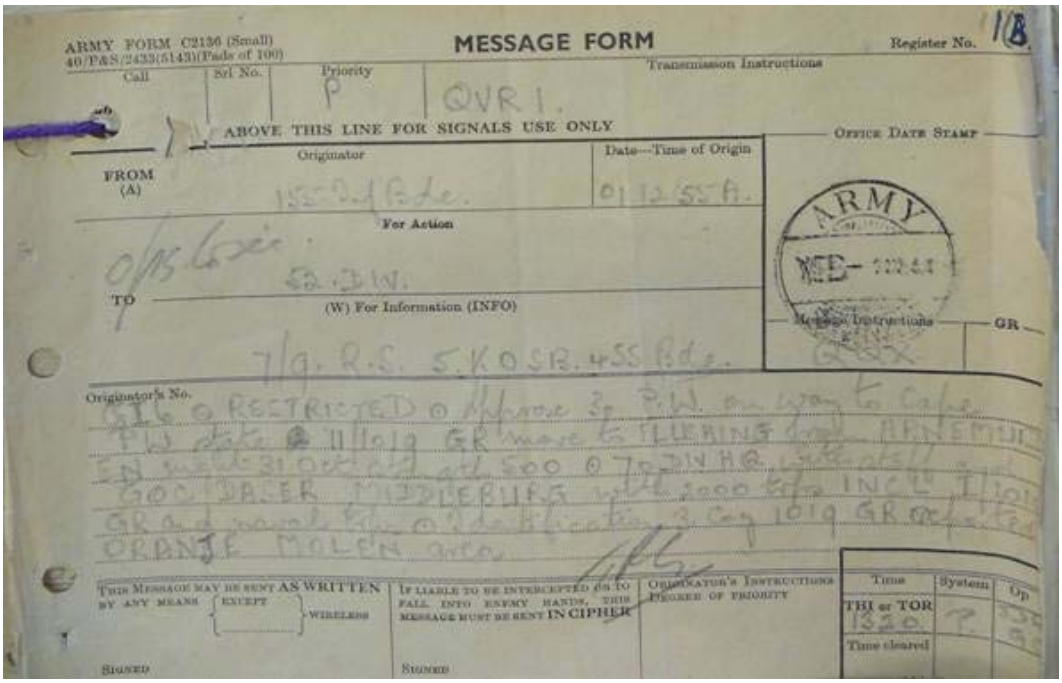
Gefreiter
(Acting L-Cpl or L-Bdr)

Obergefreiter (L.-Cpl or L.-Bdr) six years service one chevron one star.

Stabdgefreiter
(Staff L.-Cpl)

We were always anxious to get our hands on captured documents before they were destroyed. Marked maps, signal diagrams, code lists, operational orders, intelligence summaries, routine daily orders and copies of office stamps or frankings were all valuable sources of intelligence and most likely indicators of enemy intentions and identification. A glance at reference numbers on these documents highlighted their possible value: IA Operations, IB QBranch, Ib Ordnance, Ic Intelligence, ID Training, IIa Officer casualties, IIb Other Rank casualties, III Legal, IVa Administration, IVb Medical, IVc Vet., IVd Chaplain and V Technical. Priority had to be given to IA and Ic in passing these back to Brigade Headquarters. German diaries and letters, photos and diagrams of enemy equipment, training manuals and unmarked German maps were also sent back.

This signal message shows Battle Intelligence at work. Interrogation of P.O.Ws reveals enemy troop movements and identification of units; 155 Brigade HQ sends priority message to Operations at 52 Division HQ. [I am grateful to Mr Jan Wigard [see Page 13, para. 5] for providing a copy of this signal message.]



ARMY FORM C2136 (Small)
40/P&S/2433(5143)(Pads of 100)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No. 18

Call | Srl No. | Priority: P | Transmission Instructions: QVR 1.

ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY

Office Date Stamp: ARMY NED 1 NOV 44

FROM (A): 155 Inf Bde. | Originator | Date—Time of Origin: 01 12.55 A.

For Action

TO: 52 Div.

(W) For Information (INFO)

Message Instructions: GR

7/9 R.S. 5 KOSB. 4th Spl Svce Bde.

Originator's No. GI 6

PW approx 30 on way to Cage.
P.W. state II/1019 GR moved to FLUSHING from ARNEMUIDEN night 31 Oct 44 strength 500. 70 Div HQ with staff GOC DASER MIDDELBURG with 2000 troops INCL I/1019 GR and naval troops. Identification 3 Coy 1019 GR reported ORANJE MOLEN area.

This Message may be sent AS WRITTEN BY ANY MEANS (except WIRELESS)

If liable to be intercepted or to fall into enemy hands, this message must be sent IN CIPHER

Originator's Instructions regarding Degree of Priority

Time: TBI or TOR 1320 | Time cleared | System | Op

Signed | Signed

From: 155 Inf Brigade to 52 Div copy

Copy: 7/9RS, 5KOSB, 4th Special Service Bde.

Date-Time of Origin: 01 [November] 12.55 hrs.

Originator's No. GI 6 [G=Ops; I=Int.]

Approx 30 PW on way to cage.
P.W. state II/1019 GR *[2nd Battalion 1019 Grenadier Regiment]* move to Flushing from Arnenuiden *[a location 4 kilometres west of Middelburg, presumably the Regiment in reserve being rushed forward to the aid of the Flushing Garrison]* night 31 Oct, strength 500. 70 Div HQ *[70 Infanterie Division]* with staff and GOC Daser Middelburg with 2000 troops including I/1019 GR and naval troops. Identification 3 Company 1019 GR reported ORANJE MOLEN area *[area of the Docks at Flushing]*

British Infantry Battalion v. German Grenadier Battalion

British	**German**
Bn HQ	**Bn HQ**
HQ Company	---
Four **Rifle Companies**	*Three* **Rifle Companies**
Support Company:	**MG Company:**
Mortar Platoon *six* 3-inch mortars (transported in carriers);	*three* **MG Platoons** of *three* sections each with *four* MG42s;
Carrier Platoon of *four* sections each with *three* carriers, *twelve* LMGs, *three* Wasp flame-throwers,	**Medium Mortar Platoon** with *three* sections each with *two* 8cm mortars;
three 2-inch mortars;	**Infantry Gun Company**
Anti-Tank Platoon with *six* 6-Pounder Anti-tank guns;	with *six* 7.5cm Infantry Artillery Guns, *two* 15cm Infantry Artillery Guns;
Pioneer Platoon equipped for mine-laying and detection.	**Anti-Tank Company** with *nine* 5cm Anti-tank guns, *six* LMGs

It was helpful 'in knowing your enemy' to be aware of the differences in organisation between us. The British and German rifle companies had three platoons but the German platoons were larger, having four sections to our three. They had the same section strength of 10 men with a section leader, 3 men firing and belt-feeding the MG42 and 6 riflemen; however, the German platoon had a light mortar section compared to our single 2-inch mortar at platoon headquarters. Their concentrated use of German mortars always seemed to me to be very effective.

The German battalion Support Company had 3 Medium Machine-gun Platoons with twelve MG42s on heavy mounting (schweres Maschinengewehr: [abbreviated] s.M.G); and 1 Medium Mortar Platoon with six 8cm mittlerer Granatwerfer (8cm m.Gr.W.) The German battalion also had an Infantry Gun Company with 8 Infantry Artillery Guns.

The Germans having 3 MG Platoons normally allotted one to each of their three rifle companies; both German and British battalions kept their heavy mortars as specialist sub-units. The Germans did not have a Carrier Platoon and also the disadvantage of having to rely on horse-drawn transport to bring forward their ammunition, company rations and other baggage; motor vehicles and half-tracks being reserved for their artillery and specialist weapons like the Nebelwerfer rocket-projector.

German Infantry Weaponry we faced

When we attacked a German rifle company position we could face twelve rifle sections each with an MG42 and six riflemen, plus the fire-power from one MG Platoon with four MMGs and one Mortar Section with two 8cm mortars and one Anti-tank Section with three grenade-firing rifles (anti-tank and anti-personnel).

In the fire-power mix there could be *one* sniper's rifle with telescopic sight, *one* self-loading rifle, *one* rifle discharger cup lobbing grenades, *one* anti-tank rocket-launcher as well as a modified signal pistol able to fire anti-tank and anti-personnel grenades.

23mm Anti-Tank Grenade Pistol
A modified Signals Pistol, fires an Anti-Tank projectile of approx. one pound.

This rifle is self-loading, operated by surplus gas pressure trapped in the cylinder at the muzzle. Has a 10-round box magazine and can be fired using British 7.92mm Besa ammunition. [Used it as my personal weapon in addition to my Smith@Wesson point-38.]

Below is a **High Explosive Grenade**, with a fuze delay of 4.5 seconds and a burst radius of 16 yards.

Rifle Discharger (Cup type) with Anti-Personnel Projectile
[Projector screws into rifle barrel].

Formidable as that concentration of enemy firepower could be, the German rifle company could also have the direct support of a Platoon of two 7.5cm Light Infantry Guns to cover targets beyond the range of their 8cm mortars; and there were two Heavy (15cm) Infantry Guns at German battalion headquarters with 83-pound shells to reach targets up to a range of about 5000 yards.

Anti-Tank Guns were usually allocated to German battalions, giving them three guns compared with six in a British battalion; the calibre of the guns roughly the same. Their Anti-Tank Company was the one motorized sub-unit in the grenadier regiment. The German rifle company also had an anti-tank rifle section with three anti-tank rifles (point-31 calibre) that could also fire anti-personnel grenades.

Table 1 shows the strength and fire-power of a German rifle company.

INFANTRY REGIMENT IN AN INFANTRY DIVISION

(b) Strength and fire-power

	Strength (approx)	LMGs	MMGs	A tk rifles	5-cm (2-in) mortars	8-cm (3-in) mortars	5-cm (1·97-in) A tk guns	7·5-cm (2·95-in) inf guns	15-cm (5·91-in) inf guns
Regt	3,215	118	36	27	27	18	9	6	2
Bn	854	36	12	9	9	6	—	—	—
Rifle Coy	191	12	—	3	3	—	—	—	—
MG Coy	202	—	12	—	—	6	—	—	—
13 Inf Gun Coy	200	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	2
14 A tk Coy	153	6	—	—	—	—	9	—	—

The balance and effectiveness of machine-guns between us was very important. The German MG42 was introduced in 1942 to replace the MG34. Used as Light Machine-gun (LMG) when fired from bipod; as a Medium Machine-gun (MMG) when mounted on a tripod and aimed with a dial sight. German rifle company had 12 LMGs plus 4 MMGs attached from the MG Company.

German MG42 [7.92mm (point-31in)]
Rate of fire 1,200 – 1,300 rpm

In comparison, a British rifle company had nine Bren LMGs but the Battalion's Carrier Platoon with twelve LMGs [4 Sections, each three Bren LMGs] could be deployed to supplement the fire-power of the rifle companies or as flank protection or as a screen in front of the Battalion.

British Bren LMG (point-303in)
Rate of fire 500 rpm. Range 1,850 yards

The normal role for the Bren was firing as an LMG using the bipod; when mounted on a tripod it became an MMG able of firing on fixed lines, used especially at night to cover enemy approaches or ground likely to be used as a forming-up place. The Bren LMG was especially effective when fired from the hip during an assault charge.

If and when a Platoon of the Manchester Regiment was attached to a battalion, *four* Vickers MGs with a range of 4,500 yards could be deployed. These were superb weapons, belt-fed, had enormous fire-power.

British Vickers MMG (point-303in)
Rate of fire 500 rpm
Range 4,500 yards

The German MG42 had double the rate of fire compared with the Bren LMG and the Vickers MMG. However, the German MG42 suffered breaks in fire due to over-heating and as it used belts of 50 rounds it needed to be kept supplied and reloaded requiring a crew of 3 (one gunner and two ammunition carriers). They were generally sited in pairs to cover each other, but we would expect this as it was a basic manoeuvre used by us in siting our Bren LMGs. Our battle drill of fire and movement with a rifle group and the Bren machine-gun section moving separately in bounds gave cover to each other in an attack: the Germans did this less frequently.

Enemy Weapons

Wpn.	Type.	Weight	Rate of Fire	Range.	Remarks
Rifles.	98 (bolt)	9lb		100–1200 m.	Latest type short (short ½ in) Gewehr 98/40 (7.92)
	dtl M.	10lbs 14.		100–1200 m.	Reload automatically 10rd mag.
	Sdkd dt2	10lbs 12	660rpm (c)	1,300 yds	very light gas-op MG – automatic or single – Bayonet.
M.Gs.	MG 34.	26½ lbs.	LMG 150 MG 300 cyclic 2/900	LMG–1650 yds	Bipod or Tripod (dt2lbs) Belts of 50 rds
	MG dt2	23¾ lbs	LMG 150–160 MG 460 1ct 1200	MG –3750 "	do.
Carbines	Schmeisser	9lb	(c) 520-540	250-290	32 rd. mag.
Pistols.	Lüger 08	1lb 14oz.		50–100 yds	Self Loading
	Walther 38	1lb 15oz		do.	do.
	Eirendale(w)	1lb 9½oz		100 yds.	modification of Sig pistol Rifled barrel dial sight.
Grenades.	"Stick"	1lb 4oz		50 yds	Normally HE. "O Not very effective (Sm. Nb "white")
	Egg.	10oz.		25 yds	5 secs delay. Blue knob. OK – Red – booby Trap!!!
	Hollow ch.	2lb 2oz		20-30 yds	Tank (L -20° d. dt")
	Smoke.	20oz		25 yds	Green Knob 3 secs – 1½ - 2 mins smoke.

This page from my War-time notebook is dated 1944. These machine-guns, rifles and small arms supported by mortar bombardment were the basic elements of the infantry battle, in attack or defence. We expected the enemy's fire-fight to be supplemented by field artillery and heavier medium field guns firing before and during an attack; in close combat to meet hand-thrown and rifle-fired grenades and flame throwers could also be a part of the lethal mix.

Tanks were always a frightening hazard to both German and British infantry. When they appeared we had protect ourselves with anti-tank hand-held weapons. With prior knowledge or expectation of

their deployment we sited anti-tank guns to deal with the threat. In defence we laid anti-tank mines and dug delaying ditches, with anti-personnel mines to delay the attacker in a designated area covered by pre-registered artillery, mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire. However, when we were attacking an enemy position we had to be prepared to quickly fight our way out of delaying obstacles by prepared artillery fire and bold use of bangalore torpedoes by our forward troops to make gaps in the German wire and move our attack forward on to the German 'strong-points' as rapidly as possible.

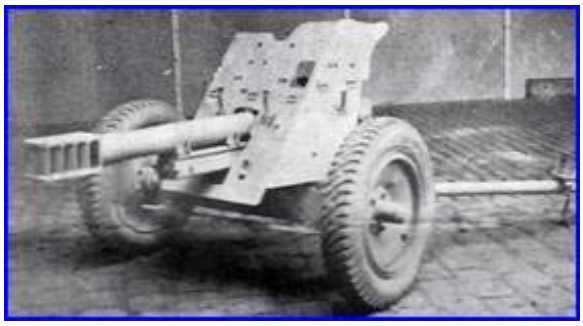
German Mortars: (l to r)
Range 5cm 568 yards; Short 8cm 1,200 yards; Normal 8cm 2,600 yards.

British 3-in Mortar: range 1,600 yards

Mortars

Type.	Rate of fire	Range.	Weight projectile.	German Amn.	Weight	Remarks
5 cm.	6rds - 9secs	568 yds	2 lbs	5cm W. Gr 36 (HE)	30lbs 12	Now obsolete.
8 cm (42)		1200 yds	7 9/11 lbs	HE and Smoke.	62 lbs	2 pr Rifle Coy HQ.
8 cm (34)	6rd - 9secs	2600 yds	7 3/11 lbs	34 HE 34 Nb - Sm. 38 Airburst. 34 Dewt - indicator 38 - do -	125 lbs	NCO+5 = 3 pts.
12 cm.	8 10 rds p.m.	6,500 yds	35 lb	HE and Sm	5 1/4 cwt	2-wheel rubber tyre carriage

We had great respect for the very effective German mortar organisation. As a counter-balance, the British 25-pound artillery was superb as a close support weapon and clearly superior to the German Light Infantry Gun-Howitzers.



German 7.5cm Infantry Gun-Howitzer

British 25-Pounder Field Gun

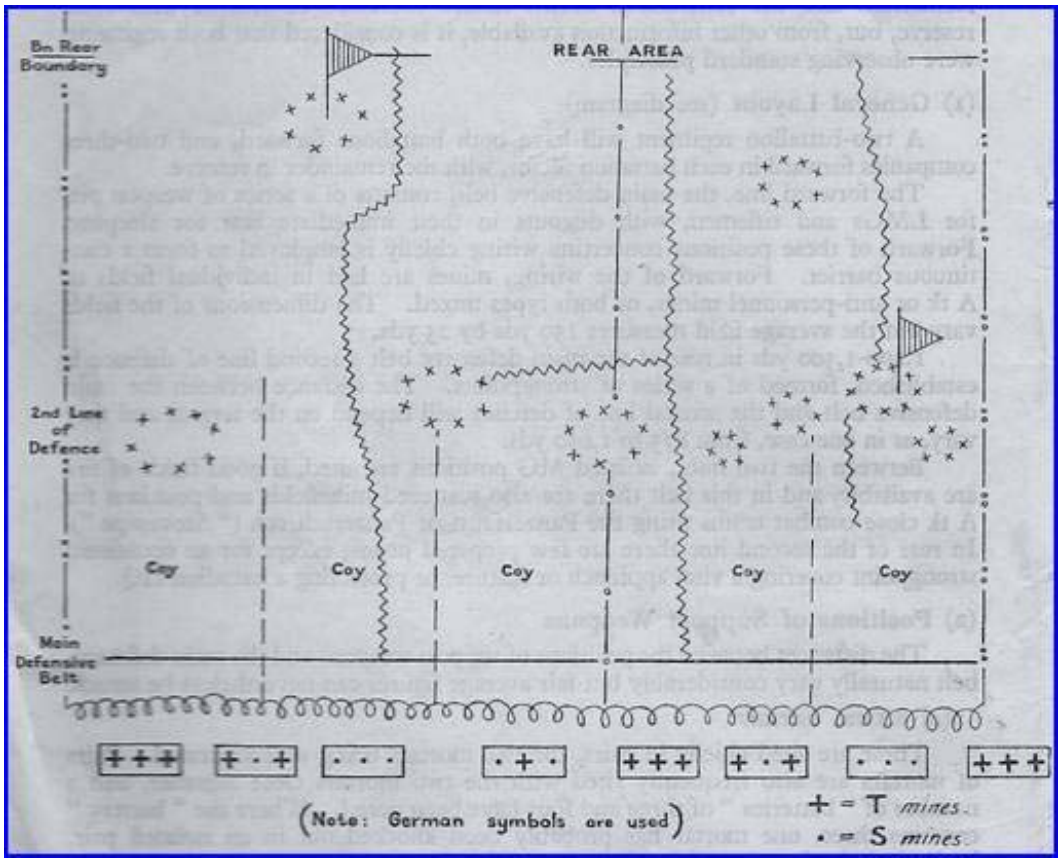
German Defensive Positions

The Intelligence file noted German defence tactics based on intelligence from the North African and the Italian campaigns, where they were reported to have had well-prepared formidable defensive lines. A map captured at Anzio shown below is an example of a two-battalion regiment in a strongly held defensive position.

However, the situation in Europe following the successful establishment of the bridgehead at Normandy and the subsequent break-through after we had captured Caen, forced the Germans to use a very effective aggressive 'mobile' defence. Their strategy was based on their need to delay our advance and provide the German High Command with time to develop operational manoeuvrability to regain the initiative. A strong feature of their 'mobile' form of defence was based on the launching of immediate counter-attacks to try and regain lost ground, especially key 'strong-points' when these were over-run.

Although we were trained to attack orthodox in-depth defence positions, we quickly adapted to attacking these 'nests of all arms' deployed to defend hills and ridges, villages and road junctions, woods and river lines. The enemy were adept and skilled in their counter-attacks, said to be rehearsed, and we equally became skilled in pushing through the objective after a successful attack and quickly prepared our troops to repel the enemy 'battle-group' of infantry and/or tanks as they came in from a flank. It was axiomatic for us to immediately dig in and co-ordinate our fields of fire with neighbouring units. We also knew we were occupying ground pre-registered by their artillery and a good incentive to get dug in . . . but quick!

This sketch shows the static defence layout by a Two-Battalion Grenadier Regiment at Anzio.



Attacking this position we would meet two screens of troops deployed forward of the main defensive line. A screen of lightly manned advanced positions about 5000 yards in front, then about 3000 yards behind more troops dug-in but ready to fall back to the main forward 'battle outposts' if likely to be over-run. These deployments intended to delay us and prematurely deploy, seeking to hold us pinned down in their field of fire ranged for divisional artillery, infantry field guns and mortars as well as MGs.

When we reached the forward main defensive belt, our urgent need was to secure several break-through points through their concertina wire and minefields. The minefields at Anzio measured 150 yards by 25 yards with anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. Having anticipated this, our artillery would have targeted these wire/minefield hazards and our forward troops ready to use Bangalore torpedoes to open up the wire. Once through, we would meet 'nests of all arms' with their MMG42s and riflemen in weapon pits with dugouts built in their rear. Our artillery barrage would be timed or signalled to assist us as we advanced in phases of fire and movement, each section and platoon supporting each other as they attacked their allotted objectives. In the inevitable close encounter each side ready to use bayonets, grenades and anti-personnel missiles.

The second line of defence some 900 to 1700 yards behind the main forward line would become the objective of reserve troops passing through us to attack the next series of strong-points. If German habit is followed and terrain is suitable these may not necessarily be closely supporting by cross-fire but with open ground between them protected by wire and mines and/or anti-tank ditches intended to force us into the fire of their Mg42s and riflemen. This could be a phase where both sides use flame throwers.

In defence the Germans were adept at camouflage and having well-sited alternative positions, often with misleading 'dummy' positions. Snipers with telescopic-sighted rifles an expected hazard. However, the sting is always in the tail as the Germans believe the defence battle has only been won when they have worn us out and we have been successfully routed by a flank attack.

The German Attack

A German attack can be anticipated after a period of active patrolling on our front, usually by fighting patrols of ten men prodding our defences looking for a weak point. If found, will then attack in strength almost at once. If no obvious weakness found, they will attack at several points and reinforce wherever they are successful.

They believe success in attack is to win the initial fire-fight. They tend to concentrate maximum fire support of all their weapons on a narrow front, of light and heavy infantry guns, divisional artillery, SP assault guns and smoke mortars.

Once they have penetrated, power is delegated to forward troops to take the initiative and drive the assault forward, their flanks will be guarded by artillery and anti-tank fire and screened by smoke. As the first wave pushes on, it will be followed by successive waves to widen the gap and then motorised troops and/or tanks can be expected.

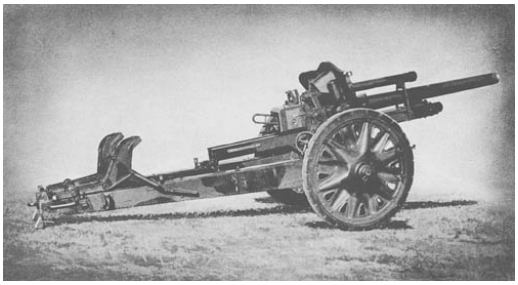
Points to look for in an attack: (1) MG and mortar groups of 2 to 3, second-in-command carrying tommy-gun. (2) Ranging rounds by their 8cm mortars. (3) Pronounced flash and loud report of infantry artillery. (4) Platoons moving 'one-up', 'two-up' or 'three-up'. (5) Sections advancing in single file and MG42s firing through the gaps

German Artillery

German Artillery is a separate arm of the service distinguished by the red colour piping on shoulder straps.

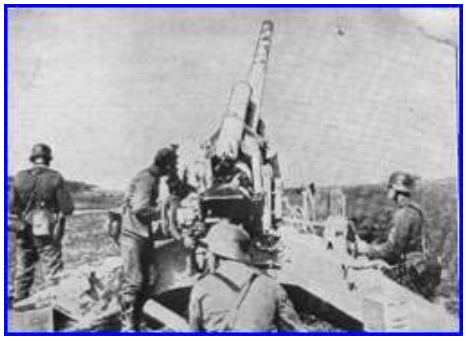
Each Grenadier regiment has its own artillery of light and heavy infantry guns and manned by infantrymen wearing white piping on their shoulder-straps. These guns deployed much further forward than normal field artillery as they are short-range.

German equivalent of our 25-Pounder is 10.5cm gun-howitzer. The calibre is slightly larger (4.14ins) and shell heavier (33lbs). Range is 11,670 yards but with muzzle-brake (as for 25-Pounder) can range up to 13,400 yards.



10.5cm (4.14ins) Gun Howitzer
Normal Field Artillery. Range 13,400 yards.

15cm. (5.91ins) Field Gun
Medium Artillery Weapon.
Range 25,000 yards.



15cm (5.91ins) Howitzer
Medium Artillery Weapon (Divisional Artillery of Infantry). Range 16,400 yards.

21cm Rocket Projector (Nebelwerfer). Range 10,000yds.
Nebelwerfer was originally developed as a chemical warfare weapon.
Nebelwerfer = smoke mortar.
Towed by half-tracks in and out of prepared positions.

8.8cm Multi-Purpose Gun. Range 11,300 yards.

A very effective anti-personnel, anti-tank, anti-aircraft weapon.

German Flame Throwers

Only Engineers carry and use flamethrowers and usually attached to infantry units down to the smallest assault detachments . Two engineers with a flamethrower may be included in a raiding patrol, but normally they are with the larger patrols who will clear the way forward and provide them with covering fire.

Flamethrowers are normally used against static targets like pillboxes as they aim for openings or parapets; enemy infantry detachments advance within effective range using smoke or MG42s fire or supported by a single tank. Men carrying flamethrowers are easy targets and have a high casualty rate as the weapon is short-ranged. Fire is usually single short flame bursts used on individuals but sprayed bursts on area targets.

Light Portable Flamethrower (1940 pattern)

Has an annular ring cylindrical section, like a lifebuoy.

Range 30 yards; fuel for about 80 bursts 1-2 seconds duration.

The more powerful Flamethrower Tanks of the Panzer Grenadier units carry 2 tanks of 35 gallons and have a range of about 40 yards and use spray bursts of 3 to 4 minutes.

German Mines

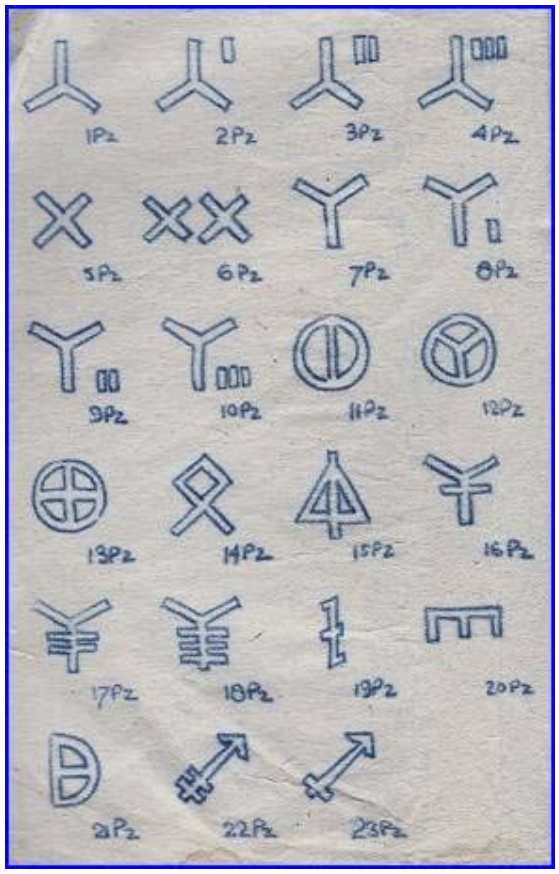
Left: **S-Mine 35 Anti-Personnel**
Contains about 350 ⅜ins steel balls.

Right: **Schü Anti-Tank Mine**
Light plywood box 5 x 3⅞ x 2 ins

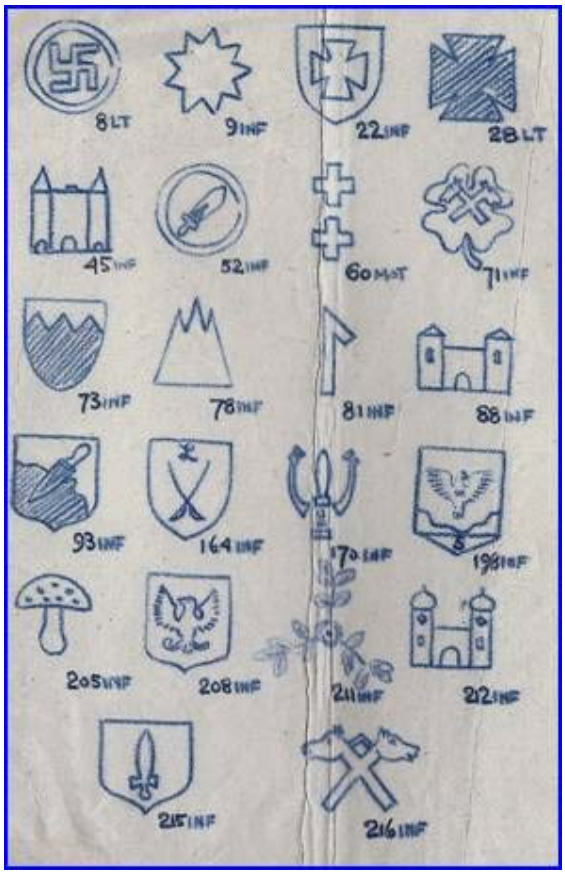
Above: **Tellermine**
Anti-Tank
Firing pressure 650 pounds (approx).

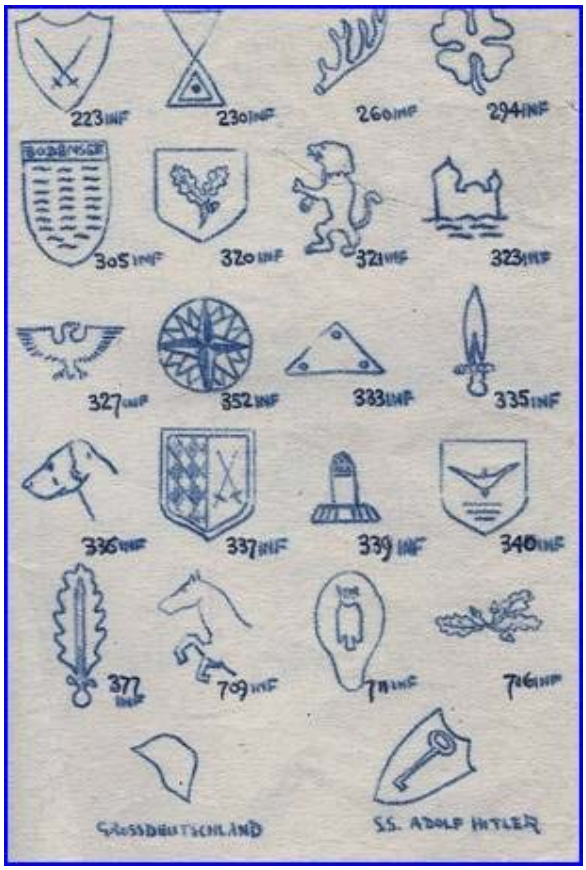
German Divisional Emblems

Panzer Divisions



Other Divisions





<u>Footnote:</u>

Although the 7th/9th Royal Scots captured General Daser, Commander 70th German Infantry Division [70 Infanterie Division], with 2000 of his men,

his Divisional Emblem

was NOT in the list!

***NOW** sixty-six years later*

I have it, thanks to Mr Jan H. Wigard:

70th Infanterie

Infantry Battalion's Signals Platoon

THE 8th BATTALION THE ROYAL SCOTS was reformed as a Territorial battalion in the Spring of 1939. When it was mobilised for War service our uniform and webbing equipment during the first weeks was virtually the same worn by my father during the Great War. The newly-mobilised Battalion had just three vans for transport, men had rifles and anti-gas respirators and each rifle company had only three light machine guns. Starting from these early beginnings, this 'second-line' Battalion prepared for War service by reorganising its manpower resources and having establishing a Headquarters Company quickly formed a Signals Platoon. Thirty-five men were selected and I was fortunate to be one of them.

We were trained to pass the examinations set by Royal Signals Officers and NCOs, and qualified as signallers on 29th April 1940 able to read morse code at 10 words per minute on line and wireless transmissions, and eight words a minute using a signal lamp. I was entitled to wear crossed signal flags on my lower left arm. It was the beginning of a War-time career in which 'signals' played a significant part, terminating in Germany in 1945 when as 7th/9th Royal Scots Signals Officer handing over the Battalion's telephone lines to my Russian equivalent when the Battalion left Magdeburg as it was to be part of the Russian Zone of Occupation.

The Signals Platoon were required to be trained and equipped for the challenging job crucial to the Battalion's operations. They had to provide the Battalion Commander with the means of communication to his officers commanding the four rifle companies and specialist platoon commanders in Support Company in charge of the Carriers, Mortars, Anti-tank Guns, Pioneers to order their operational deployment and with HQ Company and the Quartermaster to direct their administrative efforts to support the Battalion.

The Signals Platoon also had responsibility for maintaining all the Battalion's communications equipment. As well as being able to use this equipment and maintain its operation in battle, signallers had to be ready to act as riflemen.

However, it was the responsibility of the Royal Signals to provided the communication links from brigade headquarters to the infantry battalion, whilst the Royal Artillery Battery in support of the Battalion linked to us by telephone line and would 'net' their radio to the battalion's wireless group on every occasion possible.

Amongst the very early postings into the Battalion of regular and reservist Royal Scots was a very experienced Signal Sergeant. Of medium stature and heavily tanned as a result of his long service in the Far East, he quickly imposed his authority on the potential signallers he had to train. Our first meeting was in the Headquarters Company mess hall when queuing for lunch and we heard the order that all the members of the Signal Platoon had to report to him at the end of the dining room. As we lined up we took stock of each other. He a heavily tanned, wrinkled and with a scruffy appearance clearly left us in no doubt he thought the lot of us were a crowd of Border tramps.

Examining our outstretched hands and inspecting our fingers brought forth a further derogatory comment that our fat, podgy fingers would never be able to send morse!

He then added that as well as being a Signals Sergeant he was renowned as a bayonet instructor and ordered us to be down at the local Rugby field at 2 o'clock for bayonet practice. To the amusement of the rest of HQ company he ran us up and down the field thrusting our bayonets into straw bags littering the ground, with the added instruction to get down on our hands and knees and gouge out the enemy's eyes!

We were shaken to the core by the severity of this sergeant, so totally unlike the territorial sergeants whose first names we regularly used having grown up with them. We felt forlorn at the prospect that this extraordinary sergeant was now in charge of us. However, the first sessions on using morse code, which he alone in the Battalion could send and read, quickly showed us another and more humorous side to a most able instructor and within a very few months brought us up to the standard that successfully met the criteria required by The Royal Signals.

We were trained to operate as telephone cable layers, telephonists taking messages by speech and morse, to send and read visual signals from lamps and flags, operate wireless sets, train as switchboard operators and maintain all our signals equipment. Several signallers trained as motor-cycle dispatch riders. However, our most able Signals Sergeant made sure we benefitted from his bayonet expertise and smile as I remember him urging us forward with the cry 'Sidi Barrani fell to bayonet!' [British captured Sid Barrani in the Western desert in December 1940]. Three years later when I was a subaltern, briefly met him when he was a major and second-in-command of a P.O.W. Camp in the UK. A great character and a very good example of the fine quality of Senior NCOs in The Royal Scots prior to 1939.

Signalling Language

Our very first lecture was about the Morse Code. Invented by Samuel Morse in 1837, financed by American Alfred Vale, it had been adopted as an international language at a convention in London in 1912. It is clearly very much faster than speech, composed of just two symbols and based on the English language; the shortest letters in Morse symbols were the letters used more frequently than others: e - t - i - s - a. However, the maximum signals used for alphabetic letters are four whilst figures uniformly consist of five symbols.

The unit of time plays an important part in the construction of the code. The dot is one unit, the dash three; intervals between a dot and a dash one unit, intervals between each letter and figure three, whilst the interval between each group of letters or figures five units. It became a rhythm we soon picked up, each operator acquiring his own recognisable style when transmitting.

Another aspect of signalling language was the use of the phonetic alphabet which we had to use from the first day.

Character	Morse Code	Phonetic Alphabet	
		1939-40	1941-1956
A	• –	Ack	Able
B	– • • •	Beer	Baker
C	– • – •	Charlie	Charlie
D	– • •	Don	Dog
E	•	Edward	Easy
F	• • – •	Freddie	Fox
G	– – •	George	George
H	• • • •	Harry	How
I	• •	Ink	Item
J	• – – –	Johnnie	Jig
K	– • –	King	King
L	• – • •	London	Love
M	– –	Monkey	Mike
N	– •	Nuts	November
O	– – –	Orange	Oboe
P	• – – •	Pip	Peter
Q	– – • –	Queen	Queen
R	• – •	Robert	Roger
S	• • •	Sugar	Sugar
T	–	Toc	Tare
U	• • –	Uncle	Uncle
V	• • • –	Vinegar	Victor
W	• – –	William	William
X	– • • –	X-ray	X-ray
Y	– • – –	Yorker	Yoke
Z	– – • •	Zebra	Zebra

1	• – – – –	One
2	• • – – –	Two
3	• • • – –	Three
4	• • • • –	Four
5	• • • • •	Five
6	– • • • •	Six
7	– – • • •	Seven
8	– – – • •	Eight
9	– – – – •	Nine (Niner)
0	– – – – –	Zero

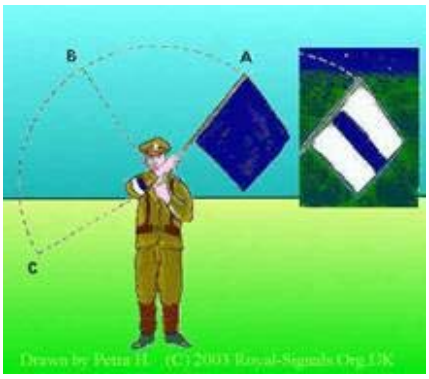
Visual Means of Communication

Sending and reading morse dominated the early weeks of training. Billeted in a former tearoom in Kinghorn, Fife, 35 signallers had their palliasse beds on the floor along the three sides of a long room having in the centre a line of trestle tables and two field telephones equipped with morse key and took our turn to send or read morse signals whenever we felt like it. They were First World War telephones in a leather case and claimed could be dropped from the height of a telephone pole and would still work! We also practised reading morse lamp signals on the golf links overlooking the Firth of Forth, the Signal Sergeant taking up a position some distance from a line of signallers who were paired, one facing the lamp the other with his back to it and wrote down whatever his signalling partner read out. These messages were usually sent in code, using groups of five letters, so that we could not guess through anticipation the sense of the morse signals being sent.

One day when getting prepared to read lamp signals, the Signal Sergeant seated some distance from us with the signalling lamp was ready to send a message and waited to get 'K' [− ● − : 'we are ready to receive the message'] signalled to him by flag by the NCO in charge of us. He was too busy chatting to a number of the lads about the 'night-before' activities, and after about ten minutes the Signal Sergeant unable to get a response to start sending the message, rose to his feet from behind the lamp, tore off his Tam O' Shanter by its tossle, threw it on the ground, jumped on it, and then walked about ten paces to the rear of the lamp, turned and ran towards the lamp, kicking it up into the air and launched into a charge in our direction! We in astonishment witnessing this rage decided to make a run for it back to our tearoom billet. The incident was never mentioned; the expected harangue did not materialise.

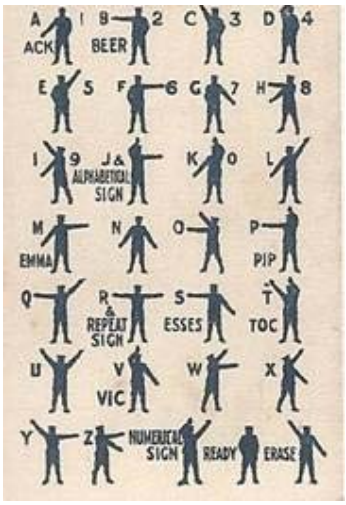
Learning morse by flag was a regular exercise. The signallers would line up on the beach at Kinghorn and would signal in unison when we received the command 'Ack to Monkey, Squad up!'

A dot is signalled when the flag is waved from (A) to (B), and without any pause back again to the normal position. To transmit a "dash" the flag is waved from (A to (C), and after a slight pause at (C), brought back to the normal position.



© Petra Henderson: courtesy www.Royal-Signals.Org.UK

It was claimed the best flag operators during First World War could send 12 words a minute. However, we never used morse flag during operations for the transmission of messages during the Second World War.



As signallers we also trained to use semaphore, but like flag signalling it was never used. Occasionally it helped to communicate instructions between signallers.

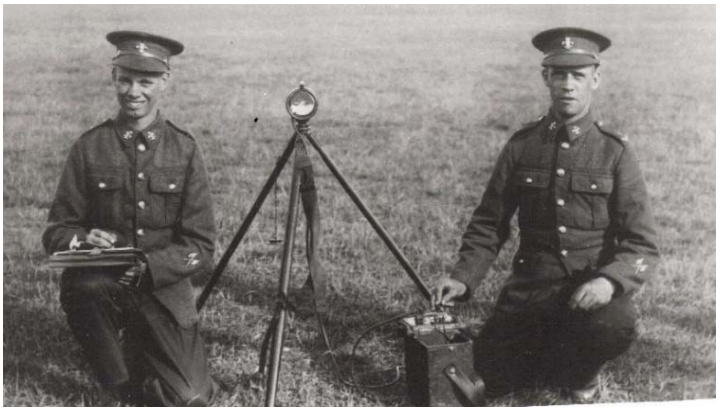
Semaphore has an interesting history. Designed by the Chappe brothers in France during the late 18th century, it was reputed to have been used to carry messages between units of Napoleon's army.

The signaller holds the flags arms extended in various positions to signal different letters and figures. The signal letter 'J' also indicates 'alphabetical letters follow'. There are special flag positions to indicate 'numerical signals follow' and an 'erase' signal.

Illustration courtesy The Royal Australian Navy Communications Branch Association

There were two forms of visual signalling. In addition to sending morse by signalling lamp we also could use the heliograph. We had four 'Lamps Signalling Daylight Short Range' in the equipment of an Infantry Battalion Signals Platoon, and we were trained to use them. A clear line of sight is necessary between sender and receiver and by day the lamp signals could be read at a distance of about two miles; but by night, six miles. These ranges of operation increased two-fold when signals were read by telescope and we had a number of these in our Signals Stores. Weather, however, was a factor that could affect distances at which signals could be read.

Courtesy www.museumoftechnology.org.uk



Signallers of the 10th Battalion The Manchester Regiment using the Lamp Signalling Daylight Short Range during training at Redcar in 1937. The signaller on the left is Wilf Shaw who later served with the 6th Battalion The Green Howards in the North African campaign (Tobruk, El Alamein, Mareth Line, Wadi Akarit), invasion of Sicily and the Normandy campaign.

Courtesy Wilf Shaw

It had a ground spike but the lamp was generally used on a tripod. Equipped with morse key and powered by eight 1·5v batteries, the lamp itself had a glass front, fitted with a 10v bulb seated on a spring with a glass reflector at the rear. The lamp had a sighting tube with a small aperture at one

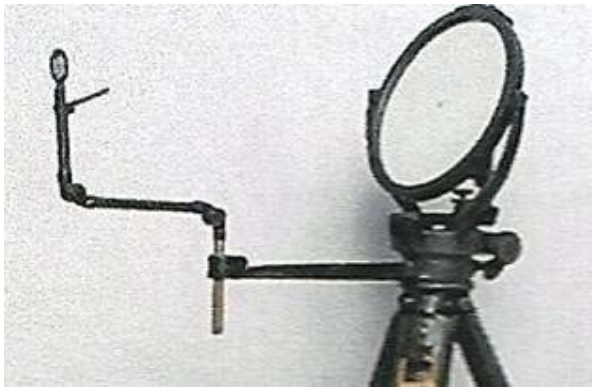
end and crossed slots at the other which we used for alignment purposes. Three coloured disks were available to be used according to conditions; amber when fog, green for snow conditions, red to either distinguish the identity of your station or to make your signals distinctive during artillery bombardment. A perforated screen could be used to cut down the spread of the beam during darkness.

Each signalling lamp required testing for true alignment. This was done by aligning the lamp beam about 20 feet away from a flat surface and where the light beam hit the surface it was marked by an 'X' 2¼ inches from the centre of the beam. Looking through the sighting tube, the 'X' should be seen in the centre of the cross slots. If it was not, the amount of the deviation had to be recorded on a diagram inside the lid of the box so the degree of error could be allowed when aligning the lamp for signalling to the distant station. The operator had to look through the circular aperture and move the lamp until the distant station was in the centre of the cross slots or move the lamp taking account of its alignment problems.

The Signals Platoon had four 'Heliographs 5-inch Mark V' as part of our signalling repertoire. A British invention, it was used by the Army in the Far East and our Signals Sergeant told us the heliograph was used to 'flash' the football results around the various Army units on a Saturday night in the years between the Wars. It can be used over long distances; up to 120 miles in the Far East, but about 40 to 50 miles in this country. I recall the special excitement of using the heliograph during a training session on the golf links overlooking the Firth of Forth in the early 1940s, when with the aid of a bright moon the heliograph worked well and the signals could be read clearly.

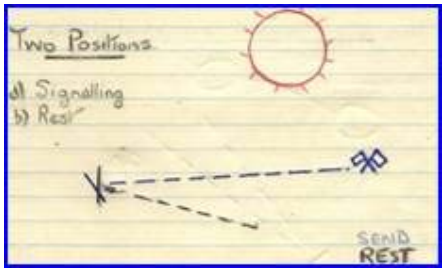
Courtesy www.museumoftechnology.org.uk

The heliograph has a signalling mirror with an unsilvered spot in its centre and a siting arm with a jointed sighing rod with movable vanes. It also has a duplex mirror held in 'U' arms with a butterfly screw. The base is equipped with a morse key.



To be able to transmit signals, the signalling mirror has to be positioned to reflect the light from the signalling mirror on to the distant station.

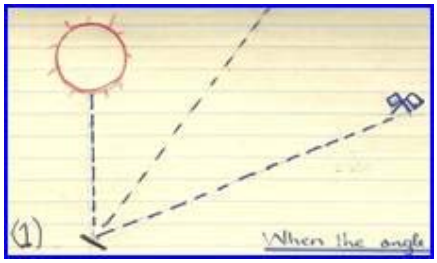
Although it is not possible to see if the reflected light is precisely on the distant station, there is a sighting mark on a vane which can align the centre of the signalling mirror on to the distant station.

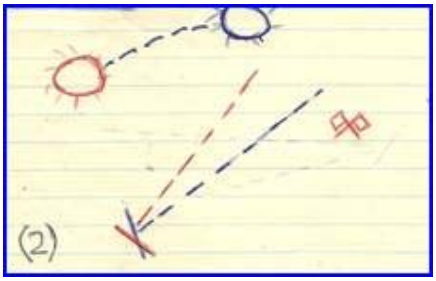


This is achieved when an unsilvered spot in the centre of the signalling mirror causes a small shadow-spot to be thrown on to the vane enabling the signaller to accurately site on to the distant station. The first rough sketch (left) from my signal notes of 1940 indicate the two positions of the signalling

mirror: when perpendicular it is reflecting signals to the distant station; when the key is released the suns rays are deflected away from the station.

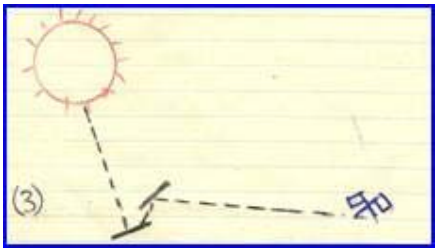
(1) Shows when the angle between the sun and the heliograph and distant station is at right angles or less, by means of the sighting rod the angle of the mirror can be adjusted to face the bi-section of the angle between the sun and the distant station.





(2) As the sun appears to move across the sky, their is a screw which gives you lateral change whilst you can move the collar to change the elevation.

(3) If over 90 degrees the duplex mirror has to be used. The signalling mirror is faced into the sun's rays which are reflected on to the duplex mirror and onwards to the distant station.



When searching for a distant station, the heliograph has to send a series of dashes which are slowly traversed over an area, doing this by turning the elevation collar or the tangent screw. When the distant station locates your flashing signals, it will align on to you.

Heliograph and Signalling Lamp have never been regarded as a secure means of sending messages as the heliograph beam had a wide lateral dispersion of 16 yards at a mile and the Signal Lamp 40 yards at the same distance and permits interception of the signals. In addition, there was always the danger that light beams would attracted enemy fire.

Pigeons

Whilst manning beach positions in Northumberland in 1941 we had training in the use of pigeons to carry messages. Pigeons had been used extensively in World War I on the Western Front in 1915 with 15 pigeon's stations each with 4 birds and a handler; by 1918 there were 400 stations with some 22,000 birds in 150 mobile lofts.

During the Second World War, Allied bomber planes operating in Europe, Burma and India were reputed to have carried a couple of pigeons. One can readily see their use if the plane was shot down behind enemy lines and the wireless set unserviceable or security of location demanded radio could not be used. The birds released with details of the crash location would provide hope of rescue.

In Northumberland we worked with the owner of a local pigeon loft and our training involved handling the birds and preparing and attaching messages. It was the only occasion we used them

although we did link up with a local loft when manning the defensive areas of East Anglia but after a while we let the idea drop.

Telephonic Communication

Field telephones connected by line cable were always the preferred means of communication. It provided interactive communication in the easiest way with the minimum amount of procedure.

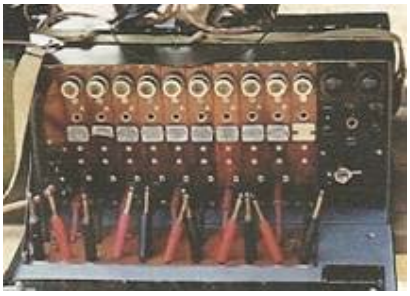
However, it was not secure as the infantry telephone system used only a single D Mark III thin braided copper and steel wire to connect telephones directly to each other or to a field switchboard, completing the electric circuit by using an earth return through the use of an earth-pin.

The advantage of the simplistic 'earth return' circuit and not using the twin twisted cable was to reduce the number of drums the line-laying parties would need to carry. The extra burden of laying twin-cable would have impeded cable laying as it was all done by hand and on foot by the Battalion's signallers. The disadvantage came from the possibility that enemy listening devices embedded in the earth would allow the enemy to listen to telephone conversations. Aware of this necessitated using covert codes in conversations and in the text of formal messages when referring to orders and making tactical references to intentions and objectives.

All signallers trained in laying cable. This necessitated knowing and practising tying reef knots to join cables and to repair broken lines damaged by shell or mortar fire or by tracked vehicles. To make a good joint in the cable we would bind it with a single strand of copper wire to increase conductivity. In line laying parties the signaller walked or ran with the reel in the hand-held unwinding frame with one signaller following and tying the cable or lifting it overhead. At the end of each 600-yard reel, the cable would be tested by connecting it to a field telephone and calling back to the signals switchboard (Switchboard Universal Call) at Battalion HQ. If the connection was satisfactory you would start the next reel. If there was a break in the stretch of line just laid, it meant going back along the cable, letting it run through you hand until you found the break and then repairing it and testing back to the switchboard.

(left) **DIII Telephone.** Used by signallers in World War I, we found it to be an ideal linesman's telephone.

(right) **Switchboard Universal Call 10 Line** [answering to magneto and buzzer calling.]



Courtesy www.museumoftechnology.org.uk

Courtesy www.ww2talk.com

We had two Switchboards '10-Line Universal Calling' and these were always located in the Signals Office at Battalion HQ. From these two boards, telephone lines would radiate out to the six companies, with extensions going to the Commanding Officer, Adjutant, Intelligence Officer and Quartermaster. There would be a connection to the Brigade HQ switchboard as well as to the Artillery Battery Commander at Battalion HQ. During operations we would provide lines to the Platoon headquarters of the Carriers, 3-inch Mortars, Anti-Tank Guns and Pioneers. A message facility in the Signals Office used two of the switchboard terminals for sending and receiving

messages. This left two spare for any special telephonic links, perhaps an Observation Post or a Standing Patrol.

In the early months of the Second World War we trained using a field Switchboard 7+3: it had terminals for seven direct lines and three other telephones connected by a common terminal-bar to the exchange with only one jack used for answering. The operator would insert the plug into the jack and then had to identify the telephone caller; however, the conversation could be listened to by the other two telephone users as they shared the same circuit! We had a system of one ring, or two or three rings to make contact with them.

Field Telephone Set D MKV

German Field Telephone

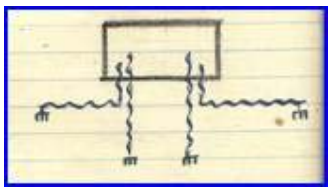
The D MkV telephone was used extensively during the Second World War, and was a good basic telephone for ordinary use and a morse key for the signallers. As the War progressed we acquired German telephones and used these to supplement our own equipment.

(left) **Fullerphone** was a unique kind of field telephone invented by Colonel Fuller in the First World War. It was designed to transmit morse signals but not speech, and operated on direct current which provided the basis of its security advantage as its signals could not be picked up by instruments using alternating current. It had a range of 15–20 miles.

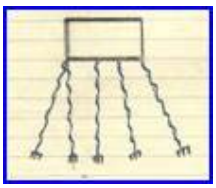
These illustrations courtesy
www.museumoftechnology.org.uk

The Fullerphone increased the capacity of the battalion signal network as it could be used to send morse messages over the same lines being simultaneously used for speech, provided we connected to the telephone circuit via the switchboard a Superimposing Unit (one transformer) to cut out interference between the AC and DC circuits.

In using earth-return circuits we could experienced induction: the telephone lines picking up fragmentary signals of speech or morse signals from cable lines lying close to one another.



We could minimised this at the switch--board by fanning out the earth-pins connections to the terminal board, laying them at least 30 to 50 yards out.



left) **Staggering** (right) **Fanning**

Radio Telephony

The use of wireless was a vital aspect of the Battalion's communications. It allowed units to keep in contact whilst on the move: when advancing to contact the enemy or during an attack or holding captured ground whilst repelling a counter-attack. Wireless enabled the Battalion Commander and the officers commanding rifle companies and support arms to be readily in touch with one another. In addition, signallers with the different companies and support arms would make sure they updated their officers on the progress of the battle by keeping them informed of important and relevant messages and conversations on the net.

Two signallers with WS18 were attached to each of the four Rifle Companies, Carrier Platoon, Mortar Platoon and Anti-Tank Platoon and the 'control' WS18 was always sited in Battalion Headquarters; the Battalion Commander had a personal WS18 which went with him whenever he left Battalion HQ. The artillery battery in close support also linked-in on the Battalion net and could hear at first-hand the progress of the infantry battle and supplement reports being send to them by their Forward Observation Officer. The advantage to the Battalion was the immediate facility of passing map references for artillery fire when opportunity targets appeared or when we were being held up and needed their help.

Apart from the main Battalion wireless net, the four rifle companies and support platoons (Carriers, Mortars and Anti-Tank) had their own WS38 Nets to their sub-units. Also, there was a Brigade net operated by the Royal Signals, linking the Battalion Headquarters to Brigade Headquarters, and to the two other infantry battalions and the Field Regiment Royal Artillery. It was on this wireless net air support could be requested, as in Flushing when we called in rocket-firing Typhoons to deal with stubborn enemy pill-boxes.

As the WS18 transmitter and receiver being separate circuits, the signaller had to tune them to each other in order the radio set could transmit and receive on exactly the same frequency. This procedure began by setting transmitter tuning dial to the frequency required, the signaller then pressing the microphone pressel switch to transmit a 'mush' signal whilst adjusting the aerial tuning dial until the maximum aerial current registered on the test meter. When successfully done, speaking into the microphone produced a series of radiating kicks on the test meter. To tune the receiver, the operator tuned to the selected frequency and adjusted the dial to get maximum signal strength. That done, the receiver and transmitter were on exactly the same frequency.

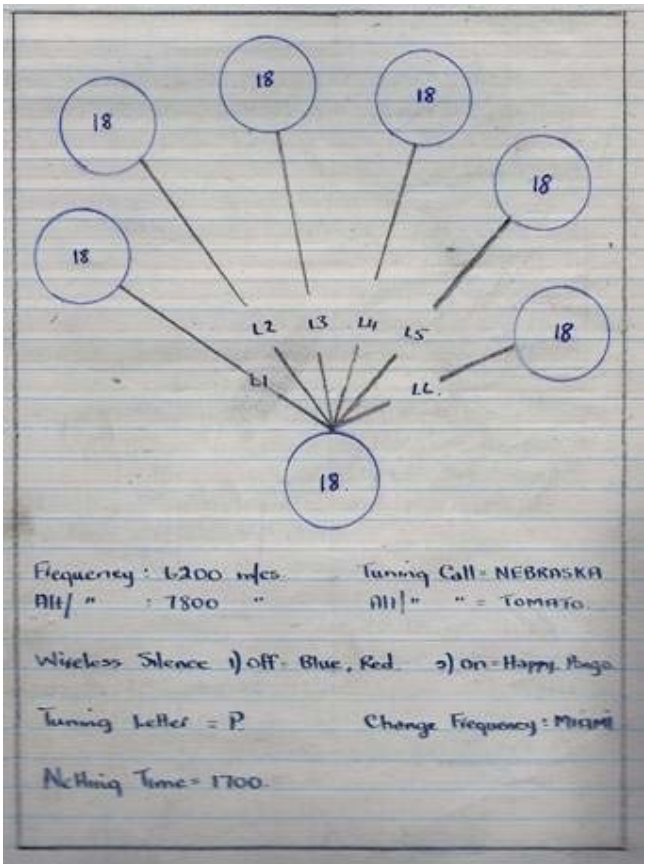
Transmitter (two valves)

Wireless Set 18
Transmitter, receiver and a dry battery in a man-packed case. Two signallers per outstation, one carrying and one operating.

Receiver (three valves)

The frequency range of WS18 is 6-9MHz. Transmission and reception range with a 6-foot rod aerial 2 to 5 miles for speech and 4 to 10 miles for morse. However, using an 11-foot rod aerial, 5 miles for speech and 10 miles for morse.

From our experience during battlefield conditions we found the main disadvantage of WS18 was the weight of the battery and its short life in continuous operation of about 8 to 12 hours.



This is a typical Battalion signal diagram. Four of the outstations are rifle companies and the two others are 3-inch Mortars and the Carrier Platoon.

Signallers at each station would have a copy. It lists the frequency to be used that day and the reserve frequency with codewords when a change had to be made, usually for security reasons. It also listed the codeword for the tuning call and reserve codeword, and the time the tuning call would start.

All stations had to be ready to act on the codeword to observe wireless silence.

Code-signs are listed for out stations but for security reasons never for Control.

Netting is the operation to tune all the Battalion's WS18 to each other, so they are working on exactly the same frequency. In accordance with the diagram above, the netting was to start at 1700 hrs when Control would transmit the tuning call *Nebraska* repeatedly for two or three minutes, the Control operator ending the tuning call with the signal *Tuning call ends*. After brief pause, a follow-up signal is sent *Hear netting call, net now*. The Control operator does this by pressing the pressel switch in the microphone handle for a period of two to three minutes; this sends out a continuous signal [see photo: No. 3 Hand Carbon Microphone]. Whilst this signal is being transmitted the operators at outstations press a plunger on the sender panel connecting the master oscillator valve which reacts to the transmitted signal from Control. It searches until it finds the zero point in the incoming frequency - a beat note - and when it does, the frequency of the master oscillator is the same as that of the incoming signal. Outstations having found the 'zero point' are now operating on exactly the same frequency: they are 'netted' to each other and able to speak and receive each others signals.

The netting procedure is brought to an end when the Control station sends the signal *Netting call ends*. Again a short pause before Control sends *Hello all stations Love One*, *report my signals*. *All stations Love One over*.

Outstations respond in numerical sequence: *Hello Love One, hello Love One OK over*. *Hello Love Two, hello Love Two OK over*. When all have reported, Control sends *All stations Love One OK out*. If a station(s) fails to reply, Control has to decide whether to re-net the unsatisfactory station(s) *Hello Love Three re-net* repeating the tuning call codeword or to re-net all outstations.

No 3 Hand carbon microphone

Courtesy www.museumoftechnology.org.uk

Each station when changing from receive to send do so when they press the pressel switch in the microphone handle. When the switch is pressed whatever is said will be transmitted. Procedural discipline by stations is necessary: more than one station endeavouring to transmit at the same time cancels out each others signals. Discipline is needed to wait until a transmission ends with the signal Over (when a reply is expected) or Out (when transmission is ended). The 'golden rule' was pause to make sure the airways were clear before pressing the pressel switch.

An improved version of WS18 was made available in 1943. The replacement WS68 had a different frequency range: WS68P, 1.75-2.9MHz; WS68R and T, 3-5.2MHz. It also had a much improved reception range of up to 10 miles and had the facility of crystal control (pre-set frequencies).

Wireless Set No 38

The WS38 was the small radio used for communication by each Rifle company to their three platoons; and by Carriers HQ to their four sections of LMG carriers; Mortar HQ to their six 3-inch Mortars; Anti-Tank HQ to control their six 6-pounder anti-tank guns.

It was a simple, pouch transceiver, weighing 10 kg, with a frequency range 7·3-9·0 MHz. It had five valves, two of these shared between transmitter and receiver with a very simple tuner arrangement. The speech range was up to two miles and a throat microphone left the operator free to use his rifle or sten gun. The battery was carried in a separate satchel. Like all wireless sets used close to the enemy, its rod aerial was conspicuous and attracted enemy fire.

Courtesy www.louis@wftw.nl

Signals Procedure and Security

Signallers and officers using the Battalion wireless net had to maintain security and observe signal procedure. Code-signs when referring to formations, units and sub-units and code-names for commanders and specialist identifications always had to be used:

Sunray	Commanding Officer of any unit (Battalion or Rifle Company)
Seagull	Adjutant (or G Staff of higher formation)
Molar	Quartermaster (or A/Q Staff)
Acorn	Intelligence Officer (or I. Staff)
Pronto	Signals Officer (or Signals adviser)
Shelldrake	Artillery
Holdfast	Engineers
Starlight	Medical
Rickshaw	Ordnance
Bluebell	REME

Sunray when linked with a call-sign would indicate whether Battalion or Company Commander; or in conversation *My Sunray* or using *Sunray Minor* when indicating the second-in-command.

Map reference codes had to be used if they referred to our own troops but not when referring to the enemy; enemy locations were sent uncoded. Map reference codes linked with identifiable objects like named villages, woods, rivers and other geographical features offered no security but helped to break down the security code; indeed, it was axiomatic that any position known to the enemy must not be referred to in code.

Conversations on the wireless net were best kept short and pre-arranged code-words used, i.e.; *Orange* = ? Village, *Green* = road clear. In 1943 a code for use in messages and conversations was introduced. Slidex consisted of a set of subject specific cards printed in a grid layout with words and short phrases appropriate to the subject, together with letters and numbers. Each cell of the table was identified by a two-letter bigram from 'slides' along the top and down one side, on the same principle as giving a map reference.

Officers and signallers had been trained in basic signal procedure for the conduct of wireless conversations for the smooth, uncomplicated operation of the battalion net. *Over* when a reply was expected; *Out* for end of transmission; *Wait* (usually meant a pause for a few seconds); *Say Again* for a repeat of the transmission; *Wilco* meant will co-operate and message understood and will comply; and *Roger* indicated the message received and understood.

It was a general rule that no one station should be on the air longer than a minute. All unwritten messages or conversations taking longer than that had to be broken into portions of about a minute. An example: *Hello L2 message for L1* sending a one-minute segment and ending with *Roger so far L2 to L1 over*. The receiving station acknowledges in reply *L1 Roger over*. The transmitting station

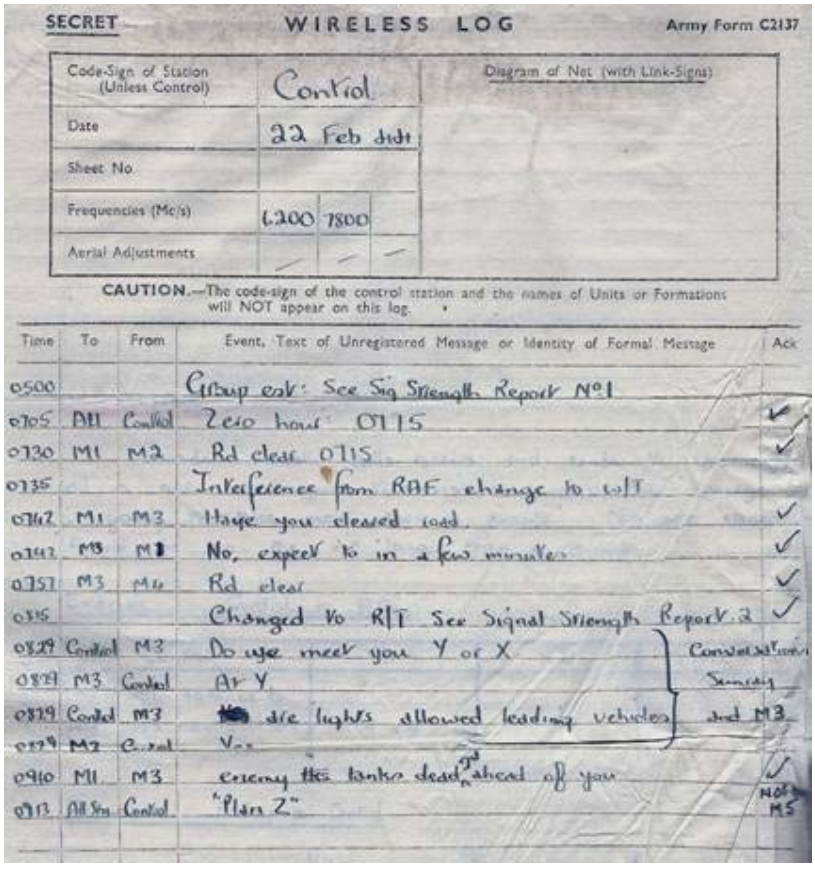
continues message or conversation saying *Hello L2* and ends the message with *Over*, acknowledged with the reply *L1 Roger out*.

Officers required to speak on the set followed that same procedure. *Hello L1 fetch Sunray L1 over*. Signaller replies *Hello L1 wait out*. When officer is at the wireless set *Hello L1 Sunray listening over*.

Signallers were trained in signal security and made aware that whenever they spoke into a microphone they could be speaking to the enemy. When using radio telephony and morse conversations signal operators had to cut out unnecessary chit-chat and avoid non-standard procedure which enemy listening stations could associate the identity of the net and relate this to a particular battalion. Nicknames of signal operators were an easy giveaway to labelling a net. Intelligence could be gathered by the enemy's intercept system by listening to operators chat which could provide information about the unit and morale ('we have a had a bad night') or about the weather or hints about wounded or casualties, shortage of stores and ammunition, or 'something big is coming up'.

Signallers had to be mindful, too, that the enemy used direction-finding (DF) systems. The longer you were on the air the greater the opportunity for the enemy to pick up your frequency, its directional antenna searching until it could detect your best signal. This technique enabled the direction finder to pin-point your location with an accuracy to less than one degree wrong. This kind of intelligence was an open invitation to bring down artillery fire on your HQ, a visit from enemy bombers (Stukas) or a fighting patrol equipped with flame-throwers to destroy your headquarters.

Wireless Logs were kept at every Station. It was a daily diary recording events, like changing frequency, switching to morse and to note details of all messages on the net whether they applied to your station or not.



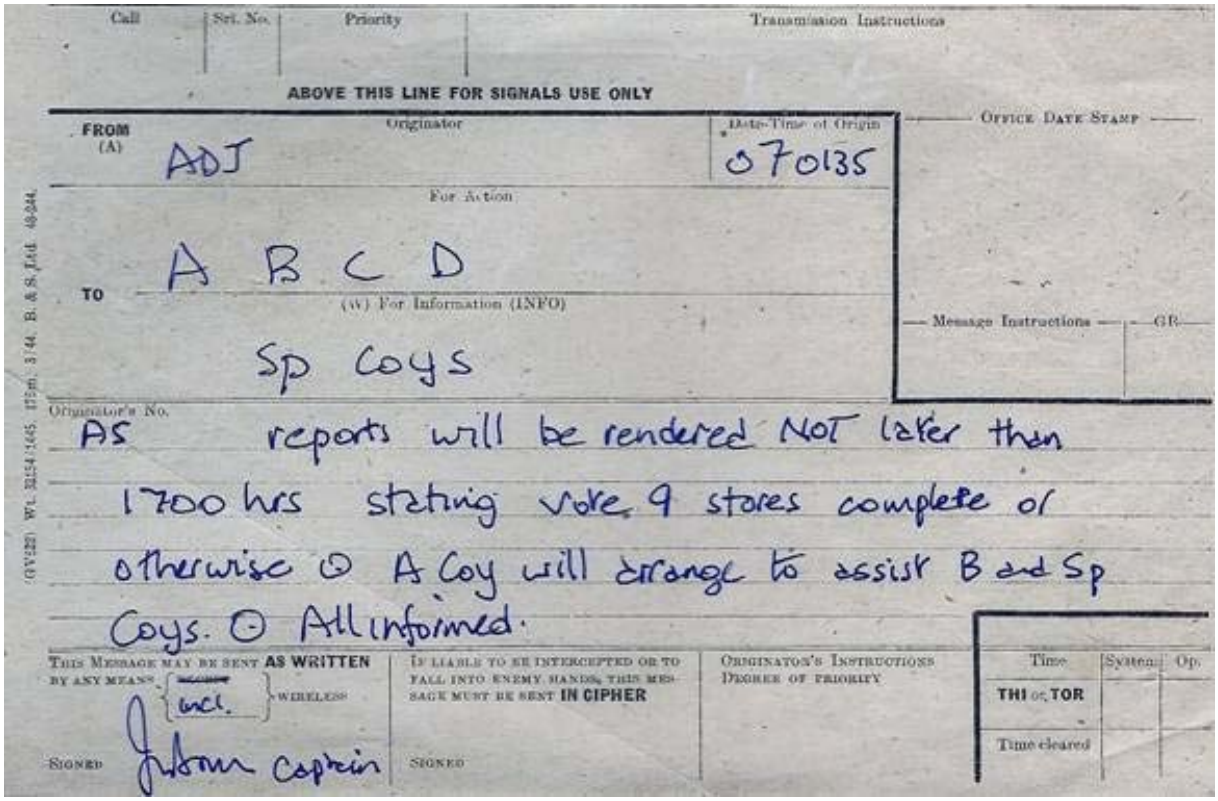
SECRET — WIRELESS LOG — Army Form C2137

Code-Sign of Station (Unless Control)	Control	Diagram of Net (with Link-Signs)
Date	22 Feb 44	
Sheet No.		
Frequencies (Mc/s)	6200 7800	
Aerial Adjustments	— — —	

CAUTION.—The code-sign of the control station and the names of Units or Formations will NOT appear on this log.

Time	To	From	Event, Text of Unregistered Message or Identity of Formal Message	Ack
0500			Group call: See Sig Strength Report No 1	
0705	All	Control	Zero hour 0715	✓
0730	M1	M2	Rd clear 0715	✓
0735			Interference from RAF change to W/T	
0742	M1	M3	Have you cleared road	✓
0742	M3	M1	No, expect to in a few minutes	✓
0751	M3	M1	Rd clear	✓
0815			Changed to R/T See Signal Strength Report 2	✓
0829	Control	M3	Do we meet you Y or X	Conversation between Sunray and M3
0829	M3	Control	At Y	
0829	Control	M3	Are lights allowed leading vehicles	
0829	M2	Control	Yes	
0840	M1	M3	enemy tks tanks dead ahead of you	✓
0913	All Stns	Control	"Plan Z"	Not M3

Transmission of Formal Messages



Call | Srl. No. | Priority | Transmission Instructions

ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY

FROM (A) ADJ — Originator — Date-Time of Origin 070135 — Office Date Stamp

For Action

TO A B C D

(W) For Information (INFO)

Sp Coys

Message Instructions — GR

Originator's No.

AS reports will be rendered NOT later than 1700 hrs stating vore 9 stores complete or otherwise ⊙ A Coy will arrange to assist B and Sp Coys. ⊙ All informed.

THIS MESSAGE MAY BE SENT AS WRITTEN BY ANY MEANS [incl.] WIRELESS

IF LIABLE TO BE INTERCEPTED OR TO FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS, THIS MESSAGE MUST BE SENT IN CIPHER

ORIGINATOR'S INSTRUCTIONS DEGREE OF PRIORITY

Time | System | Op.

THI or TOR

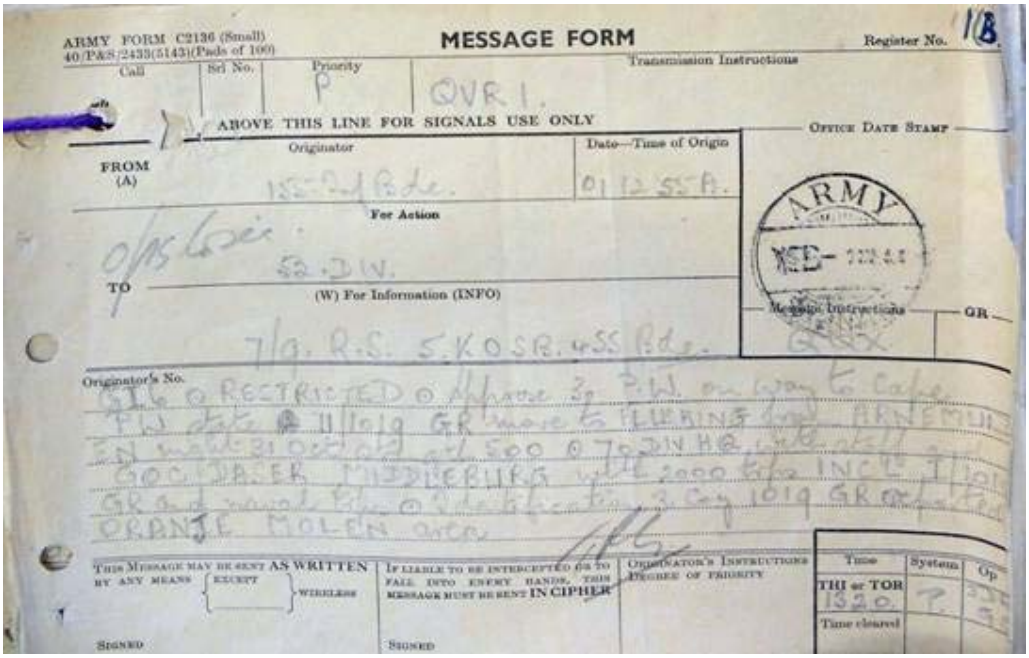
Time cleared

SIGNED [signature] Capt

SIGNED

above **From the Adjutant to all Companies.**

below **Message received from Brigade HQ, delivered by the Signals Office to the Adjutant.**



ARMY FORM C2136 (Small) 40/P&S/2433(5143)(Pads of 100)

MESSAGE FORM

Register No. 18

Call | Srl. No. | Priority P | Transmission Instructions QVR 1.

ABOVE THIS LINE FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY

Originator — Date—Time of Origin 01 12 55 A.

Office Date Stamp — ARMY — XXX

FROM (A) 155 Inf Bde.

For Action

O/S Copies 52 Div.

TO

(W) For Information (INFO)

7/9. R.S. 5 KOSB. 4SS Bde.

Message Instructions — GR

Originator's No.

SIG O RESTRICTED O Above 3 F.W. on way to Cafe. FM date 11/10/19 GR more to FLUSHING from ARNEMUIDEN FM with 31 OFFICERS and 500 OTHER RANKS HQ. 155 INCL 7/9 GLOUCESTER MIDDELBURG with 2000 from INCL 7/9 GR and 52 DIV. 1019 GR OF ORANJE MOLEN area.

THIS MESSAGE MAY BE SENT AS WRITTEN BY ANY MEANS [except] WIRELESS

IF LIABLE TO BE INTERCEPTED OR TO FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS, THIS MESSAGE MUST BE SENT IN CIPHER

ORIGINATOR'S INSTRUCTIONS DEGREE OF PRIORITY

Time | System | Op.

THI or TOR 1320

Time cleared

SIGNED

SIGNED

This is a copy of an actual message sent by the Brigade Major HQ 155 Infantry Brigade to HQ 52 (Lowland) Division, copied to the Bn Headquarters of 7th/9th Royal Scots, 5KOSB and the HQ 4th Special Service Brigade, on the first day of the 155 Brigade's assault landing at Flushing reporting

intelligence gained from interrogating P.O.Ws which disclosed the movement of reserve forces to reinforce the Flushing Garrison. [See page 41 for wording of message.]

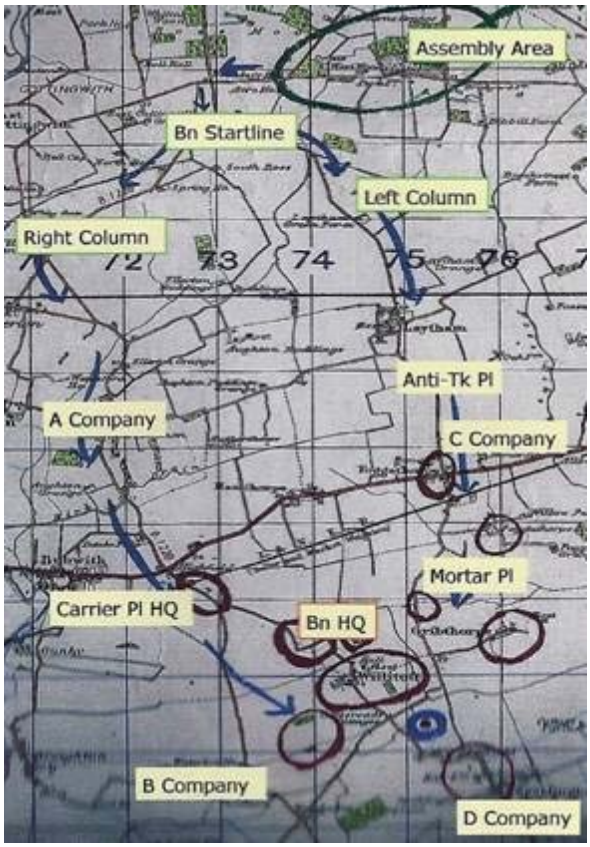
In the top line of the message form the priority P indicates it is to be transmitted and handled by signals offices as 'Important'. Other prefixes: D Deferred [messages of minor importance]; when no indication used [routine messages]; P Important [used by any Officer for above ordinary routine messages, and instructions may be added such as 'To await arrival']; OP Immediate [used by Battalion Commanders or Senior Staff Officers for messages of special importance]; O Emergency [Commanders and Senior Staff Officers for messages of the utmost importance having a direct bearing on operations]; OU Most Immediate [Commander-in-Chief or his Chief Staff Officer only].

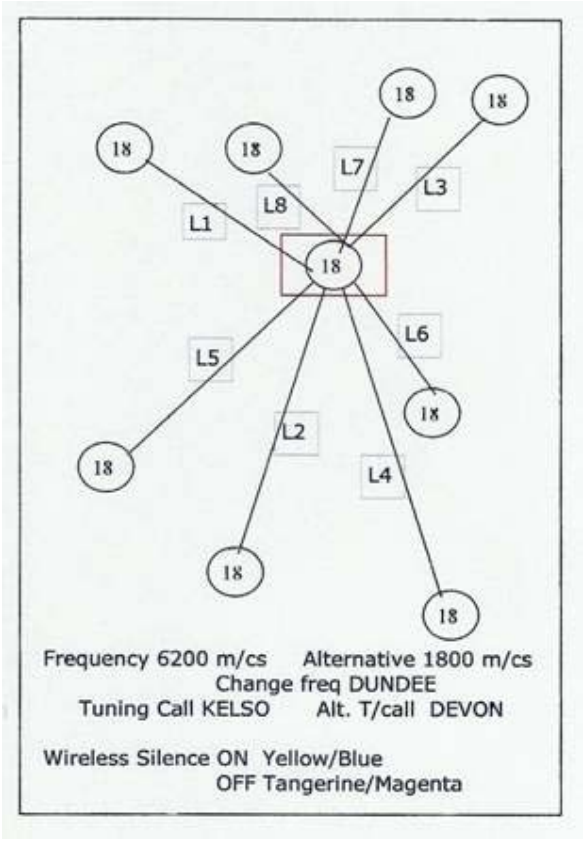
Formal messages written on a signal message form were handled by the Signals Office, always located at Battalion HQ. The Signal Corporal in charge would decide the best and/or quickest means of sending each message: line telephony, morse transmission by line, wireless telephony, runner or dispatch rider. Incoming messages from Brigade HQ or Companies would be delivered by the Signals Office to the appropriate officer at Battalion HQ.

Signals Platoon Operational Deployment

The Battalion had generally three distinct operational roles. Often required to advance towards the enemy to probe out his defensive position and locate his 'strong-points', this was known as advance to contact. In principle, the leading rifle company would have one platoon forward as it advanced towards the enemy, seeking to overcome whatever resistance it met until it could no longer do so. When the platoon was fully deployed and pinned down, the company commander would determine from his own observations and reports from the leading platoon commander about the enemy's positions and strength and then attack with his two remaining platoons. If the opposition was overcome, the advance would continue until the leading company was no longer able to move forward but pinned down by the effectiveness of the enemy's defences.

The Battalion Commander would then consider his options for deploying one or more of his rifle companies in reserve, determined to probe as fully as possible the extent of the enemy's defensive layout. Depending on the order the Brigade Commander had received from the Division, he would be ready to deploy the two battalions under his command.





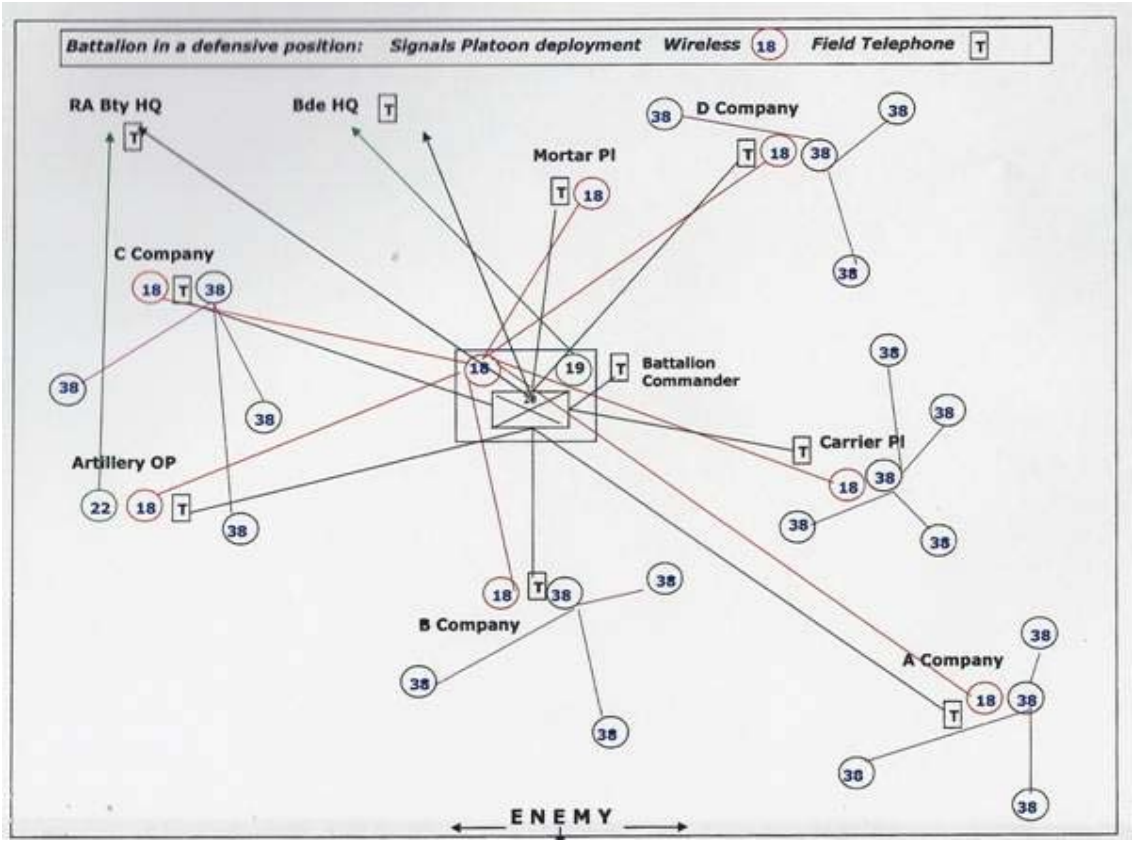
The above diagrams shows the Battalion having moved from an assembly area, is advancing on a two column front on parallel roads in order to contact the enemy and probe out his defensive ‘strong-points’.

The map diagram illustrates the Battalion's deployment of four rifle companies, carrier platoon, mortar platoon and anti-tank platoon. The Battalion wireless net shows 'B' Company (code sign L2 on the net) is leading the right column and 'D' (L4) the left column. The Carrier Platoon (L5) is protecting the right flank and behind them in reserve is 'A' Company (L1). Behind 'D' Company on the left flank are the 3-inch Mortar Platoon (L6) followed by 'C' Company (L3) which is in reserve. The Anti-Tank Platoon (L7) in the area of Battalion Headquarters ready to be deployed when enemy tanks are encountered. The Royal Artillery battery operating in support of the Battalion, has the code sign L8.

The Battalion during an **attack** relies on wireless for communication. Often cable-laying parties would follow the rifle companies into an attack and if the advance was held up the line-laying signallers would quickly provide telephone communication to Battalion Headquarters. Nevertheless, wireless was always best suited for the mobility of advancing, attacking forces . . . despite its time-to-time limitations.

When the battalion occupied a **defence** position, we relied on telephone communication backed up by wireless. When a telephone line ceased to work, the signaller would open up wireless transmission if ‘wireless silence’ was not in operation. Battalion Headquarters would always be on 'listening watch' for such an eventuality.

Layout of the Battalion in a defensive position: Signals Platoon deployed to provide a communications network with the Battalion Commander at its centre.



18WS: Battalion Net of Company and Support Arms.
38WS: Battalion Sub-Units Nets.

19WS: Brigade Net.
22WS: Royal Artillery Net.

An actual diagram of the line communication network deployed by the 7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots when holding a position on the west bank of The Rhine is shown on page 74. Later the 8th Battalion The Royal Scots passed through this position and made a successful crossing of The Rhine and went on to attack Goch.

Reality -- Stress and Strain of Maintaining Communication

I am sure that it was the experience of all infantry signallers that wireless communication could be unreliable and telephone links subject to break-down when cables were damaged by enemy shellfire or churned up our own tracked vehicles.

Wireless for military purposes was first used in World War I, but the sets were said to have been 'very large, heavy to transport, unreliable and their transmissions could be received by the enemy'. Even at the start of World War II wireless was still in its early stages of development for military use. The WS18 we used from 1941 onwards had been developed by Pye Radio Co. from the earlier WS8 made by Murphy Radio, incorporating improvements gained from our experience in the 1940s

when we opposed the German blitzkrieg attack which ultimately forced the British Expeditionary Forces to withdraw back to Britain for the 'final defence of the Realm'.

WS18 operational range was approximately 4 miles but the transmission of signals at strength was always subject to the type of terrain. If the WS18 was sited in the 'shadow' of a hill or in the vicinity of large objects it could lose signal strength and often the signaller in charge had limited scope to avoid these obstacles or minimise their effects. The over-riding factor was always the tactical siting of the Rifle Company Commander's headquarters, not necessarily the best position for the WS18 to work. When wireless reception was difficult, the Company Commander with the signallers often tried to find a compromise, balancing tactical requirements with securing the optimum signal strength for transmission and reception. Clearly, communication was crucial to the Company Commander: his need to keep in contact with the Battalion Commander and the other attacking companies and to be able to call on mortar and artillery support.

During operational use we found that the WS18 did not always stand up to the rough treatment of the battlefield. Unfortunately, the valves were fragile, and Pye Limited said after the end of the Second World War there was a weakness in the filament support springs which fractured too easily which severely limited the effectiveness of the WS18. Each wireless had a set of spare valves but whereas the Signals Platoon stores had a valve testing kit, the wireless operator in the field had to change each valve in turn until he found the faulty valve. It took valuable time; often under difficult circumstances.

8RS Signallers in action with WS68
Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard, Vol 2,
Robert H. Paterson
(The Royal Scots History Committee 2000)

The relatively short working life of the battery was another major shortcoming, plus the fact they were very heavy to carry, especially when having to manoeuvre a satchel of spares when advancing under enemy fire. We also found that the WS18 had a tendency over time to drift off frequency and one more problem for the signaller to be on the alert to detect and deal with.

The limitations of WS18 were clearly demonstrated during the 7th/9th RS attack on the German Command Post located in the area of the Grand Hotel Britannia in Flushing . During the crucial stage of this ferocious battle there was only one Rifle Company WS18 working back to Battalion Tactical Headquarters. Two other rifle companies and the Carrier Platoon (dismounted) also in the front line of the attack were without communication as the WS18s were unable to receive or transmit. It was a night attack and the approach made through flood water waist deep and often chest high, and this necessitated the two-man signal team holding their WS18 out of the water and carrying the set on their shoulders, as everyone was doing with their rifles, machine-guns and mortars and to continue to carry them shoulder-high despite coming under artillery fire as the advancing column got close to the objective. The sea water must have affected most of the WS18s, and this had resulted in only one outstation in communication whilst three other WS18s were out of

action. This led to the decision by the Battalion Commander to move forward from his Tactical Headquarters to be up alongside the attacking companies and was severely wounded whilst doing so. To the great sorrow of all his comrades in the Signals Platoon, the C.O.'s signaller carrying a WS18 was killed.

On another crucial occasion, wireless failed the test of the battlefield. I with another officer was briefed by the Brigade Commander to find a route for a battle-group in amphibious Buffalos to approach the west of Middelburg and be able to get into a position to launch an attack on the capital of Walcheren, occupied by 2000 Germans. We set off in a Buffalo which made its way through heavily-flooded terrain, whilst encountering mines and overhead explosive charges. Having determined it was possible for a battle-group to get into position to attack Middelburg, we decided to return and report to Brigade Headquarters in Flushing. To our dismay the Buffalo manoeuvring to avoid overhead explosive charges got stuck when one of its tracks became trapped on the span of a concrete bridge hidden from view under the grubby sea water. Despite jettisoning non-essential heavy-weight gear to try and re-float, we were still marooned. We wanted to get a message to Brigade using the Buffalo's WS46, but it would not work. Rescued by the Dutch Resistance in a rowing boat we eventually waded our way back to Brigade Headquarters hours later than anticipated. Later that day a company battle-group followed our route and surprised the German garrison and took the surrender of Middelburg. Mr Louis Meulstee, a leading authority on Wireless for the Warrior <www.wftw.nl/wireless/wireless> was surprised the radio had failed to work at that crucial moment. He understood the WS46, designed for beach landings, would function even if submerged in sea water. However, on this occasion WS46 did not stand up to the conditions of the battlefield.

During the First World War signallers often laid cable in the form a ladder so that if a strand or strands were destroyed by shelling the remaining parts of the cable ladder might be able to complete the circuit and telephone communication maintained. Although we did not follow that practice, we often laid an extra length of cable to loop round a particular road junction or obstacle to try and ensure whatever occurred at that particular hazard the telephone connection would work.

Linesmen seeking to trace a break in a cable, especially at night, would generally run the cable through their hand until the end of the broken line was found. Or having experienced an earlier break, go straight to that 'trouble' point. Linesmen usually worked their way from the switchboard's external terminal board along the cable route, at intervals using the lineman's telephone to get through to the Signals Office switchboard to check that so far so good. They would continue along the cable until reaching a point when they were unable to contact the switchboard and knew they had narrowed down the area where the break had occurred.

Locating and mending breaks in cable lines in the forward areas always involved special risk. German fighting patrols wanting to capture a prisoner would cut a telephone cable and prepare an ambush and attack the linesmen. A 7th/9th RS Platoon commander in a forward position had a telephone link to a standing patrol and when it ceased to work he courageously led a couple of men to find the break but the party were ambushed and in the fight the officer was killed and the two men taken as P.O.Ws.

Lance-Corporal
R. T. (Ty) Smith 8RS

Killed by enemy action whilst in charge of a Rifle Company Signals Terminal on the Foreshore, Lowestoft 1941.

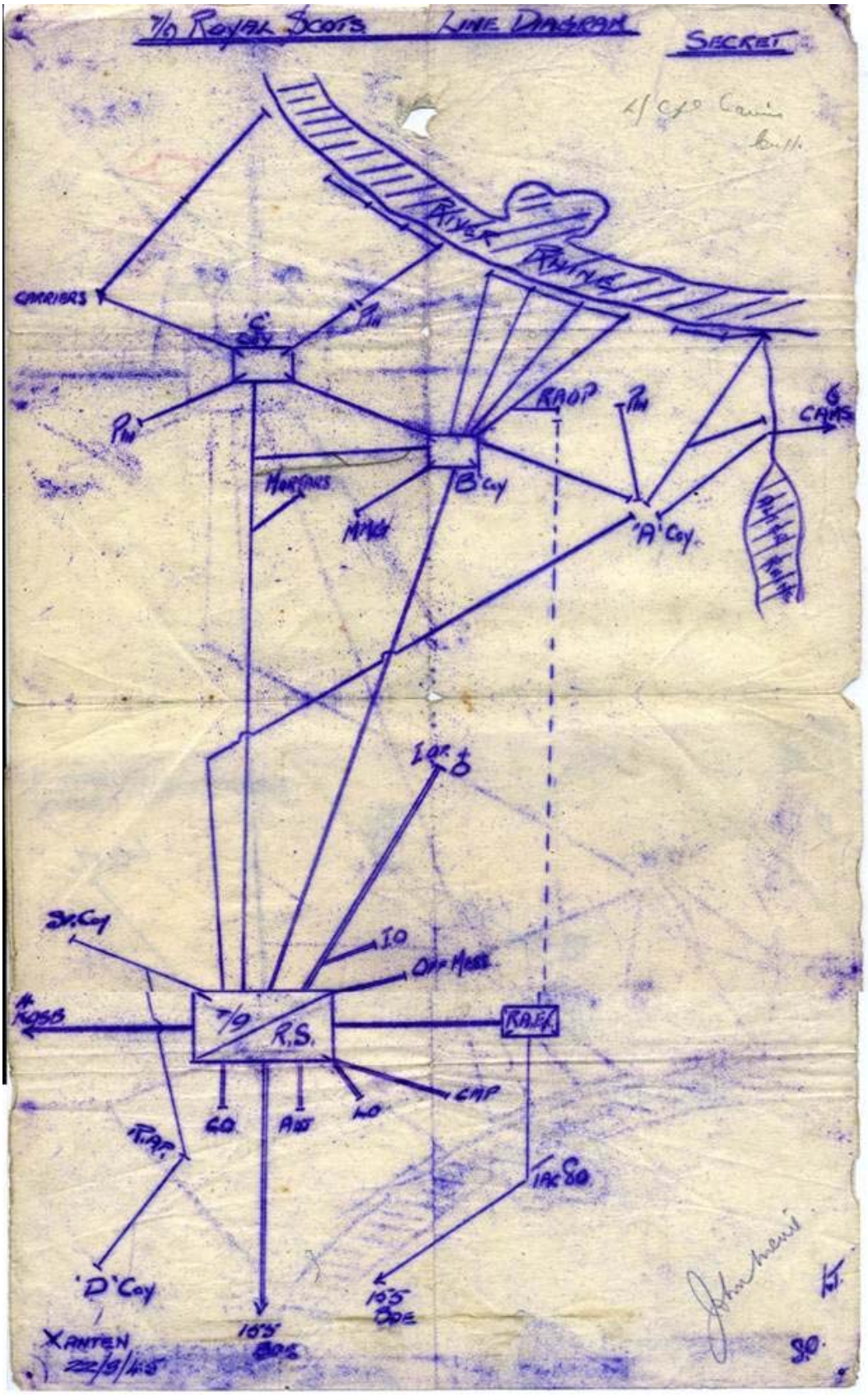
These brief remembrances of the Second World War are dedicated to all infantry signals platoon signallers. They were not Royal Corps of Signallers but infantrymen, trained to use the rifle and Bren machine-gun, prepared to fix bayonet in close combat, throw Mills 36 grenades and dig slit-trenches. Their unique training and skills ensured they could operate and maintain wireless sets, lay and repair cables lines, send and read morse code signals and map read their way across country. Because of these additional skills they were inevitably in the forefront of the fight and near to those who had the responsibility to command and lead in the battle.

Signal Sergeant
David Douglas 8RS

Awarded the Military Medal for his brave action in supporting his forward Signal Terminals at the Gheel Canal 1944.

I recall their keen young faces and see them now, the Signallers of the 7th/9th and 8th Battalions of The Royal Scots who gave their lives as they strived to do this crucial job of maintaining communications, keeping our Battalions strong and purposeful as we fought to defeat the enemy . . . which we did!

● − ● − ● [AR] end of message



Copy of the actual Line Diagram issued by the Signals Platoon 7th/9th Royal Scots when in position on the west bank of The Rhine.

'On Saturday evening 10th March 1944, the 7th/9th Battalion reached Xanten, a small town less than a dozen miles east of Goch and about three-quarters of a mile from the west bank of The Rhine.' [The First of Foot, Augustus Muir, (1961), page 403]

This diagram was kindly given to me by Mr James Cairns.

Mr James Cairns is the son of the late Lance-Corporal David Cairns of the 7th/9th Battalion Signals Platoon. David Cairns was the Signalling N.C.O. in charge of the signals terminal attached to 'B' Company, commanded by Major (later Colonel) Hugh Rose whose distinguished conduct during the battle to capture the German Garrison Headquarters located in the Hotel Britannia, Flushing, Walcheren, was recognised by the award of the Distinguished Service Order.

Lance-Corporal David Cairn's wireless set was the only 'out station' in communication to Battalion Headquarters during the attack, the other wireless sets had been damaged by exposure to the very heavy flooded water pouring in from the Scheldt Estuary, despite the wireless sets being held aloft just as other equipment like machine-guns and rifles were carried above the heads of the men of the attacking column making its way to attack the Hotel Britannia. For the outstanding achievement of maintaining communication under such hazards Lance-Corporal David Cairns received the award of a Mention-in-Despatches.

The telephone network diagram shows lines radiating out in all directions. An analysis shows the forward deployment of three rifle companies. On the left to 'C' Company, 'B' Company in the centre and 'A' Company on the right. They are also linked to each other by line. On the extreme left flank is the Carrier Platoon with a line linked into 'C' Company, but the diagram shows that Carrier Platoon line extends through its Platoon Headquarters to Carrier Section(s) located on the river bank. The three-inch Mortar Platoon is looped into the line going to 'C 'Company.

Around Battalion Headquarters are 'command' links to the Battalion Commander (C.O.), Adjutant and I.O., to 155 Infantry Brigade Headquarters and also to the Royal Artillery switchboard which has its own line forward to its Forward Observation Post. The diagram shows the line to the Battalion Intelligence Officer has an extension to an Intelligence Section Observation Post located in a church. 'D' Company in the rear, in reserve, is linked up by a line which also links to Support Company Headquarters and the Regimental First-Aid Post. The battalion on the left is the 4 KOSB and is connected to main battalion HQ switchboard, whilst the 6 Cameronians on the right is linked through 'A' Company. It is a formidable set-up of communication, providing complete integration. There is even a line from the Battalion switchboard to the Officers Mess . . . luxury indeed!

1939 - 1946 . . . the Beginning and the End

The start of a long personal journey of 7 years 11 weeks. Our departure is recorded in this group photograph taken in the third week of September 1939 at the Drill Hall in Peebles, in the Scottish Borders.

It shows the local Territorial Company of the 8th Royal Scots mobilised on the 1st September 1939, three days before the start of the Second World War, and now ordered to join the rest of the Battalion concentrating in the area of Earlston, also in the Scottish Borders, to be equipped and trained for War.

Aged 18, I am standing in the row immediately behind those seated and fourth from the right.

The second group photograph is taken seven years later in Oldenburg, Germany, on 26th June 1946.

It was the last day of the War-time service of the 7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment). The GOC 52 (Lowland) Division has formally inspected the Battalion.

Now aged 25 and Battalion Adjutant, seated in the front row second right next to the Brigade Commander 155 Infantry Brigade.

It was not the end of my War service having some six months still to serve and was posted to GHQ of 21st Army Group as a Staff-Captain until demobilised in the last two weeks of December 1946. It was there I had to personally brief the Army Commander, having kept him waiting ten minutes [see pages 18 to 20].

Duties of a Soldier

Private	Infantryman ”D” Coy (Peebles Company), 8th (TA) Bn The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), enlisted May 1939.

War-time

Private	Signaller “HQ” Coy, 8 RS (mobilised on 1st September 1939 for the duration of the Second World War).
Lance-Corporal	Signal Pl, 8 RS.
Corporal	Signal Pl, 8 RS.
Corporal	Battalion Training Cadre attached RAF Bomber Command, Waterbeach, Cambridge (instruct first echelons RAF Regiment).
Officer Cadet	163 Officer Cadet Training Unit.
Second-Lieutenant	Platoon Training Officer, RS Company, 9th (Holding) Bn KOSB.
Second-Lieutenant	Signals Officer, 9 KOSB.
Lieutenant	Understudy Signals Officer, 7th/9th (Highrs) Bn RS.
Lieutenant	OC 18 Platoon, 7/9 RS.
Lieutenant, Captain	Intelligence Officer, 7/9 RS.
Captain	Wounded, Heinsberg (Germany), evacuated Field Hospital then General Military Hospital (Brussels), air ambulance and ambulance train to Ministry Pensions Hospital (Malvern, Worcs.)
Captain	Holding Battalion, Redford Barracks, Edinburgh.
Captain	Scottish Command, OC Advance Party establish Transit Camp, Duddingston, Edinburgh, for troops onwards to Norway.
Captain	Signals Officer, 7th/9th RS (Magdeburg, Germany).
Captain	Adjutant, 7th/9th RS (Germany).
Captain	War-time Battalion placed in suspended animation; returned The Colours to Glencorse Barracks (Penicuik); posted All Ranks and with Quartermaster returned Arms, Equipment, Transport.
Captain	Staff Captain, General Headquarters 2nd Echelon, 21st Army.
Captain	Demobilised 22nd March 1947 (Honorary Rank of Captain).

Post-War Service

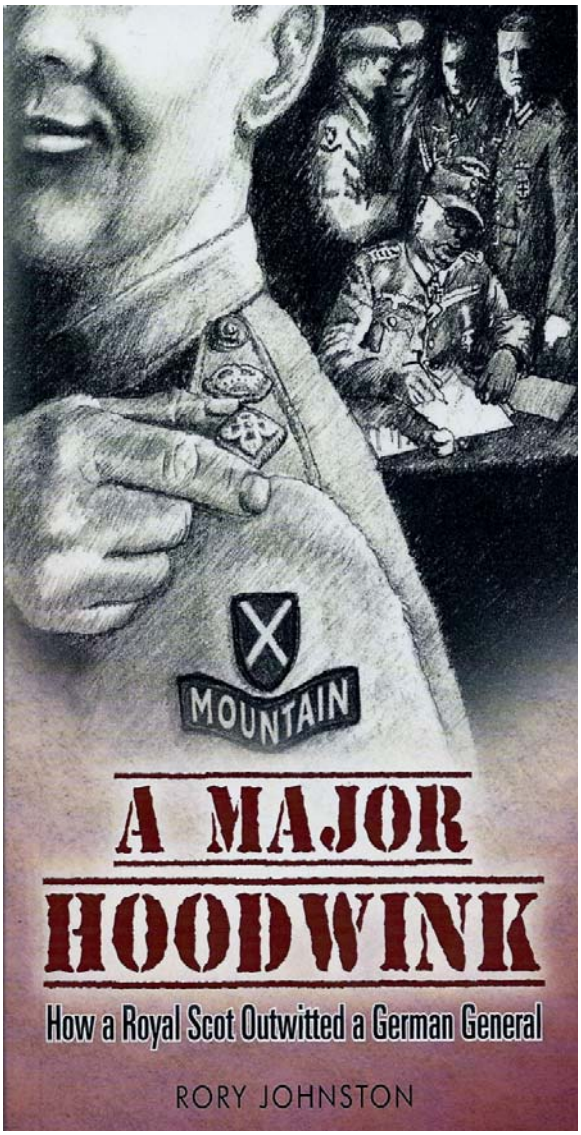
Lieutenant, Captain	Signals Officer, 7th/9th (TA) RS (1947).
Major	OC “HQ” Company and Signals Officer, 7th/9th (TA) RS.
Major	OC “D” Company, 7th/9th (TA) RS.

Major	Second-in-Command, 7th/9th (TA) RS.
Major	Retired from the Territorial Army (Honorary Rank of Major).
Deputy Lieutenant	County of the West Midlands 1975, Supplementary List 1996—.

TA Decoration 1953

Commander, Order of Merit, Italian Republic 1973

Commander, Order of the British Empire 1977




In the darkest days of World War II, as the German forces swelled all the more ferociously, one man used his wit and audacity where his rank fell perilously short. With German General Wilhelm Daser and his men firmly planted in Middelburg in Holland, Major Hugh Johnston of the Royal Scots Regiment managed to alter the course of their occupation with little more than a hoodwink. After all, he had the love of his life, his wife Mary Kate, anxiously awaiting his return.

A Major Hoodwink: How a Royal Scot Outwitted a German General is the spellbinding story of two people who met while studying in Edinburgh, Scotland, tracing their life together through the build up and reality of World War II, as well as how they managed to survive. A portrayal of the determination it took to succeed, this stirring work of historical nonfiction written by their son Rory Johnston recounts this defining time in his parent's lives, and how they did what was necessary to protect the British way of life against the evils of Nazism. Rigorously researched and deeply felt, it's certain to resonate with anyone who has an interest in military affairs or simply revels in a romance that survived a chaotic world.

Rory Johnston writes about love and family relationships and is the author of *Growing Up in Africa – A Short Story of Self Discovery in an Age of Innocence*, and the co-author with his wife Virginia Doyle of *It Happened at Squeedunc Plantation.*

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Published in 2013, the book deals with the War Service of
Major R. H. B. (Hugh) Johnston
7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion The Royal Scots
(The Royal Regiment)
Awarded the Bronze Lion
by Her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina
Queen of The Netherlands.

It refers in particular to pages 12 and 13 of the Memoirs.