

GREEN ROUTE UP



4th Canadian Armoured Division

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Our Shields



Foreword – 24 September 2006

It has been just over sixty years since the sappers of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division (4 Div Engrs¹) were disbanded in HOLLAND following the end of World War II and the component units started their long journey back to Canada. One of 4 Div Engrs' units, the 6th Field Park Squadron, RCE, is of particular significance to 33rd Field Engineer Squadron, CME as it was mobilized in Lethbridge from our earliest predecessor, the 6th Field Park Company, RCE.

Specifically:

- Authorized as 6th Field Park Company, RCE in 1936²;
- Formed as 6th (Reserve) Field Park Company, RCE at Lethbridge in 1940;
- Mobilized as 6th Field Park Company, RCE (later 6th Field Park Squadron) in early 1941 with 6th (Reserve) Field Park Company, RCE dormant later that year;
- 6th Field Park Squadron, RCE returned to Lethbridge and disbanded in March 1946;
- Reactivated and redesignated to 33rd Field Park Company in June 1946;
- Redesignated to 33rd Field Park Squadron, RCE in 1947;
- Redesignated to 33rd Field Squadron, RCE in 1954;
- Relocated to Calgary in 1968;
- Relocated to Edmonton and zero-manned in 1971;
- Redesignated 33rd Field Engineer Squadron, CME in 1975; and
- Reactivated and relocated to Calgary on 23 July 1990.

On taking over command of 33 FES in May 2003 one of my five stated goals was to focus on our military heritage. I believe that it is incumbent upon 33 FES to promote the popularity and knowledge of those units that the Squadron perpetuates in the Community, to honour their customs, traditions and heritage and to commemorate their achievements and sacrifice.

To that end, I recently received an original copy of GREEN ROUTE UP from Master Warrant Officer (Retired) Don Smith, CD. As most history books spotlight the deeds of the generals and

¹ In size and organization, 4 Div Engrs (about 20 offrs and 700 ORs) was similar to the contemporary Combat Engineer Regiment. They were composed of:

- HQ RCE (led by a Lt-Col with a small staff),
- 8 Fd Sqn to support 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade (7 offrs and 250 ORs),
- 9 Fd Sqn to support 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade (7 offrs and 250 ORs),
- 6 Fd Pk Sqn to provide general engineer support (4 offrs and 112 ORs),
- 4 Armd Div Bridging Tp which held the Bailey bridges required to support the advance (1 offr and 40 ORs), and
- 46 Light Aid Detachment, RCME responsible for maintaining the mobility of 4 Div Engrs (1 offr and 24 ORs).

² General Orders 215 and 217 dated 15 December 1936.

the other combat arms, in GREEN ROUTE UP we are extremely lucky to find a book focussed exclusively on the exploits of sappers. Since this book traced the wartime exploits of our predecessor, I can think of no better gift to the Squadron on the occasion of my relinquishing command to Major Darren McCrank.

That being said, as an educational tool for today's sappers, I noted some deficiencies with the 1946 version. Firstly, the sappers of 2006 were not the target audience of GREEN ROUTE UP. The book was written by 4 Div Engrs as a memento for their own veterans and as such was focused on retelling the story that they already knew – not telling the story to the sappers in this millennium. Secondly, the book lacked an index for use in research. Thirdly, the Canadian Army has probably gone through a dozen or more changes in organization, acronyms and terminology since World War II. This alone could result in some confusion when read by the contemporary combat engineer. And lastly, there was only one copy of GREEN ROUTE UP and a single copy cannot easily be shared between the 80-odd officers and sappers of 33 FES.

The simple answer for me was to reproduce GREEN ROUTE UP, insert an index and footnotes to maximize its educational value, and publish sufficient copies so that every member of the Squadron would have one for their own personal library.

Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again. Chimo!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eppo van Weelderen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'E'.

Major E. (Eppo) van Weelderen, CD, P.Eng.
Commanding Officer
33rd Field Engineer Squadron

Foreword – 6 November 1945

GREEN ROUTE UP³ was the name of the main axis of advance of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division (4 Cdn Armd Div or 4 Div). It stretches from CAEN in NORMANDY to WILHELMSHAVEN in GERMANY. Practically every inch was wrestled from the fanatical enemy by our gallant comrades of the Infantry and Armoured Corps, with the direct support of the Artillery, and all made the greatest sacrifices and paid a heavy toll.

The tasks of the Divisional Engineers are many and varied, but by far the greatest was that of opening and maintaining GREEN ROUTE as far as tactically possible, for our own divisional traffic, that is up to 7,000 vehicles of which some 350 may be of 40 tons in weight. The road was littered with the mangled bodies of men and animals, often in a state of advanced putrefaction, and smashed and burnt out vehicles of every description. Thousands of mines were concealed in its surface as well as the enemy's most ingenious death traps. It crossed the greatest water obstacles in EUROPE over which all bridges had been destroyed. Hundreds of huge craters dotted its winding course. But that is not all. The enemy almost invariably stayed and defended these obstacles to the last, showering the sappers with bombs, shells, rockets, mortars and machine gun bullets. The following pages tell how GREEN ROUTE UP, over its entire length of some 600 miles was repaired and maintained class 40 by 6th Field Park, 8th Field and 9th Field Squadrons, during the passage of 4th Canadian Armoured Division.

The purpose of this book is to provide firstly, a record of 4 Div Engrs' activities during the war, and secondly, a lasting memo which will bring back to the reader's mind in years to come, the bright spots as well as the black ones in World War II.

The compilation of the material has taken many months and although small errors are bound to be present, it is substantially accurate, thanks to the wholehearted cooperation of the editorial committee:

Assistant Editor, 6th Field Park Squadron – Sgt A.E. Stewart

Assistant Editor, 8th Field Squadron – Sgt K.G. Land and Sgt N.A. Black

Assistant Editor, 9th Field Squadron – Spr L.R. Berry

Art Editor – Lt G.M. Seaborn

Business Manager – Lt A.W. Rae

Circulation Manager – Lt E.P. Thompson

³ Green Route Up was marked as shown on the cover. The green parallelogram with the '4' was the symbol for 4 Cdn Armd Div (the parallelogram alluding to the shape of a World War I tank). 'Up' referred to the direction of travel – up towards the enemy – down towards the rear.

It is primarily an operational history and is divided into six chapters, each of which is a clearly defined phase. At the back of each is a map showing the route and places of importance mentioned in the text.

The hard work and professional skill of Sprs R.F. Denyer of HQ, J.E. Goodall and G.A. Harber of 1st Field (Air) Survey Company have made the publishing possible. I hope you find it as interesting to read as it has been to produce.

Lieutenant M.O. Rollefson, MC, RCE
Editor-in-chief
Bilthoven, Holland
6 November 1945

Message from the CRE

4th Canadian Armoured Division, with its five thousand (sometimes seven thousand) tanks, armoured vehicles, guns and trucks, was a powerful striking force – while it had its mobility. It was the task of the divisional engineers to see that this mobility was never lost; because of physical obstacles. In spite of the terrible ground and road conditions of the low countries we fought through, blown bridges, mines, craters, road blocks and peat bogs, the Division maintained its mobility and gave the Germans a thorough beating. I saw every job you did and knew the conditions under which you did it. Through the whole campaign you were magnificent. Your coolness under fire, engineering technique, speed and determination made every engineer plan successful. No matter what your job, you have every right to be proud as a member of the engineer team.

In your ‘bull sessions’ over a glass of Canadian beer remember that it was the fine support of other arms and services and of corps and army engineers that made our work possible. Your capacity for excellent individual effort thrown into the teamwork of good citizenship will help build us a better Canada.

Good luck to you as civilians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.R.B. Jones', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lieutenant Colonel J.R.B. Jones, OBE, DSO, RCE⁴
Commander Royal Canadian Engineers
4th Canadian Armoured Division

5 November 1945

⁴ **Brigadier John Robert Blakely Jones, OBE, DSO, MiD, CD**, was born in Edmonton in 1908. In 1940, he enlisted as an officer with 10 Fd Sqn and served in North Africa, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. During the war he commanded 10 Fd Sqn, 31 Fd Coy, 4 Fd Pk Sqn and 2 Tun Coy. He was promoted Lt Col on 21 February 1944 and appointed CRE of 4 Cdn Armd Div holding this appointment until the end of the war. At the conclusion of the war, Lt Col Jones remained in the army, and in 1946 was posted to Whitehorse as the Senior Highway Engineer of the North West Highway System. In 1949, he was promoted to Col and appointed Director of Works and Accommodations at NDHQ. This was followed by an appointment as the Chief Engineer at Army HQ from 1951-54. Later as a Brigadier, he commanded the New Brunswick Area, returning to the Yukon in 1957 as Chief Highway Engineer. From 1965-66 he acted as the National President of the Military Engineer's Association of Canada. Brig Jones died in Calgary in 2000.

List of Abbreviations

AWARDS:

OBE – Order of the British Empire (Officer)
DSO – Distinguished Service Order
MC – Military Cross
MBE – Order of the British Empire (Member)
MM – Military Medal
MiD – Mentioned in Dispatches

APPOINTMENTS:

GOC – General Officer Commanding
CRE – Commander, Royal Engineers
CO – Commanding Officer (battalion or equivalent)
OC – Officer Commanding (company or equivalent)
IORE – Intelligence Officer, Royal Engineers
SSM – Squadron Sergeant-Major
SQMS – Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant
NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer
OR – Other Rank

FORMATIONS:

2 Cdn Corps – 2nd Canadian Corps
3 Cdn Inf Div – 3rd Canadian Infantry Division
4 Cdn Armd Div – 4th Canadian Armoured Division
7 Br Armd Div – 7th British Armoured Division
4 CAB – 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade (4 Cdn Armd Div)
10 CIB – 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade (4 Cdn Armd Div)
L of C Tps – Lines of Communication Troops

UNITS:

S.A.R. – The South Alberta Regiment (4 Cdn Armd Div)
B.C.R. – The British Columbia Regiment, Duke of Connaught's Own (4 CAB)
6 Fd Pk Coy – 6th Field Park Company, RCE
6 Fd Pk Sqn – 6th Field Park Squadron, RCE (4 Div Engrs)
8 Fd Coy – 8th Field Company, RCE
8 Fd Sqn – 8th Field Squadron, RCE (4 Div Engrs)
9 Fd Coy – 9th Field Company, RCE
9 Fd Sqn – 9th Field Squadron, RCE (4 Div Engrs)
L.S.R. – The Lake Superior Regiment (4 CAB)
Argyles – The Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (10 CIB)
Algonquins – The Algonquin Regiment (10 CIB)
L & W Regt – The Lincoln & Welland Regiment (10 CIB)

MISCELLANEOUS:

C.A.S.F. – Canadian Active Service Force
CE – Canadian Engineers
C.E.F. – Canadian Expeditionary Force
CME – Canadian Military Engineers
G.O. – General Order
N.P. – Non-Permanent Active Militia
RCE – Royal Canadian Engineers
RE – Royal Engineers

The Formation and Training of 4th Divisional Engineers

During the months of May and June 1941, the 4 Div Engrs were mobilized at widely separated points in order to support 4th Canadian Infantry Division (4 Cdn Inf Div) . Both 6 Fd Pk Coy and 9th Field Company (9 Fd Coy) were entirely western units while 8 Fd Coy and 19 Fd Coy were from ONTARIO and QUEBEC respectively. Maj H.B. Stewart organized 8 Fd Coy at the Fort York Armouries, TORONTO, then took them to their first camp at NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE. Similarly Maj J.M.L. Lafrance formed 19 Fd Coy in SOREL on 15 May 1941. The 9 Fd Coy was formed in DUNDURN on 22 May 1941 by Maj W.E. Denley, MC and was recruited entirely from the province of SASKATCHEWAN.

After receiving their mobilization order⁵, the officers and NCOs of 6 Fd Pk Coy were sent on training courses. Recruitment and training was carried out at the old R.C.M.P. Barracks in LETHBRIDGE (the Lethbridge City Hall, Civic Centre, and Curling Rink were later built on this site). A draft of 111 men from CALGARY, EDMONTON, and SASKATOON in July 1941 brought the unit to full strength. In PETAWAWA the Company joined 8, 9, and 19 Fd Coys, all mobilized to support 4 Cdn Inf Div⁶. A divisional RCE headquarters was then established under Lt-Col P. Debney, the Commander Royal Canadian Engineers (CRE), of EDMONTON to coordinate the activities of the four companies⁷.

The month of September 1941 found the four companies together for the first time at Petawawa Camp. There they received part of their equipment and carried on unit training. An NCO's school was being conducted at ST. HYACINTHE and many NCOs and sappers went there for special courses.

An engineer headquarters was established under Lt-Col Debney, the first Commander, Royal Canadian Engineers (CRE), so the three units became a formation. Then on the 22 January

⁵ General Order 160, 24 July 1941.

⁶ 4 Cdn Armd Div was constituted in March 1942 by converting 4 Cdn Inf Div. It consisted of the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade (4 CAB) with three armoured regiments and an infantry battalion (The Governor General's Foot Guards, The Canadian Grenadier Guards, The British Columbia Regiment and The Lake Superior Regiment respectively) and the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade (10 CIB) composed of three infantry battalions (The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, The Algonquin Regiment and The Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada)

⁷ Meanwhile, back in LETHBRIDGE on 30 August 1941, a small entry in the newspaper advised all soldiers currently in the 6th (Reserve) Field Park Company to turn in their equipment and uniforms. Lt Jacobson was given the task of turning the lights out and the last parade was held on 2 September 1941. The reserve element of 6 Fd Pk Coy was now officially disbanded for the duration of the war.

1942, the 4 Div Engrs moved to Debert Camp in NOVA SCOTIA, where they became the engineer formation of the 4 Div and were called Squadrons instead of Companies⁸. Most of the operational equipment was issued and as much training done as the limited equipment would permit. On 27 April, Lt-Col Connelly became the CRE and Capt Berry the Adjutant and preparations were made for the trip to ENGLAND. Maj G.L. MacDonald took over command of 8 Fd Sqn, Maj H. Minshall the 9 Fd Sqn and Maj H.A. Maclean the 6 Fd Pk Sqn.

In the first few days of June, 8 Fd Sqn and 6 Fd Pk Sqn boarded the Polish liner *Batory*, 9 Fd Sqn the *Duchess of York* and sailed as the first formation of 4 Div to go overseas. The voyage to ENGLAND was made very quickly and several unsuccessful submarine attacks added interest. Foul conditions aboard the *Duchess*, however, marred what could have been a pleasant experience for 9 Fd Sqn. 12 June found the engineers comfortably settled in civilian homes in Surrey, 8 and 9 Fd Sqns in EAST HORSLEY and 6 Fd Pk Sqn in WEST HORSLEY. Never before, or since, had the sappers encountered the warmth of hospitality displayed by the people of these towns throughout the eight months spent there. The sappers were introduced to the new Bailey bridge and all ranks well remember the death marches to WALLINGFORD to train with it. All transport and heavy equipment was received and the 46th Light Aid Detachment (46 LAD) joined the formation. 46 LAD was attached to 6 Fd Pk Sqn and followed closely the moves of the 4 Div Engrs from Shire to Shire and through many harrowing schemes in which they participated. Generally the fortunes and misfortunes of the LAD followed closely to those of 6 Fd Pk Sqn, and all moves made throughout the campaign were identical. Although the attachment to the Fd Pk Sqn had certain drawbacks at times, so far as giving maximum service to the engineer formation, it proved itself in the long run to be the most satisfactory arrangement possible. 8 Fd Sqn moved to the southeast coast for a while to do some then secret mining operations for South Eastern Command.

In February 1943, 4 Div Engrs packed up and with much regret left for HAMPSHIRE. 8 Fd Sqn went to CRONDAL, 9 Fd Sqn to BENTLEY and 6 Fd Pk Sqn to ASHVALE where more training took place. In March they participated in the huge Army Exercise SPARTAN, then went to HALTON in LANCASHIRE for a strenuous session of wet bridging. Later THRAPSTON was visited for another struggle with the Bailey. 9 Fd Sqn took several weeks off to construct a number of reinforced concrete pillboxes on the downs, for a scheme that did not come off. Later they had the pleasure of blowing them to bits.

Early in June the Squadrons moved once more to the Shire of SUSSEX, 8 Fd Sqn to HALLAND CROSS ROADS, 9 Fd Sqn to VINEHALL and 6 Fd Pk Sqn to MOUNTFIELD. Again training

⁸ Since an Armoured Division only required two fd sqns (one to support each of the two brigades), as opposed to the three fd coys in an Infantry Division (with it's three brigade structure), 19 Fd Coy was no longer required and was converted to 3rd Battalion RCE.

in all subjects was carried on until in the fall the Division moved north to do battle with the 1st Polish Armoured Division (1 Pol Armd Div) and an Armoured Car Regiment in Exercises GRIZZLY and BRIDOON. The Division as a whole turned out an excellent performance and much valuable experience was gained by all ranks of the sappers.

On completion of Exercise BRIDOON on about 5 November, Lt-Col C.A. Campbell, the new CRE brought the 4 Div Engrs back to SUSSEX, and their last harbour in ENGLAND. 8 Fd Sqn moved to DANEHILL, 9 Fd Sqn to CHELWOOD CORNER and 6 Fd Pk Sqn to the ISLE OF THORNES.

In January 1944 Lt-Col G. Walsh came from 1 Cdn Inf Div in Italy as CRE and the Squadrons were introduced to bridging on the double in PLANCHET PARK. In February, Lt-Col Walsh went to 2 Cdn Corps and Lt-Col J.R.B. Jones, took over. At the end of February, Maj M.H.C.W. Allan took over 8 Fd Sqn from Maj MacDonald, Maj E.W. Henselwood was commanding 9 Fd Sqn and Maj E.W. Oddliefson 6 Fd Pk Sqn.

A mounting excitement was felt as all were sure invasion would come by summer, and training was intensified in preparation for the day. Small troop schemes in PLANCHET PARK culminated in the big engineer Exercise SPAN, and advance on two routes over the heavily demolished (supposedly) area from CHIDDINGFOLD to PANGBOURNE. This was designed as a six-day exercise for three field companies and a field park, and myriads of umpires insisted on treating the scheme as if it were actually a battle. The 4 Div Engrs covered themselves with glory by completing the course in two days and as a grand finale dropped a tank off a raft into the THAMES RIVER.

Back in SUSSEX again a battle school was conducted by members of the Algonquin and Lake Superior Regiments at 6 Fd Pk Sqn and many sapper NCOs received valuable training in infantry tactics.

In April all Squadrons moved to MAIDSTONE for a months intensive training in rafting on the tidal MEDWAY. This was a beautiful part of the country and the stay there was greatly enjoyed by everyone. Rumours of the coming invasion added impetus to the work. Training took the form of constructing and operating all types of assault rafts. Attached to the engineers were troops or sections of every variety of fighting vehicles in the Division. Every week an infantry battalion under their supervision practiced assault river crossings and twice a week the Squadrons took part in battalion schemes by building Folding Boat Equipment (F.B.E.) bridges and by rafting supporting arms across the river⁹. By the end of the period on the MEDWAY the

⁹ Folding Boat Equipment was water crossing equipment consisting of metal gang-planks lain parallel on folding boats made of wood and canvas.

infantry, armour and engineers were confident of their ability to work together in an assault river crossing.

The Bailey bridge was now mastered to such an extent that bridging lorry drivers who had seen plenty, watched with open mouths as jobs were completed in unbelievably short lengths of time. All types of enemy mines were studied until every sapper could detect and neutralize them without aid at least the common kinds.

Some time before “D-Day” the squadrons returned to CHELWOOD GATE where preparations for the invasion were commenced. Equipment was loaded and reloaded until the most efficient method was devised. Then all tools were greased and wrapped in waterproof tarpaulins and vehicles thoroughly waterproofed and tested. “D-Day” came and everything was in readiness but not until six long weeks later did the order to move come through. The only excitement was the continuous parade of V-1s roaring overhead in the direction of LONDON. Many were shot down in the area, both by fighters and anti-aircraft guns. CHELWOOD GATE was built on a very high piece of ground and the bombs flew so low some nights that one swore they were coming right into bed with you. Since the bombs fly low, the anti-aircraft rounds must of course explode at the same level. It did, right overhead, and provided what could be called the first battle inoculation. 6 Fd Pk Sqn was apparently at the focal point of several batteries and right on the path of a buzz bomb launching site. There was a continuous hail of falling shrapnel each time a bomb passed and of course the pleasant thought that one might land there at any minute.

Many officers and NCOs who were greatly responsible for the training and welding of the 4 Div Engrs into the remarkably effective body they were have not been mentioned, but before many chapters are read, it will become quite evident that their efforts were not in vain.

From Chelwood Gate, Sussex to Bruges, Belgium

At 1220 hrs, 16 July 1944, the Advance Party of RCE HQ moved off from COLD HARBOUR, SUSSEX to begin their 600-mile advance that was to end in WILHELMSHAVEN in GERMANY. They were followed by the rest of 4 Div Engrs in the period 19-22 July. This ended a long period of waiting and preparation during which rumour was rife and morale went lower with each postponement of our embarkation date.

Movement orders in each case were received from South Eastern Command, and having arrived safely on the beaches of NORMANDY, everyone was deeply impressed by the remarkable coolness and efficiency displayed by movement control on the journey, which was made quickly and comfortably.

Most parties landed dryshod on the floating Mulberry piers at ARROMANCHES-LES-BAINS, a disappointment to nobody, including the drivers who had meticulously waterproofed their vehicles. On disembarking, the squadrons proceeded to Transit Camp 60, about a mile from the beach, to begin de-waterproofing. All parties had arrived by 26 July when the remainder of 6 Fd Pk Sqn, 46 LAD and 4 Div Troops disembarked at COURSEULLES-SUR-MER, several of the parties having been compelled to wait overnight offshore before unloading. Enemy planes came over every night on reconnaissance, usually bringing a few bombs or bundles of propaganda leaflets. The explosion of the bombs, the noises from the masses of all kinds of anti-aircraft guns and the rain of shrapnel made things very interesting and exciting on these occasions.

From the transit camps, all squadrons moved to an area about a mile due west of CREPON and just north of the road. Here they found some enemy beach defences consisting of 88mm guns surrounded by wire and minefields and accompanied by the usual dugouts for living quarters, ammunition etc. These were examined in detail by almost everyone, and some mine detector training carried out in the minefields. It was much more of a satisfaction to detect mines that had actually been laid by the enemy. De-waterproofing was completed here, and training, with the usual parades, including foot drill, recommenced. 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn constructed and operated for about a day a waterpoint at ST. GABRIEL. 6 Fd Pk Sqn received instructions to convert a Sherman tank into a 100-ton monster, for a deception scheme, and began to gather material for it. 8 Fd Sqn had their first casualty when Spr Shearne was accidentally shot through the arm with a sten gun. All the recce officers were out collecting mines and gathering all information of value. Lt A.P. Beavan, Intelligence Officer Royal Engineers (IORE), was busy contacting other IOs to get us into the picture, particularly the IORE of 3 Cdn Inf Div at MONDEVILLE, from whom we expected to take over.

At 1400 hrs, 28 July the CRE held an Orders Group (O Gp) and gave details to the Officers Commanding the Squadrons (OCs) of the expected move. After the O Gp, the CRE and Sqn OCs went to CAEN to look over their respective harbour areas, and on the morning of 29 July, recce parties consisting of the OCs and another officer from each squadron took off at 0500 hrs. About 1200 hrs, 4 Div was mobile and late afternoon found them in their new area, where everyone dug in and protected vehicle tires with sandbags and bricks. This was particularly necessary as they were all in artillery areas and considerable counter-battery fire came down as well as the occasional shrapnel bomb from enemy night raiders. On 30 July 8 Fd Sqn moved up and followed the same procedure. 4 Div had now begun its first operational role in taking over holding positions from the 7 Br Armd Div south of CAEN. After two days our infantry and other support arms took over the forward positions south of CAEN from 3 Cdn Inf Div and came face to face with Fritz for the first time. 4 Div Engrs however were able to operate from their original harbour, and left non-essential vehicles and personnel in the administration area with 4 Div Br Tp (a short distance to the north). 6 Fd Pk Sqn's bulldozers were busy for several days digging in the Div HQ armoured command vehicles as they were located in front of a medium artillery regiment.

4 Div Engrs first major task in NORMANDY was the construction of part of a bypass south of CAEN, to run from FLEURY-SUR-ORNE to CORMELLES and northeast to MONDEVILLE. The work of the three squadrons was coordinated and directed by Lt R.D. Livingstone (FE 1). On 31 July each squadron sent a recce party to look over their sector of the job. The road was to be graded 44 feet wide with a 24-foot carriageway of rubble placed 9 inches deep, rolled and oiled. A 12-foot strip was to be constructed first on the north side. 6 Fd Pk Sqn supplied, among other things, two sections of tippers, an autopatrol, a roller and a D-8. Work was to be carried on continuously with troops working in shifts. A large part of the road ran between our medium gun lines on which the enemy brought to bear considerable fire, causing several casualties to us as well. Work continued on this job until 7 August when it was turned over to Line of Communication Troops (L of C Tps). The week 1-7 August was a very busy one and provided 4 Div Engrs with an invaluable battle inoculation. All units took a fair hammering from enemy medium and heavy artillery, also the odd night raider. 8 Fd Sqn had probably the toughest session of all, as on several occasions they were pounded for a couple of hours by enemy mediums, but they were well dug in and there were no fatal casualties.

A rare scene was witnessed one day in 9 Fd Sqn's lines when a 17cm shell landed about 200 yards from camp, bored its way five feet into the ground, shot up 150 yards into the air again, changing direction about 30 degrees, landed at one end of a long line of vehicles and bounced and skidded its way through the narrow space coming to rest about 3 feet short of a stone wall behind the orderly room. There it was duly sandbagged and later removed.

One sapper in 8 Fd Sqn can boast of an 88 mm shell exploding on top of his slit trench without so much as scratching him. However several unfortunate incidents also occurred. A sapper in 9 Fd Sqn had all the flesh stripped from one arm when a bazooka, which he was examining, exploded. Two men in 8 Fd Sqn were also injured when a 5.5 gun blew up nearby from a premature detonation.

This period was also utilized to train officers and NCOs in night patrolling with the infantry and many harrowing experiences can be told of trips to no-mans-land near HUBERT-FOLIE, BOURGEBUS, GRENTHEVILLE, etc. This area was under constant observation by the enemy and any noise or dust brought clouds of rockets to the spot in short order. Both 8 and 9 Fd Sqns did considerable oiling of the roads and tracks in forward areas to try to make travel a little safer.

By this time Workshop Troop of 6 Fd Pk Sqn had completed their 100-ton monster PHONEY, after several alterations at the suggestion of Maj-Gen G. Kitching, DSO, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 4 Div, and it was indeed a frightful spectacle. It was a Sherman tank with a huge wooden false tank body built over it using a tubular scaffolding frame that was bent and welded into a suitable shape. The main gun barrel was a large, sheet metal covered telephone pole and it had triple dummy Bofors (anti-aircraft guns) on the rear of the turret for anti-aircraft protection. From a distance of over 200 feet it looked quite genuine. The GOC then decided to send it for a trial run along the front line and in plain view of the enemy. It was greeted immediately by a shower of enemy 88s and field artillery but luckily received no direct hits. The CRE,, desiring to observe the effect on the enemy, accidentally wound up on the same hill with it and got a fair plastering for his effort, until shelling subsided after the monster had passed.

Both Troops and Squadrons perfected vehicle loadings so they could have maximum effectiveness with minimum load on the day of the attack. They were to leave behind all vehicles and personnel not needed right in the front line, and each leading troop was to have five halftracks, four for the sections and one for stores. 6 Fd Pk Sqn organized a mobile dump under Sgt Stewart to keep well forward with the Squadrons. On 6 and 7 August all work was turned over to the Lines of Communication Troops (L of C Tps) and the 51 Br Inf Div took over from 4 Div which withdrew from forward positions to form up for passing through after the initial assault. 87th Assault Squadron, RE (87 Aslt Sqn) came under command 6 August, and during 7 and 8 August all Squadrons formed up on the road south of CAEN ready to take off in the column.

At approximately 2300 hrs on 7 August, 1,100 RAF heavies began to pound enemy targets immediately in front of us, our troops having been withdrawn a short distance. After a terrific bombardment, which lasted for two hours, infantry led by flails and tanks guided by light beams put in an attack with 2 Cdn Inf Div on the right of the CAEN-FALAISE road and 51 Br Inf Div

on the left. This was completely successful and all objectives were obtained by morning, enabling 4 Div and the 1 Pol Armd Div to pass through 2 Cdn Inf Div and 51 Br Inf Div respectively. Tanks were en masse accompanied by infantry in converted Priests and soon the prisoners were streaming in. A detachment from 8 Fd Sqn followed the leading tanks. 4 Div did not use the roads in this assault but moved across country just to the west, keeping the Squadrons busy marking the paths with barber poles and maintaining them in a passable state.

About this time a formation of U.S.A.A.F. flying forts 'pattern' bombed a closely packed concentration of our troops in the CORMELLES-COLOMBELLE area, causing many casualties and great damage to equipment. SQMS Forster of 8 Fd Sqn was killed and three sappers wounded. Three vehicles, including their QM truck and a bridging lorry were totally destroyed.

In the opening day of the attack, the weather was very hot and dry and the country flat so the Division was able to proceed across country almost independent of roads. Squadrons were of course engaged in marking, signing and maintaining these routes. Sgt Stewart set up his advanced stores dump just off the main road by TILLY-LA-CAMPAGNE. He had some difficulty persuading the major of a 5.5-inch regiment that his presence was really necessary as the field was already overcrowded. The major's wrath was finally soothed when Sgt Stewart dug in his HQ with one of the bulldozers. There were very few mines reported and 8 Fd Sqn removed the only minefield (a small one) that was encountered. The RAF bomb disposal crew however was kept busy neutralizing rockets and bombs of all sorts.

The first few days of the advance brought us to the area of HAUTMESNIL about ten miles south of CAEN on the main road to FALAISE and almost through the enemy's ten-mile deep defences around the bridgehead. Three days were spent here, during which some sleep was caught up and refitting accomplished. During this period a disastrous thing happened. One section of 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn was sent out to demolish roadblocks at level crossings on the CAEN-FALAISE railway line. They took the wrong road and found another roadblock in enemy territory, which they removed without mishap. Just as they started off, their vehicle received a direct hit by an 88mm, detonating the 200 pounds of explosives carried. Sgt Neil, the section commander, and eleven sappers were killed and L/Cpl Johnston severely injured. The vehicle was completely demolished and only five identifiable bodies found.¹⁰

6 Fd Pk Sqn had very little rest in their harbour at ROBERTMESNIL as enemy artillery continually harassed them. There was not one vehicle that didn't have a shrapnel hole in it. One attached transporter was knocked out by several pieces through the motor. The harbour was right on the brow of a hill from which they could watch the smoke and flame belch from the barrels of the German guns as they sent shell after shell crashing into the camp. They were also

¹⁰ This single incident resulted in over half of the deaths suffered by 9 Fd Sqn during the entire war.

having difficulty keeping the Division supplied with water, the weather being so dry that very few streams were flowing.

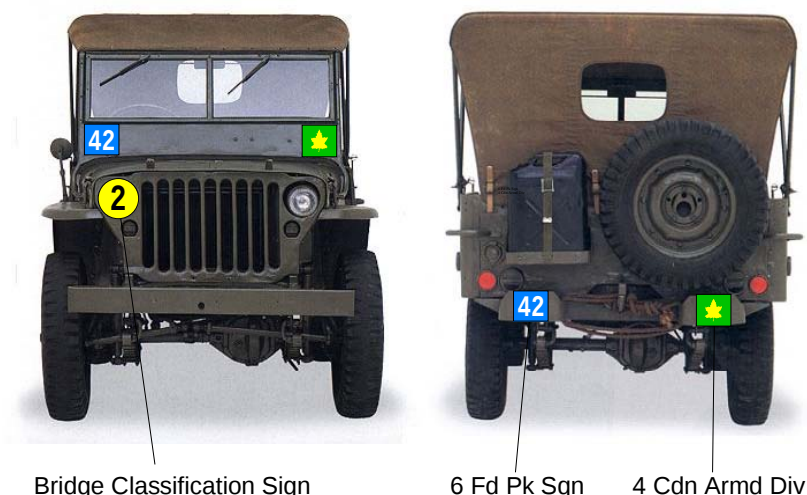
After this short rest period the Division was to break through to the south of ROUVRE, the LAISON RIVER not being considered a tank obstacle, and take OLENDON and EPANEY. A bombardment by over 1,000 RAF heavies was to precede the attack and everyone was therefore in high spirits remembering the excellent job they had done before. Shortly after dinner on 14 August they appeared in the northern like a plague of locusts, their drone increasing in intensity until reaching a fortissimo over our heads. As the first few squadrons passed we waved and cheered at them. However, shortly there was an ear-shattering series of explosions a few hundred yards away and it became obvious that our four-engined friends had mistaken us for the enemy. Everyone dove for a slit trench and stayed there for an hour and a half while our airborne brothers baled approximately 700 tons of high explosive and fragmentation bombs onto us. One particularly vicious Halifax (not Lancaster) circled the writer's slit trench three times before he was satisfied with the bomb run. In spite of this he missed by 50 yards with his 2,000 pounder and buried alive nine men from HQ Tp of 9 Fd Sqn as they lay well dispersed in their slit trenches. Five of them were evacuated to the hospital after the attack was over. 6 Fd Pk Sqn lost two sappers injured by bomb splinters and 8 Fd Sqn lost one, as well as two 60 cwts completed destroyed. A Spitfire peeled off and sprayed 6 Fd Pk Sqn men with cannon and machine gun fire as they ran to take cover from the bombs.

In spite of this terrible mistake the attack went in successfully with 4 CAB leading and detachments of 8 Fd Sqn and Aslt RE in support. They made two scissor crossings, two fascine crossings and located a ford over the LAISON RIVER, which proved to be a definite tank obstacle. 4 CAB attacked in a mass tank block one brigade strong with the most vulnerable soft-skinned vehicles in the middle of the hollow square. The attack was to proceed across country on a general line SOIGNOLES-ROUVES-OLENDON. Lt Ditchburn had a harrowing experience in this unfortunate manoeuvre as the engineer recce officer. He was with the Tactical Headquarters (Tac HQ) of 4 CAB, which followed the powerful hollow square of some 300 tanks. Tac HQ, led by Brig Booth pushed off with a protective squadron and the entire brigade staff. In that dust and confusion caused by changing the hollow square formation Tac HQ became separated and headed towards ESTREES LA CAMPAGNE and HILL 111. On the way they passed masses of dead Germans and knocked-out B.C.R. tanks finally reaching the hill after penetrating an extensively entrenched defensive position. The fun began when they started down HILL 111 heading in a south-southwest direction. No one, it appeared, knew where they were but all followed the commander's instructions implicitly. No enemy were in sight, but all of a sudden WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!, nine or ten times and tanks started brewing all around. Crews were mowed down by machine guns as they tried to escape the burning vehicles. In a few minutes all command tanks, including the Brigadiers, were knocked out. Actually Tac HQ had

gone through the initial tank defence system of QUESNAY WOOD, the strong point that 4 Div was trying to outflank, and incidentally the anti-tank bastion that caused the mutilation of the B.C.R.s several days before. Lt Ditchburn's 'Otter' was the only soft-skinned vehicle to come out, but not without scars. The brigade major and Lt-Col Hogarth were the only members of the expedition who were able to get their tanks out intact, and were all that remained of some 15 to 17. To add to the confusion a few of the heavy bombers dropped their loads on the shattered force.

In the same attack Lt B.P. Jennings of 8 Fd Sqn, while recceing a ford over the LAISON RIVER, was killed by an 88 which hit a tree beside him. Spr Robertson was also killed and several injured, including Sgt Nicol and L/Sgt Macleod, on this advance. Because of the bombing and heavy smoke screens laid, there was considerable confusion and several armoured columns lost direction. As a result much sapper work had to be done without protection, however the crossing was effected and the objectives taken. Then, to take the rest of the Division and maintenance traffic, Lt R.D. Livingstone (FE1), built seven miles of road from ST. SILVAIN to ROUVRES with two sections from 8 Fd Sqn, two bulldozers and an autopatrol. On 15 August, 2 Troop 9 Fd Sqn built the Division's first operational bridge by replacing a scissor bridge at ROUVRES with a 40-foot Single-Single (40' SS) Bailey Bridge over the LAISON RIVER. Most of the Division passed that day heading for OLENDON and EPANEY.

During the crossing of the ROUVRES RIVER, 6 Fd Pk Sqn's water point and mobile dump were established near the bridge. At night the small party got a fair idea of what hell could be like, with the continuous shelling and frequent visits by night raiders. Barber poles were in great demand and great difficulty was encountered in maintaining a substantial supply forward as the Division was moving fast now and roads were congested at all hours. Cpl Douglas of Field Stores Troop left the main dump at ROBERTMESNIL one day with a load of stores to replenish the depleted advanced dump at ROUVRES and to contact Sgt Stewart. His instructions were to find the water point, as the stores would be there also. Two hours later he reached the town and began to inquire as to the location of serial 42 vehicles. He got very little satisfaction from either the Poles or the Canadians and only after two hours of searching in the dark did he hear Sgt Stewart's familiar voice answer. The water point had been so carefully camouflaged that several times he had passed within a few feet without recognizing it. The next morning enemy planes strafed the party but our anti-aircraft guns made short work of the Jerries by knocking down four of the six attackers.



6 Fd Pk Sqn (Serial 42) Vehicle Markings

9 Fd Sqn were now in the lead and a crossing was going to be made at DAINBLAINVILLE since recce had reported it clear. The Division was to advance straight south through DAINBLAINVILLE to the FALAISE-TRUN road and thence to TRUN. Lts Pyke, Sheppard and Ditchburn had recce'd the DIVES RIVER for crossings and chose DAINBLAINVILLE, where a bridge was found intact. Lt Pyke carried on straight south for another mile and penetrated strong enemy defences to a depth of half a mile when he came face to face with a platoon of Germans marching down the road. The Germans were apparently unable to recognize the Humber as a Canadian vehicle so did not show themselves or fire as he approached. He attempted to take them prisoner but rather than cooperate they chose to disperse and commenced firing at him. A sharp about turn was executed and Lt Pyke ran the gauntlet through one half mile of now thoroughly aroused Hun to inform Maj Henselwood, who was in DAINBLAINVILLE. The enemy then commenced to shell and mortar the area making it absolutely untenable so our infantry withdrew from the town back into the woods to the north. Maj Henselwood was seriously injured by shrapnel during the attack when a mortar bomb hit his halftrack and set it on fire. Two RCASC lorries attached to 6 Fd Pk Sqn were damaged. Pte Steeves' vehicle received a direct hit from a mortar on the motor and was a total loss.

After the DAINBLAINVILLE episode, 4 Div moved northeast and crossed the DIVES RIVER at JORT. 2 Troop 8 Fd Sqn constructed a bypass around SASSY to open up the Division maintenance route. The Division then moved to the area of BAROU at which point they were on the neck of the FALAISE POCKET that was being rapidly closed. Intelligence reported that an enemy attempt to break through was imminent so it was decided to blow all bridges along the DIVES RIVER from BEAUMAIS to MORTEAU-COULIBOEF. 8 Fd Sqn were assigned four and 9 Fd Sqn the remainder of the nine bridges involved. However, great difficulty was

encountered in contacting the infantry during the night for protective patrols and as a result only five bridges were blown. Oddly enough, the Germans at the same time, were afraid that we would attack across the DIVES RIVER and to protect themselves blew three of the remaining bridges. It was therefore apparent that both 4 Div and the enemy were attempting to blow the river line as a protective measure, and between them, it was pretty well accomplished. 8 Fd Sqn found one of their crossings firmly in the hands of 3 Cdn Inf Div, who strongly objected to their plan of blowing the bridge and mining its approaches. Lt Reynolds of 9 Fd Sqn, searching for his bridge in the dark, ran over a mine with his halftrack and got shot up by enemy machine guns losing two of his party wounded.

After this flap, the Division pushed quickly to TRUN, which was taken after a stiff skirmish. Divebombers and rocket craft of Tactical Air Force (TAF) took a terrible toll of the enemy in this area. 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn prepared the bridge in TRUN for demolition and stood by it under fire for several days until the danger was over. The Squadrons were busy maintaining our now long lines of communication and 8 Fd Sqn opened up a divisional maintenance route from LES MOUTIERS EN AUGES across to LE MENIL GIRARD about a mile northeast of TRUN. They had to do most of the signing also as the Provosts had their hands full with prisoners-of-war (POWs). When the route had been thoroughly signed 'CLUB' it was changed to 'JOKER' so they signed it all over again. The attack on TRUN was made over a wagon track across country, which had to be developed into a two-way route by 9 Fd Sqn, newly under command of Maj W.F. Sharon. At TRUN the Germans did attempt a break through which was easily held although pandemonium reigned for several hours. Following this, they began to surrender by the thousands and for several days POWs almost overwhelmed the Provosts. The FALAISE POCKET was finally closed by an advance from TRUN south to CHAMBOIS by the South Alberta Regiment (S.A.R.) during which Maj Currie won the Victoria Cross¹¹. Divisional recce elements then moved off up the TRUN-VIMOUTIERS road turning off in the direction of ORVILLE. Lt Pyke and a section from 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn led the engineers and with the help of a dozer from 6 Fd Pk Sqn cleared a one-way route through a most indescribable mass of wreckage. Burnt-out vehicles of all descriptions, mixed with the mangled bodies of men and horses completely blocked the road in many places. Everyone was sick and vomiting from the vile stench. A path wide enough to take bridge vehicles was cleared down through DEAD HORSE GULCH as it was aptly named to the site at ORVILLE. After quite a struggle enough lorries were brought down to enable Lt Pyke (who had broken his wrist during the night) to construct a 40' SS Bailey over the LA TOUQUES RIVER. Several of the lorries got hopelessly stuck in the ditches, which were flooded with recent rains. Lt Pyke's recce car got stuck in the belly of a dead horse, and in recovering it, the spinning wheels splashed rotten guts crawling with maggots over the poor sappers who were already sick enough to die. 2 and 3 Troops were

¹¹ The South Alberta Regiment is the predecessor to the South Alberta Light Horse.

at the same time widening the path and clearing the roadway including verges. The next day the entire 9 Fd Sqn were engaged in maintaining the approaches to the bridge as the Division moved over. Many of the tanks were passed over a ford about a half-mile to the north. A culvert was repaired on the main road beside the bridge immediately so that the bulldozer could be gotten across. By night it was evident that the existing bridge approaches had failed so 2 Troop constructed another 40' SS Bailey on the main road thus relieving the traffic congestion. The next day they built a wooden culvert under the bridge and removed the Bailey. Thus ended one of the most distasteful and discouraging tasks ever completed by 9 Fd Sqn, most of whom had not slept for three days. 2 Troop got separated from their cook truck and personal kit and had practically nothing to eat over the same period. The bulldozer operators from 6 Fd Pk Sqn put on a most outstanding performance during this advance.

At ORVILLE, 8 Fd Sqn took over from 9 Fd Sqn and 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn supported recce elements which advanced rapidly through LE SAP, where they received a hilarious reception, to MONAL. Here they were held up for a very short time by enemy anti-tank defences in the area of BROGLIE. 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn then took over, and with Spr C.H. Kruger and his dozer from 6 Fd Pk Sqn cleared the road to BERNAY¹². They encountered several roadblocks and craters and marked off a large minefield after losing a halftrack in it. At BERNAY, Capt Turner and Lt Ditchburn found a diversion around a seven-tree abatis and got leading troops into the town while 3 Troop quickly removed the abatis with saws, explosives and the dozer. From BERNAY they pushed straight to SERQINGNY where all the bridges over the RISLE RIVER were found to be blown. After an extensive recce by Capt Turner and Lts Ditchburn and Ward, it was decided by the CRE to cross at FONTAINE, where a partially demolished bridge was passable for a few vehicles. 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn opened a diversion here to the damaged bridge. Lt Ward with 1 Troop commenced construction of a 90' DS Bailey beside this before the infantry arrived, there being only a few armoured cars on the site. Some light mortars landed on the site but work was continued until when almost complete the infantry arrived to form the bridgehead. They waited a few minutes until the job was finished, then proceeded to the other side over the bridge to form the bridgehead. This was the only crossing on the 2 Cdn Corps front at the time. Lt Ward counted 600 vehicles crossing his bridge and diversion in one hour. 3 Cdn Inf Div recce went across early, and 3 Cdn Inf Div passed over complete after 4 Div.

At FONTAINE, 9 Fd Sqn took over but 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn came under command and remained lead troop checking roads, verges and entrances at 20 mph. They used every available sign in the Squadron. 26 August found the 4 Div Engrs concentrated in the area of TOSTES

¹² Spr Kruger, who had already cleared 24 nasty and dangerous miles of road that day with his D-7 dozer, finished the day on the diversion under mortar fire, successfully pushing it through to carry the traffic while a 50 ft DS Bailey was built on top of the weakened structure of the bridge at FONTAINE. His day's work brought him the Military Medal. (The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, Volume II, p. 299).

overlooking the SEINE RIVER near ROUEN. 6 Fd Pk Sqn had a few anxious moments here when they overshot their harbour area and found themselves leading the Division by a couple of lengths. They were finally stopped and turned around when the leading Dispatch Rider (DR) found the road blocked by mines. Before reaching this area the CRE made a sensational discovery. While checking information on roads near the SEINE RIVER he accidentally passed our forward troops and came across a battery of artillery firing madly in the direction of the SEINE RIVER. On questioning a doughboy he found they were part of 2 US Armd Div who had come up on our right and cut across in front. Apparently nobody, including Gen Eisenhower, had known they were within miles of here.

For the SEINE RIVER crossing 20 Fd Coy and 23 Fd Coy from 1 Cdn Army Tps came under command of the CRE. Unfortunately they arrived without their equipment so a Bailey platoon, a pontoon platoon and part of an assault platoon along with some storm boats were ordered. All Squadron recce officers were put on recceing roads and tracks south of the SEINE RIVER. CRIQUEBOEF was chosen as the crossing place and on the morning of 27 August, Army engineers began to ferry infantry across in storm boats. They also constructed and operated with marvellous efficiency two Class 9 support rafts. 8 and 9 Fd Sqn's each constructed a Class 40 Bailey pontoon raft and prepared approaches for it. 6 Fd Pk Sqn's dozer operators again turned out a fine performance. There was considerable shelling on the sites including accurate airbursts. Several times work had to be suspended. 9 Fd Sqn lost one sapper killed and seven wounded. Lt Sheppard, their R.O. 2 was severely injured in the arm, chest and thigh. Spr Marchmont, one of 6 Fd Pk Sqn's dozer operators, was killed while working on the far side of the river. His dozer was taken over by Spr N.J. Hore from 6 Fd Pk Sqn who continued to operate under heavy shellfire until the task was completed. His efforts were nothing short of magnificent and would earn him the Belgian Croix de Guerre.

1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn prepared landing stages for 'ducks' at BONPORT ABBEY. All rafts were turned over to Army Engrs in the evening. On 28 August the three Squadrons moved off to ELBOEUF and across a Bailey pontoon bridge constructed by Corps Engrs. Just across the bridge the convoy was heavily shelled by enemy medium mortars but miraculously no casualties were incurred. 6 Fd Pk Sqn unfortunately took the wrong road and drove along a high ridge in plain view of the enemy who were dug into the cliffs across from ELBOEUF. They discovered their mistake after running into the leading tanks and finally got turned around and headed back in the right direction. Suddenly the enemy opened up with an 88 and scored a direct hit on the leading vehicle which contained all the reserve picks and shovels. Then he proceeded to shell the entire convoy of about twenty vehicles, three of which were heavily loaded with explosives. Several men were injured by shell fragments but in spite of the accurate fire, the NCOs in charge got their convoy on the move and finally deployed in the new area. In their new harbours both

6 Fd Pk Sqn and 8 Fd Sqn were again heavily shelled, but 9 Fd Sqn beneath the brow of a hill had a good rest.

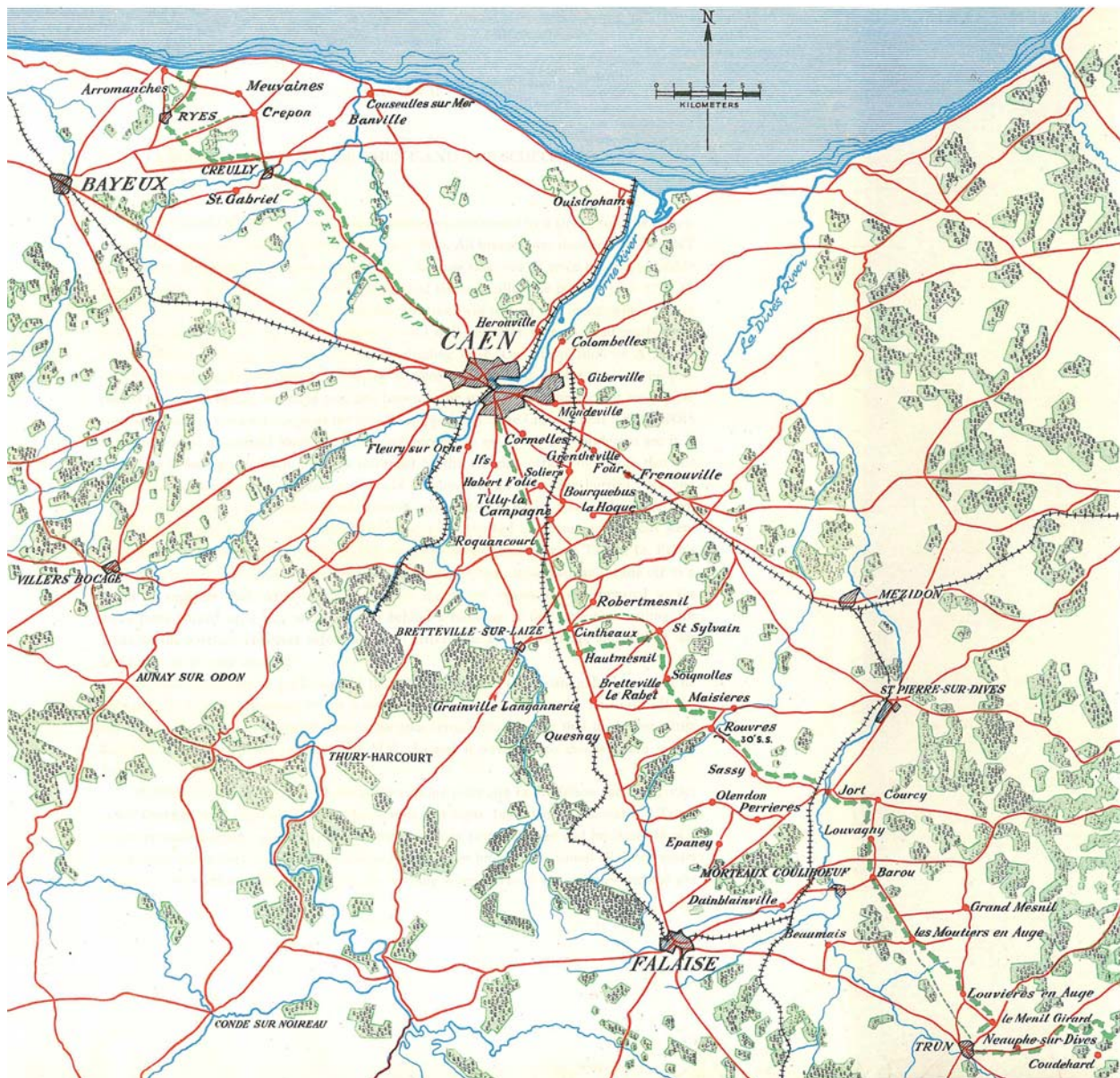
Infantry gradually enlarged our bridgehead to BOOS, then rapidly to BUCHY. Engineer work was limited to signing and some route maintenance as the bridges had been left behind intact. Here they were informed that 1 Pol Armd Div was taking over giving us a few days rest. Two hours later plans were completed for a push towards ABBEYVILLE at first light in the morning. Lt McAdam arrived at this time and became Recce Officer 2 (R.O.2) of 8 Fd Sqn.

The move up from BUCHY was slow and tiresome. Three Divisions were contesting the right to use our centreline and finally we had to move over to the left after the GOC flew to Corps to settle the matter. However 2 September found 4 Div Engrs complete, concentrated near WANDEL south of the SOMME RIVER near ABBEYVILLE. Squadrons had signed down to PONT REMY. After extensive recce up and down the river it was decided to cross at PONT REMY where four bridges in succession had been blown. A timely report was admitted by Lt Pyke who reced the four gaps before the enemy had been completely driven from the town on this side. At 2200 hrs 2 September, Lt-Col Jones, held his O Gp and bridging was commenced immediately after. 9 Fd Sqn was assigned the first three bridges – a 60' DS, a 40' SS and a 70' DS in that order. 8 Fd Sqn was to do the last and largest, a 90' DS flush decked to complete the crossing. By 0430 hrs the 60' DS had been completed by 2 Troop, by 0730 hrs the 40' SS by 1 Troop, by 0945 hrs the 70' DS by 2 and 3 Troops, and at 1205 hrs 8 Fd Sqn completed their 90' DS flush deck bridge. At 1300 hrs Divisional vehicles began to move over the SOMME RIVER, the first crossing by any Allied part since the material for the second could not be unloaded until the first was complete. However 8 Fd Sqn finally found a diversion over which they brought their material, thus speeding up the last bridge considerably.

By 4 September all Squadrons had moved to the vicinity of BELANCOURT across the SOMME RIVER and just west of ABBEYVILLE. Here they had a two-day rest, which was used to check over tools and equipment and refit generally. Lt Parker arrived at 9 Fd Sqn to replace Lt Sheppard. Both the CRE, Lt-Col Jones,, and the Adj, Capt Lake, held meetings. NCOs promotion was an important item and many changes were made. On 5 September word was received that 4 Div was to push right into Belgium in the direction of GHENT, the concentration area being near EECLOO. We were to pass through the Poles at YPRES, then carry on on our own. We moved off early on 6 September and the Squadrons reached the area of ST. OMER that night. By 2200 hrs Lt Scowcroft with 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn had completed an 80' DS over the canal at ST. MOMELIN a few miles north of ST. OMER. The Division began to move over at once and continued all night. 7 September found the Squadrons widely scattered and about six miles west of DIXMUDE. In DIXMUDE a long wooden bridge on the centreline was a matter of some concern, until a Sherman tank was run across proving the structure safe. However it quaked and groaned so much that a barge was propped down under it giving considerable moral

support, especially at high tide. The Division then passed over and proceeded almost unsupported to the GHENT CANAL at STEENBRUGGE south of BRUGES. We had received a magnificent welcome from the Belgian people on the way through and at one stage drunken drivers almost sabotaged the advance.

Map of Caen-Falaise



Crossing the Ghent Canal and the Schelde Pocket

At STEENBRUGGE, 4 Div again found themselves confronted by a strong force of enemy. It was estimated that in BRUGES alone there were two thousand. All bridges over the GHENT CANAL not already demolished were blown that day so the first task was to recce the most suitable crossing place. Maj Sharon who had been assigned the task called the possible sites A, B, C, D and E as on the attached map, and the original intention was to find one intact, which was at first considered possible. Lt Pyke had been briefed well ahead of time and had reached the STEENBRUGGE bridge some time before the leading recce. On investigation of A site he found the bridge had been blown and enemy in some strength held the far bank, so he proceeded towards B bridge. B Bridge was also blown so he started for D bridge but since there were still none of our own troops in the area he stopped at a large chateau near TROIS ROIS to inquire. Here an alleged Russian princess volunteered to go down to D bridge to see if it was intact. She cycled down and was informed by the German officer in charge that the bridge was prepared for demolition and would be blown in an hour. She hurried back and reported to Lt Pyke who relayed the information immediately to Maj Sharon. Lt Pyke then started for the bridge but when still a mile from it encountered an enemy amphibious jeep. Both parties stopped and stared at each other for a few seconds until Spr Taylor, Lt Pyke's wireless operator opened fire on the jeep, which executed a sharp about turn and made off in a cloud of engineer lead. After chasing it for a half mile more enemy troops appeared so the recce party backed up a way and pulled in behind a building at the same time calling for tanks on the wireless. However before any help arrived the bridge went up, and with it our last hopes of an easy crossing.

Lt Pyke then made a quick recce of the MOERBRUGGE crossing during which he shot a German as he attempted to put a bundle of straw in his slit trench. To finish off the day he was wounded by shrapnel from an 88 and, considering the fact that his broken wrist had been in a cast for several days, the Medical Officer deemed it advisable to evacuate him to the hospital.

MOERBRUGGE was finally chosen as the crossing place and Lt Rollefson and Sgt Tooley made the final recce and staked out the bank seats that night. Immediately afterwards 2 Troop, 9 Fd Sqn began unloading equipment on the site. At the same time Spr Kruger and his dozer from 6 Fd Pk Sqn cleared the building site by knocking down a few brick walls. Almost all the necessary equipment was unloaded before early in the morning when 2 Troop was driven from the site by small arms and mortars. Several times during the night mortars landed right on the site in the middle of the work parties. The Germans counter-attacked and infiltrated through the Argyles right to the far bank of the canal from which they proceeded to fire Spandaus. This made it necessary to retire behind buildings to carry on with the unloading. Finally machine gun

and 20mm fire was brought to bear directly on the site from three separate directions and it became impossible even to walk across it.



Moerbrugge

During the next day the enemy was driven back from the canal with the assistance of tanks, one of which was firing from the middle of the laid out Bailey stores. Dinner was brought down by 2 Troop's cooks in a halftrack and during the meal at least ten mortars fell within 25 yards of the house. The canvas top of the halftrack was completely ruined. Shortly after dinner 1 Troop and part of 3 Troop, 9 Fd Sqn relieved 2 Troop who retired for a much needed rest. During the changeover ten sappers from the three troops were wounded and had to be evacuated. Others received slight injuries and refused to be evacuated. That night the enemy had been driven back far enough so their shelling became inaccurate and the 90' DS Bailey bridge was constructed by sections from 1, 2 and 3 Troops under the direction of Maj Sharon and Lt Reynolds.

MOERBRUGGE was a very nasty job and will not be forgotten soon by 9 Fd Sqn who lost 10

sappers and an officer.¹³ Two sappers from the Bridge Troop were injured near OOSTCAMP when German mortars opened up intense fire without warning.

In the meantime 8 Fd Sqn had resigned GREEN ROUTE right back to the Belgian border. As soon as the bridge was open however 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn crossed and began checking the road on the far side for mines. They managed to get only a few hundred yards before being stopped by the enemy. They completed a short distance the next day, during which Spr Bernard was wounded and evacuated. The enemy held his ground with grim tenacity and only after very bitter fighting did our infantry break his grip and force him eastward again. It has been said by some of the Argyles that this was their hardest battle.

On 12 September, 8 Fd Sqn moved across the canal and the next day found all Squadrons concentrated in MAELE in preparation for a crossing of the LEOPOLD and DERIVATION CANALS. 4 CAB attempted to capture the STROOIBRUG bridges intact but they were blown up when leading elements were only 75 yards away. The CRE had been informed by a flying Observation Post that the bridges were intact only two minutes before Lt Ditchburn reported them being blown up in his face.

On 12 September, BRUGES was liberated and work began opening routes through the town and scouring the area for engineer materials. A Belgian contractor, with the aid of 2 Troop 9 Fd Sqn, constructed a steel bridge at STEENBRUGGE in very fast time, and a steel railway span which had been blown down onto the road about half a mile south of there was removed.

After a short recce it was decided to attempt a crossing of the two canals at MOERKERKE where they ran parallel. A 300-foot bridge would be required, of triple single construction and supported at each edge of the embankment between the canals. 9 Fd Sqn were responsible for the task with 3 Troop 8 Fd Sqn under command. At 2200 hrs on 13 September when the Algonquins put in their attack everything was in readiness. All parties were organized and standing by, traffic circuits had been carefully planned and 6 Fd Pk Sqn had their supply system ready to deliver the goods when and where required at a moments notice.

The Algonquins assaulted successfully and gained enough ground so that confirming recce and final measurements could be made before first light. During this recce a mortar bomb lit right on the near bankseat less than 10 feet from Maj Sharon, Lt Cole, Lt Reynolds and Spr Berry who were standing together. Lt Reynolds was hit by a small piece of the bomb and retired

¹³ Both Maj Sharon, who remained continuously on the site throughout the operation, and Lt Rollefson were awarded the Military Cross. Sgt Burlton, of the relieving Troop was awarded the Military Medal for the determined leadership he displayed. (History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, Volume II, p. 313).

temporarily, Lt Scowcroft of 8 Fd Sqn taking over from him. Lt Cole's life was saved by his steel helmet, which was almost penetrated by a piece of shrapnel. L/Sgt Reichert then completed the measurement of the far bankseat. Just as it began to get light, the first accessory lorry was unloaded and work begun on a panel lorry. Unfortunately the protective mist began to clear and enemy machine guns opened up on the working party injuring one NCO. In a short time, as the fire intensified, it became apparent that it was impossible to work until the bridgehead could be enlarged. Instead the enemy was steadily reinforcing during the day, bringing more and more shellfire to bear on the area and in the afternoon the Algonquins were ordered to retire to the home shore. This was a bit of a shock but morale was unshaken. Engineer losses, which amounted to L/Cpl Cayford killed and one officer and 2 ORs wounded, were light.

8 Fd Sqn now carried out extensive recce along the DERIVATION CANAL, the object being to cross and advance to EECLOO. Finally the site was chosen, on a secondary road about a mile west of EECLOO and the Argyles crossed and made a bridgehead against light opposition. Just as bridging was about to commence Lt Scowcroft came flying down from BALGERHOEK and announced that it was a perfect site and there were no enemy there, so the CRE got the L & W Regt to dash up there to form another bridgehead. This was much better as BALGERHOEK was on the main BRUGES-EECLOO road. At 1750 hrs, immediately the L & W Regt had crossed Lt Scowcroft began unloading and by 1950 hrs vehicles were passing over the 80' DS Bailey. This bridge, built in record time, was the bridging highlight of 8 Fd Sqn's career, and was named 'Macleod Bridge' after their popular Recce Sgt by that name, whose death from wounds had been announced that day. Incidentally civilians reported that it took the Germans four hours to demolish the original bridge.

The L & W Regt and the Argyle then joined up their bridgeheads and advanced to capture the town of EECLOO, and 4 Div moved into the area on 16 September. 10 CIB continued the drive in the direction of GHENT to join up with the 1 Pol Armd Div and were supported by 9 Fd Sqn who repaired many blown culverts and craters, using to good advantage the large stores of road materials found in EECLOO.

When the Division was comfortably settled around EECLOO the Jerries around MALDEGEM, which was about 60% pro-Nazi, began to feel brave again and threatened our supply line passing through there. In order to have a less vulnerable maintenance route, 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn constructed a 90' DS flush deck bridge about a mile southwest of EECLOO.

The next task was mopping up the area to the south and east of the LEOPOLD CANAL. 8 Fd Sqn supported advances towards WATERVLIET and ISABELLA (actually named ANKFORHAVEN), 9 Fd Sqn towards BOUCHAUTE and SAS VAN GENT. In the PHILIPPINE and BOUCHAUTE area much of the country was flooded, including long stretches

of road. Spr Rudd of 6 Fd Pk Sqn was killed by shellfire when delivering lumber for an 8 Fd Sqn improvised bridge here. Craters and bridges were blown and extensive use had been made of Teller and Holz mines. These were carefully concealed in the paved roads. In some places the stones were removed, the mine planted and the stones replaced so carefully that it was almost impossible to detect them in the daylight. One morning, Lt Ward and part of his troop drove down in a 60 cwt and began to lift mines westward from ISABELLA. At first a fog protected them but when later this lifted they were fired on from close range and had to beat a hasty retreat. The next night 2 Troop from 9 Fd Sqn had a go at it, the infantry having cleared some distance further. Lt Rollefson and Cpl Eddy decided to creep down the road quietly and remove detonators and primers from the mines so that the tanks could get down next day. Twenty-five Holz mines were found and disarmed and just as they were about to start back there was a blinding flash and a roar followed by a shower of debris. A bridge had been blown up less than 125 yards (measured later) ahead. The next day they discovered there had been twenty-six mines in the road instead of twenty-five as a S.A.R. tank neutralized the last one. After this episode the ISABELLA front was static for several weeks.

About this time Lt Scowcroft, the Troop Commander of 3 Troop 8 Fd Sqn was captured by the enemy. He and an infantry sergeant went to recce the demolished bridge south of WATERVLIET one afternoon. While they were checking the far bank the Germans, who were dug in close to the bridge, discovered the pair and opened fire at close range. The infantry sergeant was instantly killed and Lt Scowcroft made for the canal, losing his sten gun in the process, and hid in the water under the wreckage of the blown bridge. The Germans knew he was there, and three hours later as it was beginning to get dark they came down to with Schmeiser pistols and dragged him bodily out as he was almost paralyzed from three hours in the ice cold water.

Word was then received that STROOIBRUG had definitely been chosen as the crossing place for the initial assault on the SCHELDE POCKET. No one knew just when this would take place and many important jobs were completed while waiting. Lt Livingstone(took 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn and 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn down to GHENT where he superintended the decking of a railway bridge to take wheeled traffic, thus opening up a route to the east. The troops worked hard during the daytime with an audience of scores of beautiful Belgique maidens and at night painted the town red. 'La Paloma' and 'Kitty's Bar' were taken over as headquarters for night operations.

The Poles had crossed the NEUZEN-GHENT CANAL and broken through to NEUZEN annihilating hundreds of Germans in the process. It was necessary for 4 Div to link up with them so 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn built a 60' DS and a 110' TS across the locks at SAS VAN GENT on

25 September. Both 2 Troop and 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn worked for two days on the approaches to these, using all the catwalks from the local sugar factory.

All the roads in the triangle GHENT-STROOIBRUGGE-PHILIPPINE were checked for mines, signed and re-signed. On several occasions German patrols laid mines during the night on stretches of road that had been checked, with the resulting loss of one jeep. Both Squadrons constructed many improvised bridges over blown culverts. In GHENT and also SAS VAN GENT, all kinds of engineer materials were available. This was requisitioned in a number of different ways – all wrong. Class 40 bridges were constructed with telephone poles up to a span of 20 feet. A good example of this type of work was the repair of the GHENT-SAS VAN GENT road by 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn. The road ran along the west bank of the canal and served a number of important factories. These had been heavily bombed by both the Americans and the RAF leaving huge craters in the road and on the edge of the canal. The latter were particularly difficult to deal with as retaining walls of steel R.S.J.s had to be erected in each case before the crater could be filled in. Three large demolished cranes blocked the roadway and pieces of a nearby oil refinery lay scattered about. Those culverts which remained intact after the bombing were demolished by the Germans. It took over a week of steady work to open up the road.

2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn built a 50' DS Bailey at NOTELAERE in close support of the infantry. 1 Troop built a Class 5 raft at MOERHUISEN and operated it for several days.

The end of September found 4 Div in a semi-static holding role, having inherited all territory between BRUGES and ANTWERP, which had just been taken by the 11 Armd Div. The thousands of roads in the new territory were all reced, checked for mines and signed. Life was not all work however as considerable recreational transport was allowed to both GHENT and BRUGES. On 1 October, 4 Div Engrs attended a church parade in 6 Fd Pk Sqn's hangar with Capt Leng of the L.S.R. officiating. There 6 Fd Pk Sqn had their first real rest. They used the period to put their vehicles and masses of all kinds of stores in first class shape, since they were stationed at an airfield and had several hangars in fair condition in which to work and lay out stores. Supervisor Cornelier of the Canadian Legion at last had an opportunity to show movies to the troops and SSM Dyson of 6 Fd Pk Sqn took some of his men to see VIMY RIDGE, where he had fought in World War I.

8 Fd Sqn had by now made a thorough recce of all crossings of the LEOPOLD CANAL between MOERKERK and WATERVLIET and began preparations for the job at STROOIBRUG. Lt McAdam with 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn were assigned the task of constructing an improvised Class 9 bridge at MOERHUISEN. The primary purpose of this was to enable both the large bridges to be completed at the same time. 1 and 2 Troops worked for days hauling material. It

was to be a 100-ft job with two piers each consisting of two steel barges. The barges were hauled by a tank transporter, two from GHENT and two from SAS VAN GENT.

Advance to the east side of the pocket resulted in the clearing of the BOUCHAUTE, PHILIPPINE and HOEK area, thus compressing the enemy into a small pocket north of the LEOPOLD CANAL. The only entrance was at ISABELLA, which had been flooded, mined and reinforced with more troops.

3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn completed their improvised bridge on 4 October with great relief. Much of the work had been done under shellfire. One day they were chased from the site five times by mortars. It was finally brought up to Class 12, but 3 Troop swore it would have taken a Sherman. 8 Fd Sqn opened the road from BALGERHOEK along the north side of the DERIVATION CANAL to STROOIBRUG to ensure a supply route to the second bridge should their MOERHUISEN effort be destroyed.

The coming STROOIBURG crossing was to be an 8 Fd Sqn show with Maj Allan in charge and 9 Fd Sqn in support. Reconnaissance showed that two 120' DD Baileys were necessary and 8 Fd Sqn took the LEOPOLD CANAL, giving 9 Fd Sqn the DERIVATION CANAL. Final measurements were done by Lts Ditchburn and Ward, and bankseat work on the south bridge by 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn. A detailed plan was drawn up by Major Allan and work tables turned in for each bridge. 6 Fd Pk Sqn, under Maj Oddliefson, had a well organized supply system with control point, marshalling areas, surge points, etc., telephones running to everybody, and a D-7 and the LAD recovery standing by to remove without delay any vehicle casualties, as this show had the makings of a real stinker. The CRE laid on a tremendous artillery support program with two flying O.P.s to be in the air at all times. Each time the bridge site received a mortar, every known enemy emplacement would receive the heat treatment.

Masses of artillery, medium, heavy and field, were dug in and ready when on the morning of 6 October, 3 Cdn Inf Div crossed the canal and established a small bridgehead against fanatical opposition. So bitter was the struggle that not until 13 October did we own the far bankseat. That week was utilized by training and organizing and reorganizing. Both 8 and 9 Fd Sqns mastered the finer points of double-double construction. 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn practiced with a Class 9 close support raft in case this was needed.

On 9 October, 9 CIB of 3 Cdn Inf Div made an amphibious landing on the pocket across from Flushing. Divebombers and rocket firing Typhoons gave the enemy no rest but he hung on. However at 1100 hrs on Friday, 13 October, work began by 9 Fd Sqn on the south bridge, and at 1130 hrs by 8 Fd Sqn on the north one. 9 Fd Sqn had a platoon from 31 Fd Coy, and 2 Troop and 3 Troop with Lt Rollefson in charge of construction. Lt Ward was in charge of 8 Fd Sqn's

bridge. By 1605 hrs the first 120' DD with 10-foot flush ramp was complete with trimmings and open for traffic and at 1815 hrs the second, exactly the same was finished and the crossing completed in record breaking time. All material for 8 Fd Sqn's bridge had to be brought over their improvised floating bridge at MOERHUISEN. Several times they had to take cover for a few minutes when mortar bombs lit right on the site, but resumed work immediately. On the south side shelling was light and nothing landed closer than 150 yards. The only effect was to speed up construction. The CRE's counter-battery system succeeded far beyond our expectations. The fact that after completion shellfire was heavy bears witness to that. Two sappers from 9 Fd Sqn's maintenance party were wounded the same day. One ramp was the only hit on the bridge and was quickly repaired¹⁴.

On 15 October, 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn built a Class 9 raft south of WATERVLIET and ferried about fifteen vehicles across for the Argyles. They also cleared a small field of about twenty-two Tellermine 42s.

After the STROOIBRUG bridges were opened the fate of the enemy in the pocket was sealed and they were steadily and relentlessly compressed. 4 Div Engr's last contribution was the opening of the road from PHILIPPINE to ISABELLA and northwest to link up with 9 CIB. 9 Fd Sqn worked almost steadily for two days filling craters, lifting mines and clearing masses of felled trees blocking the road. Many of these trees were booby trapped with trip wires to Holz mines hidden in the road under the branches. 3 Troop built an 80' DS Bailey two miles west of PHILIPPINE. In spite of the fact that the road had been checked three times, a diamond T bridge lorry, a D-6 bulldozer and one of 2 Troop's 60 cwts were blown up on mines. Cpl Faries of 2 Troop was seriously injured, suffering deep cuts and bruises on the head and several broken limbs. His life was saved by the sandbags on the floor of the vehicle.

Just as 9 Fd Sqn was finishing the job, both Corps Engrs and 3 Div Engrs appeared on the scene with instructions to take over. No time was lost in getting out as the expected move to ANTWERP was scheduled for that afternoon.

¹⁴ 9 Fd Sqn completed its task in five hours and five minutes. 8 Fd Sqn, on the more difficult forward site, in six hours and forty-five minutes. Maj Allen of 8 Fd Sqn who was responsible for the detailed reconnaissance of both bridges and who remained constantly on the forward site until the bridge there opened to traffic, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, Volume II, p. 339).

Map of Schelde-Pocket



Move to Antwerp and the Advance to Steenberg

On 15 October the three Squadrons moved from the MALDEGEN area, through GHENT and ST. NICOLAS and under the SCHELDE by tunnel at ANTWERP to SCHILDE. Div HQ followed on 16 October. Here they spent several days resting, refitting and training in mines particularly. 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn built an 80' DS over the ANTWERP-TURNHOUT CANAL at LOCHTENBERG. Both officers and men found time to visit ANTWERP and agreed that it lived up to their expectations. The fact that ANTWERP was out of bounds did not deter large parties from taking the tram car every night. Here they heard the first V-2 rockets fall. Their double detonation followed by a gurgling rush of air had everyone pretty well baffled until the explanation was found. 4 Div also renewed their acquaintance with the V-1, which were then apparently, being ranged on ANTWERP for the coming blitz.

6 Fd Pk Sqn was assigned the task of gathering a huge dump of all materials, which it was expected would be required in the forthcoming operation. Heavy timber was the main item and included 300 pieces of 20' x 12" x 12" as well as 20,000 feet of assorted lumber. All this had to be located and hauled to the new location at BRASSCHAET within twenty-four hours. At the same time the Field Stores Troop were moving some twenty loads of material forward from the old dump near LOCHTENBERG and all available personnel from the Troop were engaged. However, Lt Whittier with Sgt Stewart, Sgt Jardine and Cpl Douglas managed, as usual, to get the material located, loaded and brought to the dump within the period laid down. Time of course did not allow proper requisitioning procedure to be carried out and at times Sgt Jardine found that a 20-ton transporter could be used to advantage in opening the large steel gates blocking the entrance to ANTWERP's lumber yards.

The next task was to protect the flank of 2 Cdn Inf Div who were starting to clear the BEVELAND PENINSULA and on 19 October the Squadrons moved north in preparation. The 6 Fd Pk Sqn dump was then moved from BRASSCHAET to near CALMPTHOUT and two days later a V-2 landed squarely in the centre of the old site. ESSCHEN was the first objective and 4 Div was divided into two roughly equal battle groups, one to advance from CAPPELLEN to CALMPTHOUT and north supported by 8 Fd Sqn, and the other to advance from CAMPE DE BRASSCHAET up the main road supported by 9 Fd Sqn. 81 Aslt Sqn came under command with their flails and AVREs¹⁵.

¹⁵ The engineer tank came to be called the Armoured Vehicle, RE (AVRE). In addition to mounting the Petard it might mount one or more equipments such as a dozer blade, an assault bridge or a crane. It could tow or push a pipe 'Snake', tow a trailer with a 'Conger' (a form of flexible snake which could be launched by a rocket and then filled with liquid explosive under compressed air), or carry its own means of crossing ditches using huge fascines or bad ground using prepared track on a bobbin (History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, Volume II, p. 124).

By contacting 2 Cdn Inf Div it was learned that the area was heavily mined and studded with roadblocks of all descriptions. In their advance up the west route, 8 Fd Sqn had probably one of the most difficult tasks of the war. They started out with a very unusual experience when a party from 3 Troop swept about a mile of road up from CAPPELLEN preparatory to the advance. The next day, 20 October when the push began, they learned that almost all the houses flanking this road had been occupied by Germans who must have watched them all the way. Lt Ditchburn led with a section of 2 Troop, followed closely behind by the remainder of the Troop under Lt McAdam. The first obstacle was a crater over 30' in diameter and completely blocking the road. This was followed closely by eight abatis averaging 200' in length, and 20 trees in each, between the railway crossing and CALMPTHOUT. There were booby traps on every third tree, some shells, some Tellermines, but all wired from branch to branch. On this same stretch, three craters, two anti-tank ditches and two mine and wire roadblocks were cleared. They were fired on by an enemy 20mm gun which bored several holes in one of their halftracks. Shortly after tackling one of two fallen trees the bulldozer struck a mine and badly damaged the blade, which however protected the men from the blast.

Between CALMPTHOUT and ESSCHEN it was even worse, block after block of trees, a canal crossing and three anti-tank ditches, all with cleverly concealed booby-traps. At the railway crossing north of CALMPTHOUT, Lt Ditchburn lost two mine detectors by small arms fire while checking ahead of the tanks. One sapper was wounded at the same time. The railway crossing itself was a nest of mines. In an area 20' by 30' five 'R' mines, six 105mm shells, one 50 kg bomb and two Schumines were removed. Even then when the railway gates were opened the whole issue blew up killing L/Cpl MacDonald, Sprs McCaw and Trithart and wounding Cpls Stewart and Durand. From the size of the resulting crater, a 50 kg bomb booby-trapped with a tilt igniter was suspected. The next 150 yards was a solid abatis thickly booby-trapped. Two German snipers hiding nearby were wounded when a charge went off. Cpl Buchanan went forward to recce the north end of the block and stepped on a Schumine losing a foot. Lt Ward and Spr Fulham rushed to his aid and Lt Ward stepped on another, losing a leg. The blast caught Spr Fulham in the face. Spr Hanke carried out Cpl Buchanan and the rest of the party removed Lt Ward and Spr Fulham. Spr Johnston stepped on another shortly after and lost a leg. He died later. The tree block was cleared and a huge wet crater filled by dozing two houses into it. AVREs from 81 Aslt Sqn filled a gap over the ROOSENDALE CANAL with fascines and a large unexploded bomb (UXB) was dragged behind a winch truck out of the road and into a field. 8 Fd Sqn sappers finally reached ESSCHEN from the west on 23 October after one of the most harrowing experiences of their career. Two vehicles then blew up on mines causing another three sapper casualties and bringing the total beyond those incurred in the preceding two months.

During this time, 9 Fd Sqn, although more fortunate were also having their troubles. Starting at the road junction north of MARIA TER HEIDE, 2 Troop led up the left fork and 3 Troop cleared the right for about a mile, then followed 2 Troop. At the road junction 3 Troop removed many 'S' and Tellermines, and a 50 kg bomb booby-trapped to a house gate, then commenced clearing side roads where they removed dozens of mines and bombs and several burnt out vehicles. 2 Troop cleared to KRUISTRAAT encountering several 'S' mines in the verges and an 'R' mine. AVREs were called on to fill a blown out culvert with fascines. At KRUISTRAAT, 3 Troop took over and cleared to ACHTERBROEK leaving 2 Troop with lateral roads. 2 Troop lost two sappers killed and four wounded from 'S' mines while opening a lateral to 4 CAB. The enemy had a continuous belt of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines running west from KRUISTRAAT. Dozens of 'R' mines were removed.

While recceing the airfield west of BRASSCHAET, Cpl Laking of 3 Troop had an unusual experience. Enemy machine guns opened fire on his section who quickly took cover in nearby slit trenches with the Argyles. After things had quieted down a bit, Cpl Laking stuck his head up, looked around, and with a sigh of relief said to his trench mate, "Boy, this is no place for a white man". From the dark depths of the slit trench a deep Southern voice boomed, "An dis ain't no place for a black man either".

At ACHTERBROEK, a Dispatch Rider from Sqn HQ with another sapper captured forty Jerries. Here 1 Troop took over and cleared a long abatis with a number of booby-trapped mines in it. Several craters and culverts followed. The ground seemed to be sprouting with white flags on this stretch as the infantry cleared the sides of the road. This brought 4 Div within striking distance of ESSCHEN. The plan was for our infantry to infiltrate the enemy lines in the darkness and fog and occupy the town during the night. 1 Troop was to bridge the ROOSENDAL CANAL so that at first light the tanks could come in and complete the capture. Recce wasn't possible until the infantry had gone in so it was about midnight when Lt Cole and Lt Reynolds measured the gap and found that a 40' SS Bailey was required. 1 Troop already had a 40' specially loaded on three lorries and in addition the AVREs had an assault bridge standing by just in case. The road was so narrow that the lorries had to be unloaded facing the gap. The working party rode down with the bridging to keep the transport to a minimum. In spite of the pitch dark night the bridge was completed by 0630 hrs. The first tank, a flail, hit the end panel knocking the bridge ahead five feet, askew and down 14" on one corner. A Squadron went over in spite of this and repairs were made later. Engineers took four prisoners while erecting the bridge. Later the Bailey was replaced with a wooden bridge. A booby-trapped bazooka and four British 3.7-inch anti-aircraft shells were found under it.

After a hard fight, ESSCHEN was captured that morning, 22 October 1944. The Division then moved on, west and northwest from ESSCHEN leaving 2 and 3 Troops of 9 Fd Sqn behind to act

as pioneers in the construction of an experimental corduroy road. They completed the stretch for some 800 yards south of ESSCHEN. Shellfire at the north end was very heavy and twice work had to be suspended.

At ESSCHEN the Division turned southwest towards HUIJBERGEN with Lt Zimmerman and two sections of 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn leading the engineers. 1 Troop filled two large craters on the ESSCHEN-SPILLEBEEK road and opened it for two-way traffic. The armoured dozer was hit by a shell and sprayed with machine guns but didn't stop.

1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn supported the Algonquins and S.A.R.s in an advance north from HUIJBERGEN. Forty sawdust-filled mines held them up several hours before Maj Sharon crawled up a ditch on his hands and knees and discovered they were duds. Cpl Ness and section removed a steel kniferest roadblock which was not captured by the infantry until a day later. Then on 26 October, 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn under command of 9 Fd Sqn built a 70' DS Bailey over the ZOOM CANAL at WOUCHE PLANTAGE. This was a particularly nasty job as 88 mm armour piercing shells whizzed over the bridge at three-minute intervals throughout the construction. 8 Fd Sqn lost a halftrack and Maj Allan's recce car near here. Two separate forces were advancing northwards, one towards WOUW supported by 8 Fd Sqn and one straight for BERGEN OP ZOOM supported by 9 Fd Sqn. The west route, assigned to 2 and 3 Troops of 9 Fd Sqn was only a sand track to begin with. Along one side ran a pipe or cable which made mine detection very uncertain. The sand in the road was full of small pieces of haywire which did not speed things up either. The woods on each side were full of booby-trapped shells with trip wires and picric pot mines. At one point a Churchill tank hit a charge, was thrown right up in the air and came down on its side completely blocking the road. Several cars and carriers were blown up before the road was assumed clear. However, the force on the east flank made good progress and after a stiff battle managed to outflank BERGEN OP ZOOM on 27 October, probably causing the evacuation of the town by the Germans that day. On the evening of 27 October the S.A.R.s took BERGEN OP ZOOM with practically no opposition although the Germans held the north side of the town, across the canal, in some strength. 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn moved in immediately and began to clear the main road south towards NEDERHEIDE. 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn cleared the road to BERGEN OP ZOOM from the east filling craters, tank ditches and lifting many 'R' mines¹⁶. Two knocked-out tanks were removed. A huge concrete roadblock was demolished just south of the town by L/Sgt Tooley, who was severely injured by

¹⁶ The approach was under Spandau fire. Despite this, Spr L. Schan (attached to 6 Fd Pk Sqn from 1st Mechanical Equipment Coy RCE) managed to build up the causeway with his armoured dozer. He was exposed every time his machine tipped forward but his luck held until he climbed out to study the lay of the job. He was then hit in the leg. However he finished the task and saw the tanks across before he handed over to his relief operator and hobbled to the rear, herding a batch of German prisoners for good measure. His determination won him the Military Medal. (History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers, Volume II, p. 342).

flying concrete in the process. 1 Troop from 8 Fd Sqn came up from NEDERHEIDE and cleared a similar obstacle using AVREs. They encountered Schumines and L/Sgt Manning lost a leg while lifting them. Both squadrons then moved into town, 8 Fd Sqn standing by to bridge on the eastern outskirts. Lt Reynolds was shot through the arm by a sniper as he entered the town and had to be evacuated. 4 Div received a very warm welcome in BERGEN OP ZOOM and although the advance did not stop, everyone managed to enjoy a few hours of leisure there.

In the afternoon of 27 October, Sgt Stewart of 6 Fd Pk Sqn was instructed to install a water point in BERGEN OP ZOOM. He took off on his motorcycle and soon found that the in the canal at the north edge of town was unsuitable but located a pond in the park 200 yards away which had possibilities. The purification trailer and crew were then brought forward and the water point was ready by 1900 hrs. That night the enemy shot up the equipment with small arms and put numerous holes in the canvas tanks, the trailer and the house that the crew were quartered in. In fact they insist that they could here the Germans talking quite plainly. All the next day the point was under sporadic small arms and mortar fire but Cpls Murdock and Lorrimer and Sprs Edwards and LaFleur repaired the damage and operated the point. Units drew their water in trailers hauled by armoured cars.

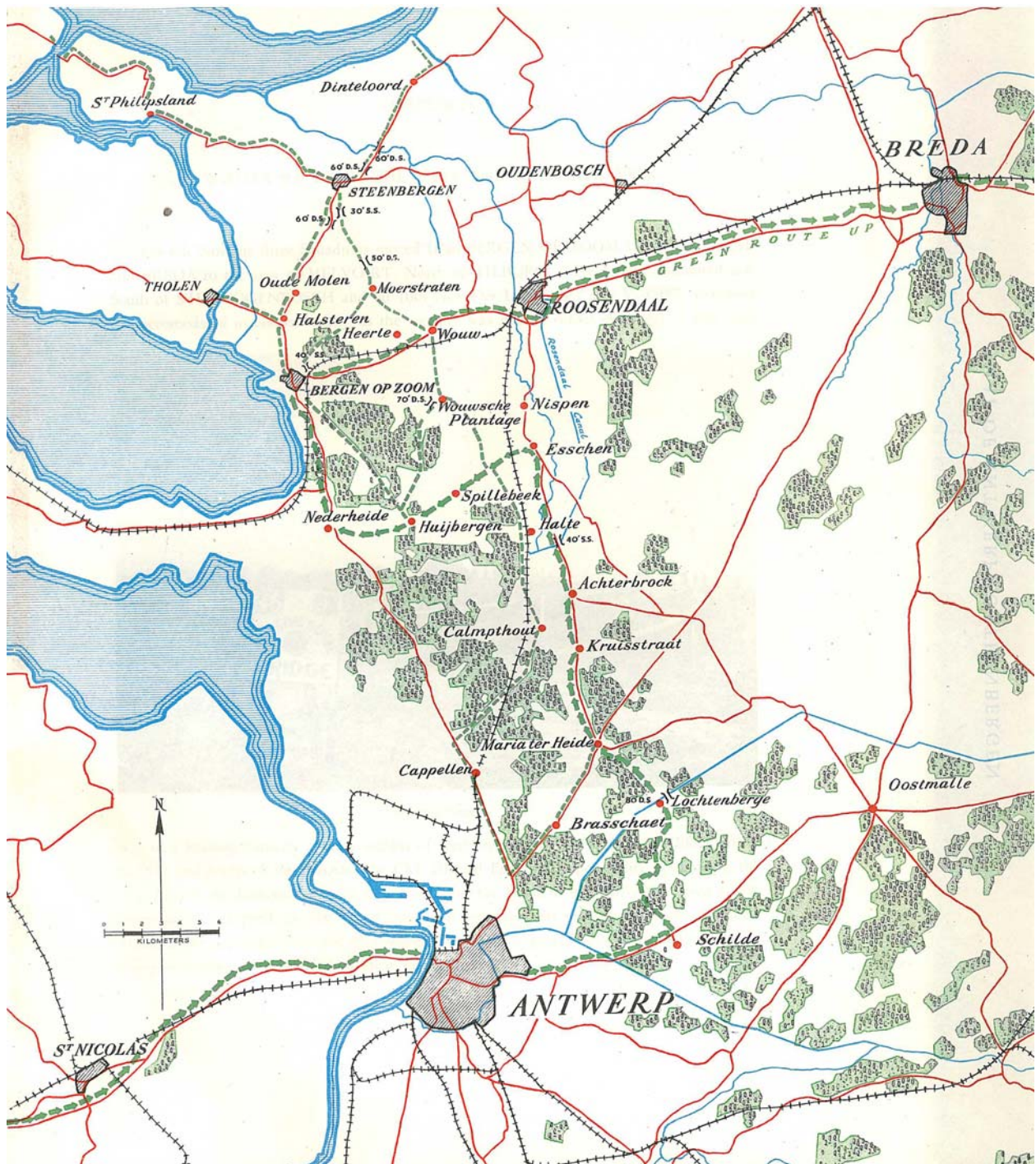
On 28 October infantry reported a firm bridgehead at the site east of town. It was found that the bridgehead was firm alright because the twelve soldiers which it comprised, were in a factory on the far side surrounded by Germans. However on the next day, the twelve infanteers were relieved and reinforced so Lt McAdam was able to complete a 40' SS Bailey by 2200 hrs after a very hectic struggle. The next morning 9 Fd Sqn, with the assistance of AVREs succeeded in crossing the canal on the west side of town where a crater and a huge concrete obstacle blocked the road. Tanks then poured over both crossings in the direction of STEENBERGEN. One force went north on the main road through HALSTERN, the other advanced to MOERSTRATEN where they joined our troops coming from WOUW. As before, 9 Fd Sqn supported the west force and 8 Fd Sqn the east. 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn came under command of 8 Fd Sqn for a bridge job north of MOERSTRATEN and filled a large crater on the same road. On the morning of 31 October, after a hectic night, Lt Lake began to build the 50' DS Bailey. The road was in the middle of a swamp and in plain view of the enemy. Eighteen Tellermines were removed from the far bank seats first. Construction was just underway when the fog cleared and in no time mortars were dropping right on the site. Everything went wrong, the dozer got stuck in the bog, and bridge lorries went in the ditch. It got so hot that Maj Allan had to call for volunteers to go up and continue. Tanks were called to give covering fire but stopped after firing a few rounds. Finally the shelling became inaccurate enough so that the bridge could be completed. Then the tanks still wouldn't go over because it was still too hot. Towards evening they began to move over and take up positions for the final assault on STEENBERGEN.

1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn built a 60' DS north of OUDMOLEN where a roadblock had to be removed before construction started. Spr McInnes lost a leg on a Schumine. The attack on STEENBERGEN was to go in from two directions, supported by 8 Fd Sqn. Lt McAdam had two sections from 3 Troop with the east force and Lt Lake with the other two sections with the west force. On 1 November the first attack went in but was thrown back. Lt Zimmerman had his car clipped by a bullet but was not evacuated. Finally on 4 November the town was taken and 8 Fd Sqn found it badly cratered with numerous mines on the outskirts. Lt McAdam lost a D-6 on a mine while clearing one of the roadblocks. A 30' SS Bailey was built on the south edge of town and three large craters filled at the cost of a D-7 blown up on a mine. 8 Fd Sqn then cleared west to THOLEN and ST. PHILIPSLAND and 9 Fd Sqn northeast to DINTELOORD. While recceing roads northwest of STEENBERGEN, Lt Brady (FE 2) ran over a mine, killing his driver and severely injuring himself.

3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn built two 60' DS Baileys that night on the road to DINTELOORD. 2 Troop checked and signed the road and filled three or four large wet craters bringing them to DINTELOORD at the end of the road. They also built a 30' DS straight east of STEENBERGEN on the way to ROOSSENDAL. All roads in the area were then reced and 5 November saw the completion of 4 Div Engr's tasks in this area.

Considering the length of time and distance travelled, this had been one of the most difficult and costly operations yet executed. We suffered many casualties both in personnel and vehicles. However the leave centre in BRUSSELS had been completed and plans made to get everyone there for a forty-eight hour leave in as short a time as possible.

Map of Antwerp to Steenberg



Winter South of the Maas and Kapelsche Veer

On 8 November the three Squadrons moved from BERGEN OP ZOOM via ROOSENDAL and BREDa to the area of HELVOIRT north of TILBURG. 6 Fd Pk Sqn harboured just south of S'HERTOGENBOSCH and on 10 November Div HQ moved into VUGHT. Luckily everyone was accommodated in billets as the weather was getting colder every day. 4 Div took over in a holding capacity a large section of territory running west from S'HERTOGENBOSCH and south of the MAAS RIVER. The CRE allotted engineer responsibility by dividing the area in half, the east sector going to 8 Fd Sqn and the west to 9 Fd Sqn. Aside from a few large jobs that cropped up, one Troop from each Squadron was sufficient to look after their sector, so the remainder were put on training. This made it possible for large parties, usually a Troop, to proceed to BRUSSELS for a 48-hour leave together.

The first major task was the construction of a Class 9 Bailey bridge across the AFTERWATERINGS CANAL which was north and a bit west of HELVOIRT. Lt Cole and a party from 9 Fd Sqn made the recce and found that a 150 foot bridge would be required. It was decided to build a 150' DS supported near each end by a pier. Removing the remains of the demolished reinforced concrete structure preparatory to placing the piers proved a very difficult task and acetylene torches had to be used on the reinforcing bars. The far pier was erected by 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn, who were under command, and the near one by 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn. On 11 November, Lt Parker with 1 and 3 Troops of 9 Fd Sqn constructed and launched the bridge. Two dozers worked late at night to build the approaches flush. The span being very long for a DS, the bridge sagged noticeably in the middle and was therefore called 'Sagging Susie'.

On 11 November, 8 Fd Sqn began work on a bridge over the AFTERWATERINGS CANAL just west of WAALWIJK. The site was in full view of the enemy who had been shelling the main street of WAALWIJK nearby for some time. After a careful recce it was decided to put in a 200' bridge consisting of a 110' section and a 90' section joined over a four-pier pontoon float. The float was to be heightened ten feet by erecting on it, a double single pier.

Six tons of explosives were used to clear the debris from the demolished reinforced concrete bridge before construction could begin. The Divisional Camouflage Officer was brought down to lay out screens to partly obscure the work from enemy observation. On 14 November construction began by 1 and 3 Troops of 8 Fd Sqn and 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn under the direction of Lt Ditchburn. Lt McAdam and 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn constructed the floating pier which had to be securely guyed before the two spans could be launched onto it. This proved to be a very difficult task and for some time 8 Fd Sqn was not certain it was possible. Considering also the fact that if the bridge were successfully completed the Germans would probably sink it, the

structure was named 'Maybe Bridge'. However after three days of sweating and swearing, Lt Ditchburn was able to open it for traffic.

At this time 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn were busy opening a Class 40 route west from S'HERTOGENBOSCH which involved moving a couple of locomotives and removing a stretch of railroad track. While checking another route, 2 Troop lost L/Cpl Livingstone killed and Spr Boudreau wounded when a mine that the former was neutralizing exploded. A Z-43 Teller mine fuse was suspected.

On completion of 'Maybe Bridge', 8 Fd Sqn withdrew to their own area and 3 Troop from 9 Fd Sqn took over maintenance and the rest of 9 Fd Sqn's area. A day or so later the enemy shelled the bridge with 105s sinking the pier and damaging several panels. Lt Parker decided to construct another pier, place it under the 110-foot section and jack it up. This was done successfully with a two pier float which left about eight inches of freeboard. The sunken pier was then drawn out with the aid of a bulldozer. Unfortunately that night the water rose six feet and the force of the flood sank the pier. The wreck greeted 3 Troop the next morning was disheartening to behold. The bridge had buckled in the centre and was a mess of twisted panels, stringers and transoms. Owing to its damaged condition, the bridge was difficult to break in the centre but finally a section was knocked out and dropped into the stream to be fished out later with a dozer. More bridging was ordered up, and a dolaunching tail was put on both ends so that each section could be drawn back onto the road. The sunken pontoons were pumped out and used to build a new pier, onto which the repaired sections were relaunched. The bank seats on the far side had begun to fail so 10' were added and the ramps dug in flush, whereupon with great relief Lt Parker handed 'Maybe Bridge' over to 52 Br Inf Div and proceeded to OIRSCHOT to join the rest of the Squadron.

On 18 November 9 Fd Sqn moved to OIRSCHOT followed by 8 Fd Sqn on 21 November and 6 Fd Pk Sqn on 26 November. Here the 4 Div Engrs carried on intensive training in bridging, rafting, demolitions, weapons training and mines. At least an hour a day was devoted to squad drill and general smartening up, accompanied of course by the usual grumbling and bleating but actually done in the best of spirits. During this time each Troop of 8 and 9 Fd Sqns spent a week maintaining their respective areas south of the MAAS. Many officer changes took place at this time. Capt Turner of 8 Fd Sqn went to the Engineer Reinforcement Unit in ENGLAND and Capt Greenhalgh became the Second in Command (2IC) of 8 Fd Sqn. Lt Ditchburn became OC of 4 Div Br Tp and Lt Baker became RO-2 of 8 Fd Sqn. Lt Nagle arrived as increment officer at 6 Fd Pk Sqn and Lt Hodgkinson at 8 Fd Sqn. Lts Lavery and Glendenning came to 8 and 9 Fd Sqns respectively. Capt Burgoine of 9 Fd Sqn went to R.E.T.C. at KNOCKE as Assistant Chief Instructor and Capt Clazie from Railway Operations became 2IC of 9 Fd Sqn. Later Lt Whittier of Field Stores at 6 Fd Pk Sqn and Lt Parker of 3 Troop 9 Fd Sqn changed places.

The month of November was polished off in fine style when 4 Div Engrs put on for General Eisenhower a display of bridging prowess that has never before or since been equalled. 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn erected a 40' SS Bailey complete with two 10' ramps, endposts painted white and approach tapes pegged out in 14½ minutes. 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn completed a Class 9 close support raft in 12½ minutes. Needless to say the General was very much impressed. The writer later had the pleasure of seeing on the desk of an engineer company command of 52 Br Inf Div a document from their CRE with 4 Div bridge timings tabulated and a footnote well underlined which stated "These times are to be *aimed at* and beaten."

On 5 December a ST. NICOLAS party was held for the children of OIRSCHOT, 1,100 of whom attended and enjoyed themselves as guests of 4 Div Engrs under Supervisor Cornelier.

On 8 December all Squadrons moved to the S'HERTOGENBOSCH area and carried on with another extensive training program. Here 6 Fd Pk Sqn and 8 Fd Sqn spent about a week smartening up for the new GOC's inspection. When Maj-Gen Vokes finally arrived he whizzed up and down the ranks like a V-2 gone berserk, gave a short speech and was gone in just over ten minutes.

A huge deception scheme was planned about this time and activity south of the MAAS RIVER increased considerably. The engineers on duty in the 4 Div area checked roads for mines right down to and including the banks of the MAAS RIVER. Several foot crossings over the AFTERWATERINGS CANAL were provided to facilitate the movement of our infantry patrols. Incidentally German patrols also put these to good use. Trip flares were put well forward for our infantry and armoured to warn them of enemy infiltrations. An extensive water survey was carried out by NCOs of 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn and 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn, the results of which, when plotted, gave a clear picture of flood conditions in the area. In addition numerous flood gauges were set out and read every day to keep track of the changing levels. 4 CAB took the island of CREVACOEUR north of S'HERTOGENBOSCH and 8 Fd Sqn ran a storm boat supply service for them. 8 Fd Sqn suffered several casualties during this period. Spr Studer stepped on a Schumine losing a foot. Spr Bishop was wounded when his truck exploded a mine and L/Sgt Ell, Sprs Watson, Caughey and Wilks received minor injuries. 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn built an improvised Class 5 Bridge near S'HERTOGENBOSCH which they called DUCK 1 because mortar bombs caused them to spend most of the time in the horizontal position.

Around the middle of December 6 Fd Pk Sqn gathered together a good supply of equipment for training in storm boating and rafting. The Squadrons put available troops training on this immediately. 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn went to LITH near OSS and 3 Troop went to NIJMEGEN to

train with 23 Fd Coy. Sluice gates were opened to try to drain some of the flooded stretches in our area.

Field Marshall von Rundstedt had been creating a disturbance down in the ARDENNES for some time now and was not doing too badly. Although no one was seriously worried the offensive could not help but cause some anxiety. At any rate it was decided to disengage 4 Div from their holding commitments to form a mobile reserve. On 21 December, after handing everything over to the 1 Pol Armd Div, the three Squadrons moved to the town of SCHIJNDEL and HQ to BOXTEL. On Christmas Eve, after having enjoyed excellent Christmas dinners with all the trimmings they made a cold and arduous move to the BREDA area. Here they were informed in a very comprehensive intelligence summary that Field Marshall von Rundstedt's offensive was only part of the plan and that if he were successful in his BRUSSELS push, an attack would be made through BREDA towards ANTWERP, putting 21 Army Gp in a precarious, if not impossible, position. To assist in this last manoeuvre, the Germans had in the DORDRECHT area a Paratroop Corps, to be dropped on the way to ANTWERP. There was then no doubt in anyone's mind as to why 4 Div was at BREDA. The CRE divided the engineers area amongst the Squadrons and laid a continuous paratroop watch as well as anti-paratroop patrols to be on ten-minutes notice, twenty-four hours a day. When all ranks were thoroughly familiar with their duties, another intensive training period began, small arms and demolition ranges having been previously located. Here 4 Div Engrs spent the remainder of 1944. With the beginning of the ARDENNES offensive, Adolf stepped up his buzz bomb attack on ANTWERP to blitz proportions, and the hellish machines roared over us in an endless procession day and night. From this area hundreds of V-2s were seen to streak skywards from the north of HOLLAND. In those trying days, in spite of the apparent graveness of the situation, morale was never shaken but perhaps even higher for this sudden change of events.

More officer changes took place then. Maj Oddliefson left 6 Fd Pk Sqn to take over 1 Workshop and Park Company and Maj G.H. McManus, formerly of 1 Cdn Inf Div assumed command. Maj Sharon of 9 Fd Sqn went to ENGLAND on a lecture tour and Capt Clazie became acting OC. Lt Thompson went to ENGLAND on course and Lt Nagle took over Workshops Troop of 6 Fd Pk Sqn from him.

The first day of 1945 saw the last and lost patrol of the dying Luftwaffe. The air was full of Focke Wolfes, Messerschmidts and bursting anti-aircraft shells. Goering did find a lot of RAF chaps in bed with hangovers but few of his boys returned to tell the tale. As the writer opened his window this beautiful bright sunny morning a 3.7 HAA shell exploded not 200 yards away. No truer word was ever spoken, that that 1945 started off with a bang.

Shortly after New Year's the new Bailey mobile bridge was received for trial and training. 8 Fd Sqn had a go at it observed by 9 Fd Sqn, then put on a demonstration for an impressive array of RCE and other brass hats. No one was particularly impressed except the sappers manhandling some of the super heavy parts.

4 Div Engrs carried on their training here until 9 January, when the ARDENNES Offensive having been smashed, they began to move back to the S'HERTOGENBOSCH area. By 10 January the former area had been taken back from 1 Pol Armd Div, with 6 Fd Pk Sqn and HQ RCE in VUGHT and 8 Fd Sqn in S'HERTOGENBOSCH. Another training program was tackled with the usual troop from each Squadron on area maintenance and in support of the infantry. 8 Fd Sqn officers did considerable recce on the north side of the MAAS RIVER with infantry patrols. On 17 January the L.S.R.s made a raid in strength across the river at HOENZARIEL, supported by 150 guns. Lt Baker accompanied them and brought back information on road and ground conditions. 8 Fd Sqn finished off the month of January in training and maintenance. One Troop at a time went to LITH to practice with storm boats and Class 9 rafts. Lt Glendenning and 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn spent a week removing the floating pier from 'Maybe Bridge' and replacing it with two crib piers, one at each edge of the canal.

During this stay at S'HERTOGENBOSCH, Workshops Troop of 6 Fd Pk Sqn was given the job of designing and constructing an assault bridge. At first it was to be only a foot bridge but this was soon changed to carry a jeep, then strong enough to take a carrier. Numerous experiments were carried out with braces from wings of Flying Fortresses. In the end angle iron was decided on and the CRE ordered twelve to be made immediately. Sgt Sellers organized the production line and the bridges were completed on the average of one a day.

On 15 January Maj Leggat arrived from 2 Cdn Corps Tps and took command of 9 Fd Sqn and on the 16th toured the area to get into the picture. On 17 January Brig Jefferson of 10 CIB held a meeting to discuss Operation ELEPHANT, which was to take place shortly. It involved the clearing of the German bridgehead at KAPELSCHE VEER by 10 CIB with 9 Fd Sqn in support. This was part of the huge deception scheme designed to make the enemy believe we were preparing a push into north HOLLAND. KAPELSCHE VEER had been held for some time by the Germans, and although it was of no particular use to us, had facilitated the passage of their patrols into south HOLLAND. The size of the garrison was small, probably less than two hundred, but their position was almost impregnable. Both 1 Pol Armd Div and a Royal Marine Commando had been bloodily repulsed in attempting to clear it.

Operation ELEPHANT was to be executed by the Lincoln and Welland Regiment with ample artillery support and 9 Fd Sqn. However, before it was over, almost all of 10 CIB including the S.A.R.s and also 8 Fd Sqn became involved. All crossings of the AFTERWATERINGS

CANAL had been demolished by the enemy and 1 Pol Armd Div had created a defensive belt north of the CAPELLE-WAALWIJK road at the time of the ARDENNES Offensive so both these obstacles had to be overcome. In addition many trip flares and anti-personnel mines had been put out by the Poles.

The plan was to prepare three approaches to the fortress, as follows:

1. An improvised class 18 bridge straight north of WAALWIJK and a road along the south side of the dyke up to the VEER.
2. A storm boat and L.V.T.¹⁷ site at the former SCHARLO ferry.
3. An L.V.T. crossing straight north of LABBEGAT.

2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn was assigned the improvised class 18 bridge and 1 and 3 Troops the task of repairing all craters, clearing the roads and crossing of mines and constructing L.V.T. ramps.

The class 18 bridge presented a ticklish problem as the site was only 500 yds from the enemy and all approach roads could be directly observed from the far side. Fortunately the bridge itself was behind a dyke and completely hidden from the enemy. It was desired to maintain secrecy, so noise had to be kept to a minimum. After careful measurement by Lt Rollefson and Sgt Joudrey a plan was submitted calling for one heavy trestle for the far side, three bays of F.B.E. stringer deck, a 40' SS Bailey and 40 feet of existing deck. Before work could be started a mass of twisted steel and other debris had to be removed and the remainder of the rolling centre portion jacked up on the rollers and anchored into position. Since vehicles could not be driven down the 1¼ mile approach road, all material had to be brought down the canal on F.B.E. raft and at night on a rubber tired trailer down the snow and ice covered road. Approximately 2½ tons could be loaded in the trailer and since there was only room for about 15 men to push and pull, it was a heart breaking task. In addition the road was sprayed several times each day by enemy light machine guns. The slit trenches along the sides were covered with ice and full of water. Fortunately only once was the party caught in this barrage and no casualties were sustained, but the wear and tear on the nerves was terrific. One night L/Sgt Eddy and section, rowing a load of girders down the canal on an F.B.E. raft were caught in a terrific wind and snow storm. Visibility was less than 25'. They got to within a few hundred yards of the site before the wind and tide combined, forcing them gradually backwards. Over two hours later they arrived back at WAALWIJK in a state of complete exhaustion. An hour later the wind subsided and the material was rowed down by a fresh party. Throughout the construction, at irregular intervals, an enemy light machine gun fired tracer rounds right across the bridge and less than 10' from the deck. Every once in a while a bullet, deflected from a house nearby, would slam into the bridge and ricochet off. Several times batches of mortars fell right around the site. Both Sgt Durham

¹⁷ Landing Vehicles, Tracked ("Terrapins" and "Buffaloes"), manned by the 5 Aslt Regt, RE.

and L/Sgt Schell were wounded by mortar fragments but continued regardless. Without the unfailing energy and perseverance of these two NCOs the bridge would never have been completed in time. A mortar bomb hit and shattered the end of one girder during construction but the damage was repaired. 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn worked in shifts, 24 hours a day for a week to complete the 'Mad Whores Dream Bridge', as the structure was appropriately named. Cpl Robinson, Spr Kadustki, Spr Tackahashi and Spr Crowells of 6 Fd Pk Sqn turned out a magnificent performance cutting away debris and welding cleats on new members with their acetylene torch. The 40' SS Bailey was completed one morning by six sappers and Sgt Durham who improvised a transom launching nose to get the end up on the existing bridge. This was done almost completely without noise.



The "M.W.D." Bridge

During this time 1 and 3 Troops working night and day filing and bypassing craters, clearing mines and cutting L.V.T. ramps. To get tanks into a firing position, 3 Troop built a 60' DS Bailey north of CAPELLE on the night of 24 January. Equipment was hauled down on a sled they had constructed, towed by a jeep. Most of the parts such as panel pins, rollers and bracing were frozen or packed with ice. 1 Troop made a track for L.V.T.s running west of SCHARLO down to the ferry. During the whole operation nights were extremely cold and often accompanied by snow and wind.

On the morning of 26 January the attack went in from two directions, one across the island and northeast towards the VEER, the other over the 'Mad Whore' and westwards along the dyke. A canoe party tried to land in the rear but ice and fog prevented most of them from reaching their objective. Many were frozen to death in the ice cold water. A tremendous smoke screen was laid across the whole front. The first vehicle across the 'Mad Whore' was a halftrack loaded with smoke containers. It hit the steep ramp at about 30 mph and came down with a tremendous crash but nothing gave way so the bridge was considered sound. To add insult to injury, or vice versa, on the afternoon of this day of the attack a V-1 landed right in front of 9 Fd Sqn's orderly room, killing one and injuring thirty persons from 1 Troop and HQ. Capt Clazie was evacuated with tremendous lacerations in the face from flying glass. Tops and windows were blown off several vehicles. Fighting was even worse than expected and soon the infantry called for tanks. Two of these mountains of steel swathed in extra track armour rolled across the MAD WHORE without incident much to the relief of the designer.

2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn were called in to build a class 40 raft to get tanks across at SCHARLO. At 1000 hrs that night Lt Hodgekinson of 8 Fd Sqn and Lt Cole recced the site and at 1130 hrs 2 Troop commenced unloading the pontoons by hand. Three lorries were offloaded before a Polish Coles crane arrived to assist. The trap doors on the pontoons were all frozen tight and had to be chopped and forced open with picks. When this was accomplished it was found that the drain plug holes were frozen solid with ice and mud. Most of the ice was chopped away with a bayonet and the threads were thawed by inserting fingers in the hole. The next job was getting the piers joined. Since the canal was full of cracked ice from 2" to 5" thick it was extremely difficult to keep the square ends clear to hook them up. Incidentally, the square ends were not square, as they were covered with lumps of ice and frozen mud, as were the connecting hooks. To add to the unpleasantness of the situation a German patrol sallied forth from the VEER and shot the site up for a while before being driven back by the L & W Regt. Then a severe snow storm came along to impair even further the miserable working conditions. In spite of this by 0830 hrs the next morning the raft was ready and a ramp constructed by 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn.

After some difficulty the first tank climbed the ramp, its tracks grabbed the raft dragging it inshore to ground, then crashed down on the inshore pier, crushing it and breaking the connection with the bow sections. At this time the tide was going out fast and the raft was left high and dry. Just after the inshore end had been jacked up and the damaged pier replaced, enemy mortars began to drop around the site. Nevertheless the raft was repaired and made ready for use that morning. After dinner heavy mortar and artillery fire drove the tired party from the site. At 1700 hrs that night (27 January) 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn were relieved by 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn who constructed a new ramp and got three tanks across by 0130 hrs the next morning.



The Scharlo Ferry

There were no roads on the island, only tracks soggy with mud and ice so Lt Whittier with 1 Troop were assigned the task of providing a tank approach from both sides, eventually to join up in the centre. The route was recced with great difficulty in daylight by L/Sgt Dunkeld and about 2300 hrs that night Sgt Partington, with a D-6 ferried across the canal at SCHARLO by 2 Troop, got the road started. A complete new road was gouged out of the south side of the dyke. Enemy patrols and mortar fire hampered the party. A D-7 was brought across “Mad Whores Dream” to start from the other side. A thaw set in and dozers, tanks and L.V.T.s took turns getting stuck and pulling each other out. For several days after the capture of the VEER this work continued until finally a track was made right across the island over which all vehicles and casualties could be evacuated.

On the night of 29 January, 2 Troop took four hours to get one tank across at SCHARLO. The weather was very cold and the ice flow began to freeze together, there being a solid mass across the water at the time. After a long struggle with the shifting tide and the monstrous ramp the tank was loaded. The far side of the canal, 450' away, could not be seen for the falling snow. The four petters road at full throttle and the raft moved slowly away from the shore with an acre of ice pack frozen to it. All the crew chopped, pushed and pulled at the thick blocks of ice jammed

between the frail pontoons and piling up around the propellers. Each time an L.V.T. passed it was hailed to come and circle the raft thus loosening up the pack. About 10 or 15 feet was gained each time. Then perhaps the tide would shift and loosen the pack and few more feet would be gained, all the while the four petters roaring at top speed and the crew fighting the ice with boathooks and oars. Then an L.V.T. ran into the raft in the darkness and snow and shifted one pontoon three feet under the raft and tank. Miraculously it held together though everyone had reconciled themselves to an ice grave. By turning the propellers alternately to the left and right a few more feet were gained against the ice now piling up against the far bank. No one thought it was even remotely possible to reach the far bank and unload the tank, it was just a matter of time before the pontoon would give in to the relentless pressure of the ice and sink the whole issue. Three hours from the far shore the raft was close enough so that a passing L.V.T. could be hooked onto on the shore and the raft pulling up so the tank could be disembarked through three feet of packed ice. It wasn't possible, the crew nearly fainted. For once seeing was not believing.

To finish off the operation, all the tanks both mobile and immobile had to be brought back. 1 Troop finished their road across the island, which was now a sea of mud from the thaw, and 2 Troop rebuilt the raft to take two Sherman tanks, so that ARVs could bring the casualties out with them. It was 80' long with 20' dropping ramps and floated on seven pontoon piers. The problem involved in getting an ARV towing a knocked out Sherman from a soft mud bank onto the steep slippery deck of a raft are such that they cannot be described in printable English. It will suffice to say that no one but the indefatigable Sgt Durham could have accomplished it.

Throughout the operation, 9 Fd Sqn was efficiently and promptly supplied with all necessary stores from a dump established at their headquarters by 6 Fd Pk Sqn and operated by Lt Ditchburn. 6 Fd Pk Sqn was kept busy procuring lumber and steel wire rope and innumerable other engineer materials required by the operation. Sgt Stewart was informed by the Pioneer Platoon Commander of the Algonquins that a shipyard at HEUSDEN on the MAAS RIVER contained large supplies of lumber. Lt Parker made arrangements with the CO of the Algonquins to remove it at night since the place was only a few hundred yards from the enemy across the river. The night plan did not work out well however as German patrols often came over in the dark and there was considerable danger of being shot by the Algonquins in the confusion. Lt Parker then persuaded the infantry to let him work in the daytime so Sgt Stewart and Cpl Douglas with ten sappers and three RCASC 60 cwts drove down and met him in HEUSDEN. To reach the shipyard, which was mortared fairly regularly, they had to drive 100 yds down a dyke in plain view of the enemy. To make a long story short they went in and loaded the timbers through a window on the near side of the yard. Needless to say there was no time lost in getting out through a hail of light machine gun fire.

1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn kept all main roads in the area sanded, allowing 9 Fd Sqn to commit every available man to the main task. And so ended one of the most miserable jobs ever assigned to 9 Fd Sqn, and the first tackled by Maj Leggat as OC.

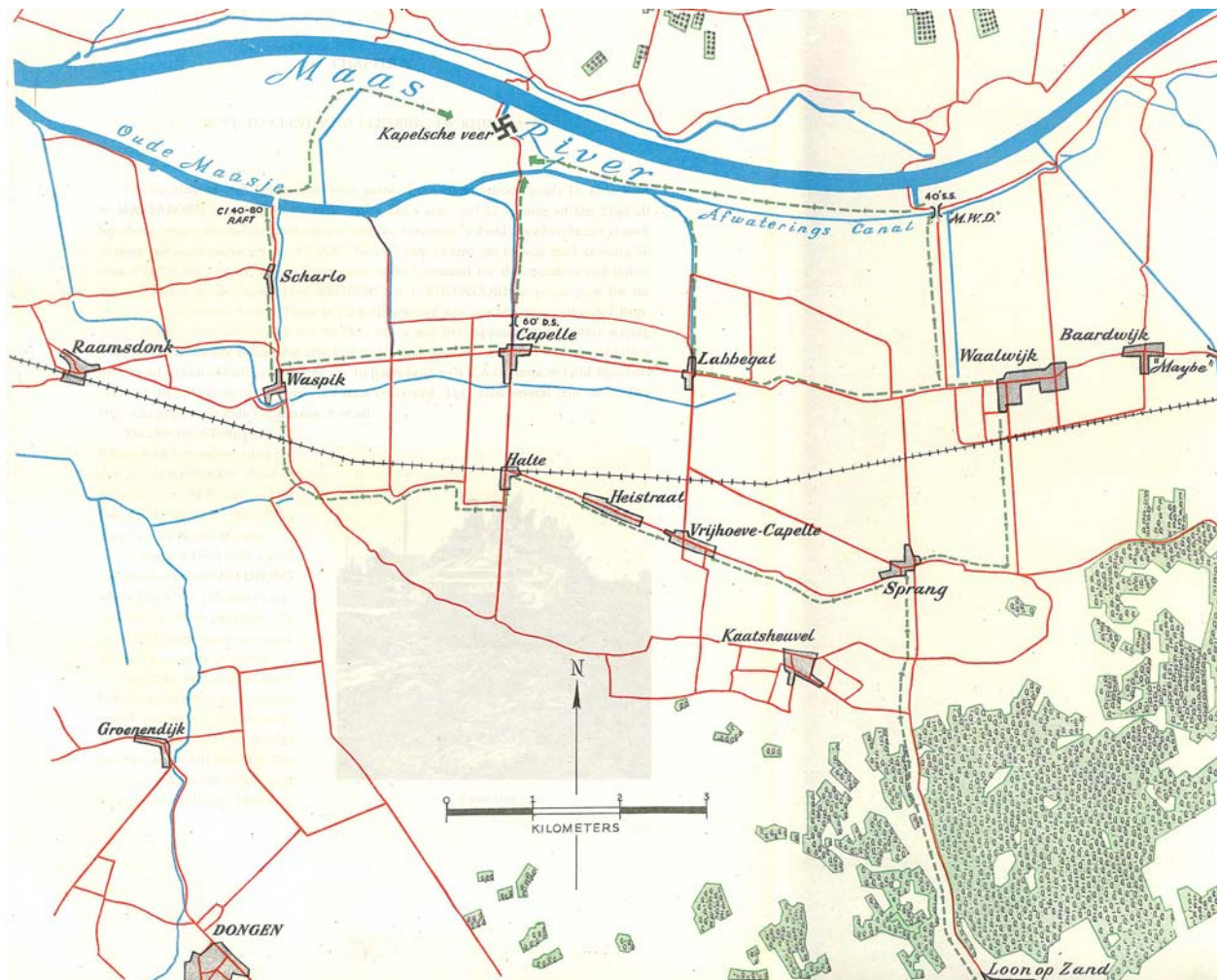
The beginning of February saw 4 Div Engrs enter another road maintenance training period and life would have been very boring had it not been for V-1s continually roaring overhead and often exploding nearby. The frost came out of the ground and many roads became impassable. Thousands of tons of rubble were piled into the bog holes. Lt Livingstone had a battalion of indifferent civies repairing and rebuilding roads in the UDENHOUT area. 8 Fd Sqn's storm boat ferry at CREVACOUER was still going strong.

6 Fd Pk Sqn hauled more bridging equipment including a class 50-60 raft and some Wild Kite Balloon winches. 9 Fd Sqn moved to ROSEMALEN near S'HERTOGENBOSCH where they could administrate both the Troop on road maintenance and those at LITH. LITH was chosen for the rafting and storm boat training sites as the MAAS RIVER there represented fairly well conditions on the RHINE RIVER. It wasn't expected that 4 Div would take part in the actual crossing but there was always the possibility that a few tanks might have to be ferried across. 2 and 3 Troops of 9 Fd Sqn and 1 and 2 Troops of 8 Fd Sqn went to LITH with sufficient storm boats, class 9, class 40 and class 50-60 rafts to last for a few weeks. This provided a welcome change. 8 Fd Sqn specialized in storm boats and class 9 raft while 9 Fd Sqn took the class 40 Bailey and class 50-60 raft. 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn scored the job of erecting a ferrying gear for the 50-60 with the Wild Kite Balloon winches. They were given a length of cable four times that of the river, with instructions not to cut it on pain of death. Putting on sufficient tension and anchoring the cable without cutting it took about three days, after which everyone took a fiendish delight in whipping the big raft back and forth with the winches. Later both the troops and equipment were changed over so that each Squadron had a troop able to handle at least one of the items.

While this was going on 8 Fd Sqn's main thorns in the side were the EMPEL and ENGELLEN roads, which were ceasing to exist as such, yet had to be kept open. 9 Fd Sqn had the same problem in the UDENHOUT area where thaws and heavy traffic caused complete failure of some roads.

On 20 February, 4 Div Engrs began to turn over road maintenance to Corps Troops, finish off training and gather up equipment, and by 21 February everyone was ready for the expected move into GERMANY.

Map of Kapelsche Veer



Move to Cleve and Clearing of Rhineland

On the night of 20 February harbour recce parties from all Squadrons, under Lt Cole, went to MATERBORN near CLEVE to look over 4 Div's area. Two days later, after a long but fast move, all Squadrons were concentrated there by the evening. 8 Fd Sqn began at once to open and mark routes for 4 CAB. 1 Troop cleared the railway crossing southeast of CLEVE for two miles. 3 Troop came under command for the operation and staked out tank tracks across country from BEDBURG to LOUISENDORF in preparation for the offensive. Each section from 3 Troop had a halftrack and was attached to an armoured regiment. These sections were cut down to one NCO, a driver and five sappers, the remainder staying with 'A' Echelon. Shortly before the attack it was found that the carriers could still not negotiate the cleared section of railway so during the ten hours prior to 4 CAB's move, 8 Fd Sqn removed the rails from the two miles of track concerned. The blew several rails into 3 Cdn Inf Div's HQ, who apparently didn't appreciate it at all.

On 24 February, 6 Fd Pk Sqn and 9 Fd Sqn moved along the axis to ACKENHOFF about four miles southeast of CLEVE and on the next day, 8 Fd Sqn moved to BEDBURG about a mile north of there. 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn built a road near the forest west of BEDBURG where the Division's 'A' Echelon was to concentrate. 9 Fd Sqn did more road maintenance and made several truck loads of fascines.

On 26 February at 0330 hrs, 4 CAB moved off along the routes staked out by 8 Fd Sqn, however from frequent rains the ground had become so soft that only two or three tanks could follow each other without bellying. They soon gave up and took to the roads which were also in poor shape. KEPPELN and UDEM fell and the roads began to disintegrate. 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn filled several craters just north of KEPPELN and began to rubble the roads with ten RCASC three tonners and forty attached men; six tippers were added later. 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn began the construction of a bypass around UDEM but were only able to maintain, not improve, the route. 2 and 3 Troops removed bombs and explosives from culverts over the anti-tank ditch surrounding the town. 9 Fd Sqn also supported an advance by 10 CIB southeast towards UDEMERFELD and the HOCHWALD FOREST. It was then proposed to use the railway south of UDEM for the advance through the HOCHWALD FOREST so on the night of 27 February, Lt Beavan of 9 Fd Sqn made a thorough recce of the track as far as possible. Fighting was very bitter and progress slow, shell and mortar fire being the heaviest yet encountered. The enemy used many of his 28-32 cm rocket projectors which throw a bomb weighing somewhere around 250 lbs. After a terrific battle, 11 Br Armd Div moved up on our right (south) flank and at 0230 hrs on 1 March, 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn completed a 40' SS Bailey on the main road about 1½ miles southeast of UDEM. The had only fifty anti-tank gunners for a bridgehead, but apparently there were no enemy troops close enough to interfere. Shell and mortar fire was heavy and continuous

throughout construction but as nothing landed closer than 250 yards away the work proceeded uninterrupted. It is possible that the noise of the shelling drowned out that of construction so nobody knew what was going on.

Both 8 and 9 Fd Sqns then moved to new harbours south of UDEM and commenced stripping the tracks from the railway. A very efficient technique was developed which consisted of rolling out two complete rolls of cordtex, one along each rail. Single four ounce 808 cartridges were split, placed on the cordtex and rammed down between the rail and the tie bolt over each tie. The resulting demolition completely stripped the 90 lb rails from the track, leaving the steel ties to be pushed off by hand. The rock ballast was then spread with an autopatrol to about 12' in width, and covered with a thin layer of sand making a smooth, hard and weatherproof surface. Work continued on this stretch 24 hours a day, involving most of 8 and 9 Fd Sqns with 80 anti-tank gunners. This road was constructed for about 2½ miles right through the HOCHWALD FOREST. A big part of the job was providing connections to it from the existing road system. These laterals were graded down, sometimes from a 40' bank by bulldozers, then paved with the heavy steel ties from the railway, laid in a herringbone fashion. On the flat stretches, thousands of yards of Sommerfeld track, chess paling and slab lumber were laid. This kept 6 Fd Pk Sqn hauling night and day for their stores dump. The road when finished was called 'GREEN ROUTE' as usual, and was changed from Up to Down every two hours or so, but in spite of this considerable traffic passed over it. In fact without it, the advance would have been seriously held up.

While this was going on, the existing roads went to pieces due to the foul weather. Every available man from both Squadrons was put on hauling rubble. Traffic was extremely heavy as there were at least four or five Divisions in the area, all of them using the UDEM-KEPPELN road.

There was some consolation however, the country was teeming with livestock and the cellars full. It was obvious that although the Germans had robbed other countries to the starvation point, they had here in the Rhineland much more than they needed. Chicken, goose, duck, turkey and veal took the place of bully beef and there was no shortage of eggs.

Resistance in the HOCHWALD FOREST was pretty well broken now and 4 Div moved south. 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn came under command of 8 Fd Sqn who were to support an advance by 10 CIB through SONSBECK towards VEEN.

While recceing roads south of LABECK, Lt Baker's recce car was hit by a bazooka. Lt Baker and Spr Pressley, who was wounded, made a quick getaway but the driver, Spr Ethier, was

missing for a short time. He turned up soon however with two prisoners captured with an empty 22 cal revolver.

On 6 March, SONSBECK was taken and the advance continued towards VEEN. 6 Fd Pk Sqn immediately began the operation of a rubble dump for road building and crater jobs to the east. Forty RCASC lorries were used here and personnel of 6 Fd Pk Sqn had little respite for over a week. In addition, twenty loads of corduroy and large quantities of other track stores were hauled up over the frightful roads from CLEVE. Fighting was extremely bitter and the enemy made good use of mines, mostly Holz and Reigle. 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn pushed south from LABECK through HAMMERBRUCK to SONSBECK lifting many mines on the way. They constructed both a wheeled and a tracked diversion around a large crater just south of LABECK.

9 Fd Sqn at this time was responsible for the maintenance of all roads and tracks. 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn constructed a 40' SS Bailey over a large wet crater about two miles east of SONSBECK, traffic passing by and mortar fire impeded construction considerably. 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn later constructed a similar bridge beside it making the road two-way. 3 Troop's 'A' Ech, left behind on top of a hill, was heavily shelled by the enemy and unable to move because of traffic congestion. Spr Mills was killed and Sprs Belisle and Wurst wounded. Sgt McPhail of 2 Troop was wounded when their bulldozer ran over a mine. Cpl Cameron was shot through the leg by a sniper as his section was clearing mines down from LABECK. Later mortars drove the section to cover. About a mile west of VEEN a huge crater was encountered. 1 and 3 Troops were assigned the task of repairing it, 1 Troop to build the first half with Sommerfeld and rubble and 3 Troop the last half with corduroy. Maj Allan, who was examining a house about to be used for rubble, awoke two German soldiers who were sleeping in the basement. Being without a weapon he rushed upstairs and borrowed Lt Pyke's pistol to capture them.

1 and 3 Troops struggled with this crater for two days and nights during which they were driven back several times by shellfire and once by a counter attack. There were two houses near the crater and at one stage of the game, the enemy occupied the far one from which they fired at the working parties. Finally two tanks were brought up for support. Once the D-7 fell into the crater and couldn't be retrieved from the water for two days. Later the bulldozer pushed a burnt-out tank off the road onto a mine injuring L/Cpl Kinch and Sprs Scott and Cooper. After this crater was successfully bypassed 9 Fd Sqn took the lead and continued to the end of the operation, while 8 Fd Sqn maintained roads and made the bypass two way, then filled in the crater. The twin Baileys were named "Mills Bridges" in honour of Spr Mills killed a few days before.

1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn supported the force pushing straight east for VEEN. One section under Cpl Gow with Lt Whittier got cut off in a counter attack and holed up in a house. They fought

off the Germans for a day, killing and wounding many would be intruders. Lt Whittier was shot through the thigh while trying to break out and could not be evacuated until the section was relieved by infantry the next day. Lt Pyke who had recently had his motorcycle shot out from under him in this area, then took over 1 Troop and after the capture of VEEN cleared to WINNENTHAL. 1 Troop removed 21 Reigle mines, 19 box mines (some booby trapped) and an abatis. The roads were covered with mud mixed with shrapnel and some of the Holz and Reigle mines were buried 18" deep. As a result many vehicles became casualties on roads that had been swept. A D-4 was blown up while clearing the road block and the operator, Spr Noble of 6 Fd Pk Sqn, was tossed into the air to light in a swamp unhurt. At one time a tank rattle up to Lt Pyke and the commander asked if the road was safe. Lt Pyke assured him that the road had been thoroughly checked and despatched a halftrack down the stretch to prove it. The halftrack had barely gotten underway when there was an ear shattering explosion. The tank commander was not convinced.

While 1 Troop was working through VEEN, 2 Troop went southeast from SONSBECK and supported a force advancing north from BONNINGHARDT. Here again many Reigle mines were encountered and shellfire along the road was intense. One crossroad at DORNEMANNSHOF was shelled almost continually by 28-32 cm rockets, 88s, 105s and 155s. The Troop finished the job in spite of this. Several burnt out vehicles were removed, including one Sherman tank from the above mentioned crossroads during the shelling. Just west of WINNENTHAL 2 Troop joined 1 Troop and 3 Troop coming from the west, and cleared another mile east to the second railway crossing. 1 Troop put in a 40' SS Bailey across a small wet gap at WINNENTHAL and 4 Div Engrs part in cleaning up the RHINELAND was over. On 12 March, the enemy having been completely cleared to north of the RHINE, the three Squadrons packed up and moved to TILBURG for a rest.

The weather during Operation BLOCKBUSTER as it was called, was generally foul and this at least tripled the amount of work to be done by the sappers. They made up for this however by bringing back truck loads of cattle, hogs, chickens, ducks, geese, etc. to TILBURG where some was consumed and the rest traded for cognac and brandy.

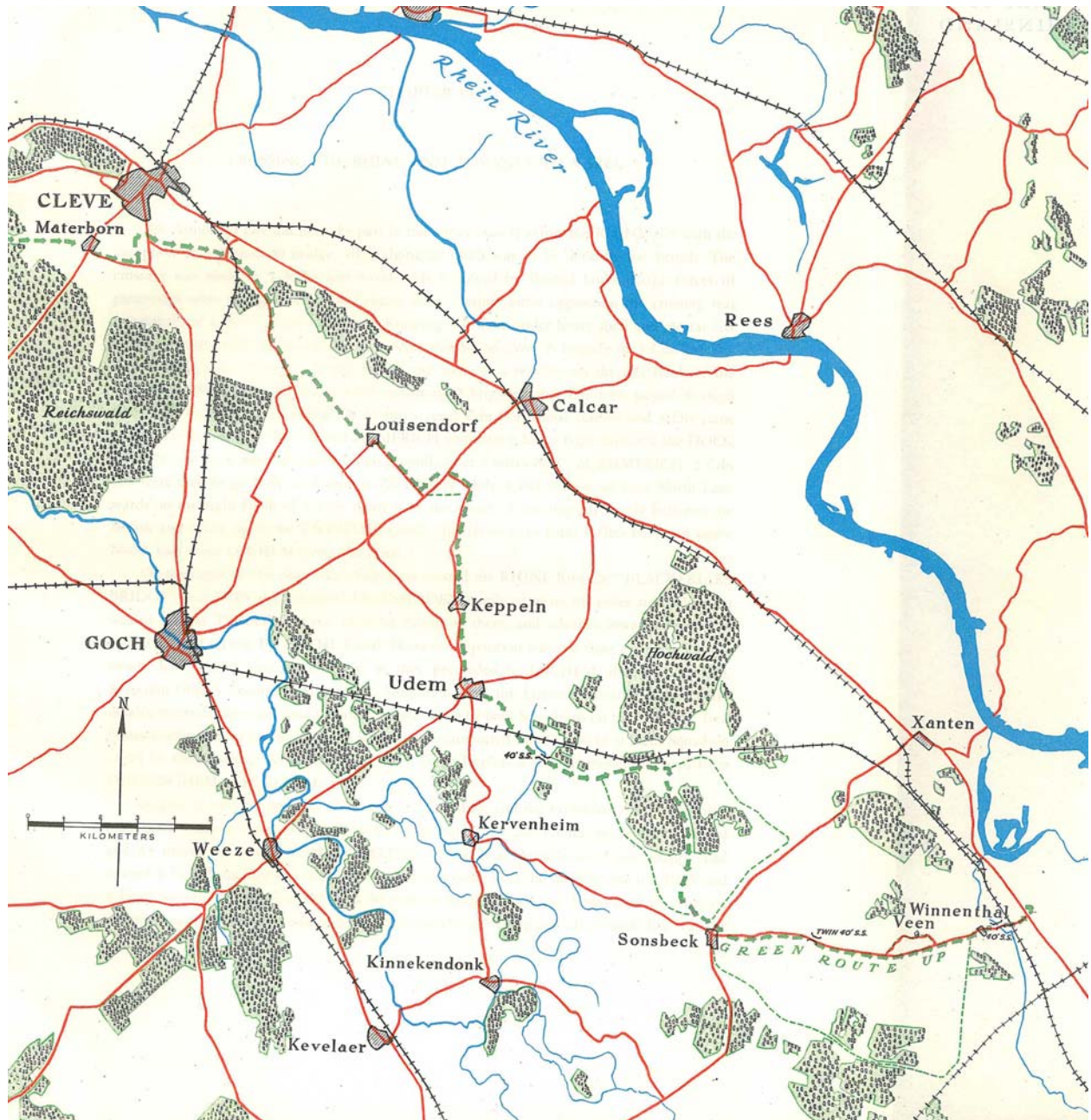
It had been a long hard struggle but fortunately engineer casualties were not nearly as high as expected. Shelling and mortaring was the heaviest yet encountered and while in the vicinity of UDEM the Luftwaffe paid several surprise night visits during which bombs were dropped. The extensive use of mobile searchlight units lent an uncanny and unnatural atmosphere to night operations. It was indeed an awe inspiring sight. However no one can deny that this speeded things up considerably as the sky was so heavily overcast that visibility would otherwise have been zero. The devastation encountered in GERMANY far surpassed anything seen since the landing in NORMANDY.

From 12 to 24 March the Squadrons spent their time cleaning and checking equipment and painting and overhauling vehicles. Everyone had plenty of time for whatever form of recreation he preferred and all Squadrons held dances in TILBURG. For the last week 9 Fd Sqn moved back to their old billets in OIRSCHOT to brush up again with a short training period. On 24 March, 4 Div Engrs moved back to GERMANY and concentrated in billets in the remains of the town of CLEVE. There some work was done to assist 2 C.A.T. prepare for their proposed crossing of the RHINE at EMMERICH.

One night Sgt Durham of 2 Troop 9 Fd Sqn received orders to take a section down to a ferry site opposite EMMERICH and clear the road down to the water's edge. Our own troops had laid shrapnel minefields there and the plans were lost. Sgt Durham, L/Sgts Schell and Eddy and two men decided to go down and two proceeded to the site where they contacted Lt Perrin of the Manitoba Dragoons. They were informed that the road was under sporadic machine gun fire from the far side and Lt Perrin took the party down to the dyke. It was a clear night so they made use of smoke during the operation. The area was thoroughly checked but no mines were found.

2 and 3 Troops of 8 Fd Sqn were put under command to clear our own anti-personnel minefields from the building site across from EMMERICH. The two Troops lifted approximately 200 British 'S' mines most of which were in a dangerous condition due to shell and mortar fire. During the operation Lt McAdam renewed his acquaintance with his former OC, Maj Oddliefson of 6 Fd Pk Sqn, who was making an advanced recce for a stores dump.

Map of Rhineland



Crossing the Rhine and Advance to Varel

4 Div did not take part in the initial assault across the RHINE RIVER and with the exception of one class 40 bridge, all bridging at REES was to be done by the British. The crossing was to be made by L.V.T.s and naval craft followed by floated tanks. Large forces of paratroops were dropped behind the enemy lines. Despite bitter opposition the crossing was successful and a firm bridgehead gained. Bridging was done under heavy shell and mortar fire but by the end of the second day vehicles were starting to cross. A Brigade of 3 Cdn Inf Div then crossed under command of the British and took up a position on the left flank of the bridgehead. They were followed by the remaining two Brigades from 3 Cdn Inf Div who passed through them and advanced on EMMERICH. At this stage 2 Cdn Corps took control and 3 Cdn Inf Div came back under command. 3 Cdn Inf Div cleared EMMERICH and after a bitter fight captured the HOCKELTON feature, a piece of wooded high ground about three miles northwest of EMMERICH. 2 Cdn Inf Div were then to go northwest and capture ZUTPHEN while 4 Div was to advance northeastwards on the right flank of 1 Cdn Army with the objective of clearing all enemy between the British and 2 Cdn Inf Div up to the TWENTHE Canal. 10 CIB were to form a firm base and probe northeast from LOCHEM along the canal.

On the night of 31 March 4 Div Engrs crossed the RHINE River by 'Blackfriars Bridge' near REES and bivouacked by ESSERDEN a mile or so on the other side. The plan was to start at TERBORG, some twelve miles north of there, and advance towards RUURLO and LOCHEM on the TWENTHE CANAL. However opposition was less than expected and the British had cleared most of the way so they proceeded to LOCHEM almost unopposed. A section from 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn and Lt Seaborn formed the engineer advance party. Considerable material recce and road maintenance was done by both Squadrons on the way. The first Bailey bridge east of the RHINE RIVER, an 80' DS was constructed by 3 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn under Lt Glendenning. 1 and 3 Troops of 8 Fd Sqn developed and maintained the road from DOETINGHEM to BORCULO.

Originally we were to make a crossing at LOCHEM, and the preliminary recce had been made under very adverse conditions by Lt Cole, but at the last minute plans were changed and we moved to an area south of DELDEN. As soon as possible after the infantry had crossed 9 Fd Sqn was to provide a class 9 crossing over the locks on the left flank and 8 Fd Sqn to begin a 180' class 40 Bailey pontoon bridge beside the demolished structure on the main road. The assault was pressed home quickly and easily and about 0100 hrs on 3 April, 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn began a 50' DS (changed from class 9 to class 40 as usual) over the locks. The bridgehead was shallow and infantry were firing sporadically from positions less than 100 yds across the canal. However the enemy offered no resistance and construction proceeded uninterrupted. At the same time 8 Fd Sqn began their 180' Bailey pontoon bridge.

By 0300 hrs the 50' DS Bailey over the locks was complete and a number of support vehicles passed over. During the next day, much to everyone's surprise and 2 Troop's delight, most of the Division passed over this bridge and advanced towards ALMELO. The approach roads were only soft muddy trails but the rain held off and the soil stood up amazingly well.

All this time 8 Fd Sqn was struggling to complete the main crossing, with all available hands and 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn. The demolished bridge had been of the overhead type and the approach road was some 30 ft above the water. It was therefore necessary, in addition to erecting the bridge, to cut, grade and corduroy two new roads over 300 yds in length on the west side of the demolished structure. All of the corduroy had to be cut by hand and hauled to the site. The bank seats were still so high that great difficulty was encountered in connecting the rafts in the centre, and several attempts and modifications were necessary before the bridge was successfully completed. During construction one NCO and 14 sappers were injured when someone moved a bicycle attached by a trip wire to a Schumine. While laying out a telephone line to the site, two driver operators from HQ Troop, Sprs Massery and Patterson collided with another jeep, and both men and the jeep had to be back loaded to the rear. To top off this disastrous day, L/Sgt Orr and L/Cpl Goddard of 1 Troop were injured in motorcycle accidents. So it was no wonder that on 5 April, when the mile long line of waiting vehicles began to grind their way slowly across the TWENTHE CANAL, that 8 Fd Sqn breathed a great deep sigh of relief. Their sentiments were fully shared by 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn who had built the far landing bay and done a great deal of work on that approach. Almost every man in 6 Fd Pk Sqn worked all night on the road near WEGDAM with dozers, axes, etc. to enable the Division to pass through that night.

After crossing the TWENTHE CANAL, the Division's task was to capture ALMELO, clear the area to COEVORDEN and probe to the east while 10 CIB held the former town as a firm base.

The town of ALMELO was taken on 5 April after a brisk encounter and 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn erected an 80' DS Bailey about three miles to the east, not so long after they had finished the Bailey pontoon bridge. At about the same time, 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn built a 70' DS Bailey on the southern outskirts of the town, then repaired two damaged bridges in the centre of it making a class 40 route through.

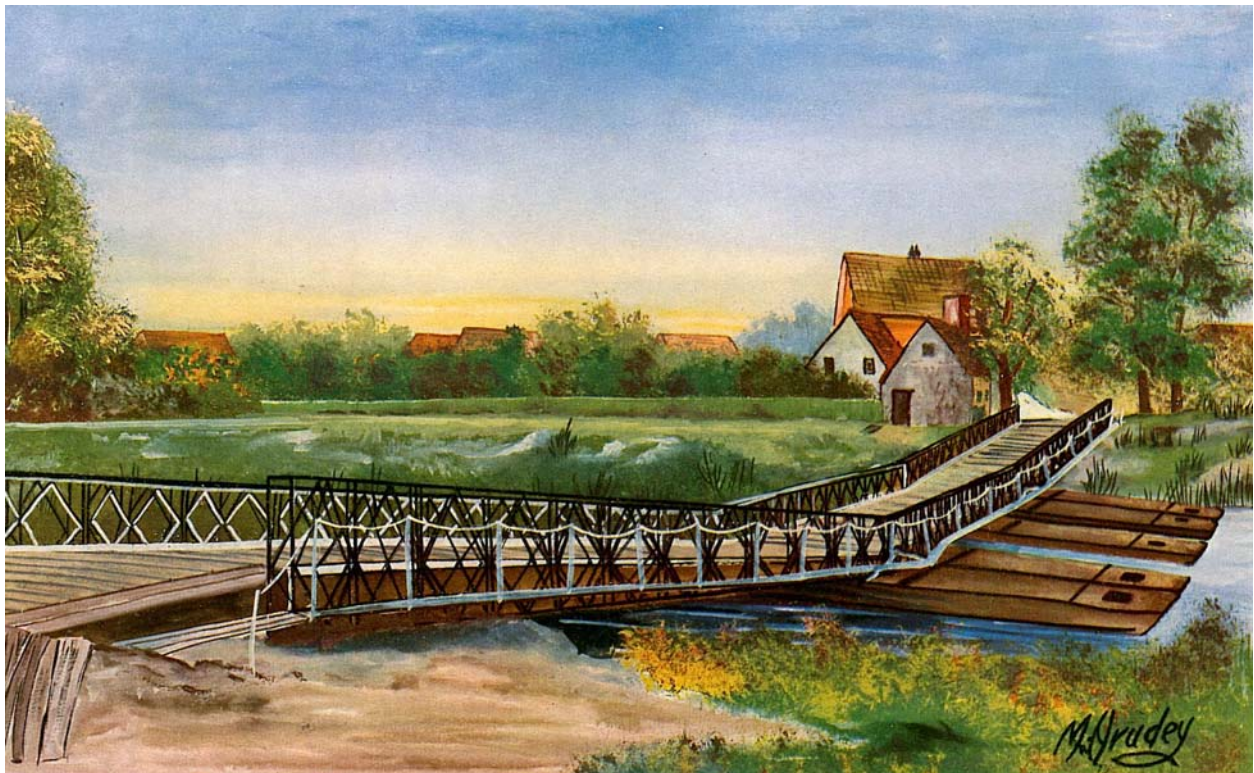
4 CAB then advanced rapidly through BORNE to COEVORDEN, where 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn erected a 50' DS Bailey, then to MEPPEN where it was found that the enemy were in some strength across the EMS RIVER, over which all bridges had been blown.

10 CIB were kept busy also as a strong force of Jerries west of ALMELO had been bypassed. They continually shelled the outskirts of the town and the road leading south from it. A small

counterattack was thrown against this road but was beaten back after a lively session. Unfortunately a vehicle from Workshops Troop of 6 Fd Pk Sqn was going down the road at the same time and was shot up and burned. Spr Wentzell was wounded and S/Sgt Howe had several bullets pass through the sleeve of his tunic. 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn was left behind to support the small push in the direction of WIERDEN. They had a very unpleasant experience one day when requested (or ordered) to bridge a gap that had not yet been captured. When finally taken the culvert was so small that a few scoops with the bulldozer filled it.

Immediately after 4 CAB's advance to MEPPEN the Squadrons took off in support and found that this area was nothing more than a vast peat bog. Roads were almost entirely of pave and lacked anything in the form of a solid foundation. After only a few tanks had passed the road became impassable to wheeled vehicles. On the last stretch towards MEPPEN 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn constructed two 30' SS Baileys which they were deathly afraid would disappear into the bog along with the road.

Since the roads were so bad and the advance so rapid, it took some time for the Division to build up in the MEPPEN area a force for the assault across the EMS RIVER. During this time 9 Fd Sqn, who had been assigned the crossing, established a dump near the town and hauled all available slab lumber in the area to it for use on the approaches.



Bailey Pontoon Bridge at Meppen

At the same time, 8 Fd Sqn was busy opening routes in the COEVORDEN area. 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn erected a 40' SS Bailey on the road running west from the town and later 2 Troop built a 30' SS Bailey on the down route from MEPPEN which Maj-Gen Vokes had reced himself.

On the night of 7 April plans for the attack were completed by 10 CIB. Early the next morning the assault went in and by 1100 hrs, after a careful recce by Lt Pyke, the bridgehead was sufficiently large for 9 Fd sqn with one platoon of pioneers to commence construction. Work continued with perfect coordination and without delay until 1930 hrs when the first vehicle passed over. The 400 ft approaches were made with thick wide slab lumber and were not in the least affected by the passage of the whole Division. About noon 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn arrived and lent a willing hand in the last mentioned task. The site was quite good and enemy opposition limited to no more than a few 20 mm shells, but the job is probably an all time record in speed and precision as far as sapper work is concerned.

3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn completed a class 9 close support raft at the same time as the Bailey pontoon bridge. This was to be used for down traffic but was found unnecessary.

For several days before and after the EMS RIVER crossing every available man in 4 Div Engrs plus a platoon of pioneers struggled with the peat bog and cobble stones to keep GREEN ROUTE open, at the same time maintaining a down route that was nothing but a sand track. The entire 6 Fd Pk Sqn, with the exception of the Bridge Troop, closed down and went to work on the road. Field Stores Troop unloaded all vehicles and made them available for hauling rubble. They spent three days on this job.

Shortly after the MEPPEN bridge was opened, 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn, crossed after the armoured recce and followed in support. They checked and cleared the road north of LATHEN then went to SOGEL finally turning southwest again to meet 2 Troop coming up through BRANSEN. In the meantime HQ Troop from 8 Fd Sqn moved to the town of SOGEL which had just been cleared. Here they had a most unpleasant experience when attacked by a force of German Paratroopers assisted by civilians. In the afternoon of 9 April, HQ Troop of 8 Fd Sqn harboured in a field behind a house and barn in the town of SOGEL. Those of the Troop who did not sleep in their vehicles or tents bedded down in the barn. Civilians in the vicinity tried to please Troop personnel with offers of drinks and beds.

Visibility was poor due to a heavy mist and everyone was used to hearing their own troops discharging captured enemy weapons. This prevented early detection of the attack which came at 0815 hrs. So swiftly was it pressed home that only 15 of the 50 all ranks present in the lines at the time were able to procure their weapons. On seeing about 20 Germans fanning out to the flank, one party took up firing positions behind a brick pile facing them. Capt Greenhalgh,

Sgt Hildur, Sgt Hickman and the SSM took parties to firing positions giving all round protection to the Troop area. Sig Coppen and Spr Elmer were wounded while manning their bren guns. Maj Allan arrived while the attack was in progress and was immediately shot in the neck by a sniper. Spr Faultless and L/Cpl Stubbard evacuated Maj Allan under fire in a jeep. Capt Conn, the dental officer and SQMS Howarth evacuated Spr Screda in the dental clinic vehicle. By this time medical men from the ADS nearby were roused, gathered their weapons, and lent the sappers a hand until 1030 hrs when the besieged party was relieved by the arrival of tanks. One of the tanks fired a round into a house held by 8 Fd Sqn but fortunately no casualties resulted from this mistake. After the attackers were driven off the surrounding houses were checked and large supplies of automatic weapons and ammunition were found. Some of the members of HQ Troop of 8 Fd Sqn who deserved commendation for outstanding bravery are: Lt Zimmerman who effectively manned a bren gun until fatally wounded, Cpl Parker who was fired on with a bazooka and immediately afterwards rushed by three Germans whom he killed with his sten, Spr Faultless, L/Cpl Stubbard, SQMS Howarth and the dental personnel who evacuated casualties under fire, SSM Salkus, Sgt Hickman and Sgt Hildur who successfully directed the defence of the harbour.

Remustering took place immediately after and it was found that Maj Allan was seriously wounded, Capt Greenhalgh killed, Lt Zimmerman wounded (died later) and three ORs were killed and three wounded.

Shortly after this episode it was found that in order to maintain the roads in usable condition 30,000 tons of rubble were needed immediately, so Operation PUSHOVER was begun. This involved converting the town of SOGEL (except the church) into 12,000 tons of rubble. The CRE quickly solved this problem by placing in the hands of the irate 8 Fd Sqn, 3 RCASC explosives lorries and pointing a finger in the general direction of the town.

6 Fd Pk Sqn and 9 Fd Sqn crossed the EMS RIVER shortly after 8 Fd Sqn and proceeded to LATHEN then to the western outskirts of SOGEL. Here SSM Sargent and Gerry Muskins, their efficient Dutch interpreter, ran into paratroopers who were apparently part of the force about to attack 8 Fd Sqn. The Germans opened up on them with light machine guns from about 35 feet riddling their civilian car with holes. Bullets tore open the leg of SSM Sargent's trousers but miraculously the pair escaped with no physical injuries. However their feelings were deeply hurt as they had been ordered to search the now firmly held town of SOGEL for accommodation. SSM Sargent then warned units near the scene of his discovery that something was about to happen and rejoined the Squadron lined up in convoy at the west end of town. Here another enemy machine gunner was gleefully spraying the area. About this time orders were changed and 6 Fd Pk Sqn and 9 Fd Sqn proceeded to LATHEN where 2 Troop supported an advance up

to the KUSTEN CANAL. 10 CIB then struck eastwards towards BORGERWALD supported by 2 Troop and north from SOGEL with 1 and 3 Troops of 9 Fd Sqn.

The Division advanced northeast towards OLDENBURG with 10 CIB on the left (or north) flank and 4 CAB on the right. Each Brigade was again subdivided into small battle groups in order to cover the network of roads. Engineer work consisted mainly of road maintenance, route signing and the occasional improvised bridge. The first magnetic sea mine used in an anti-tank role was discovered by 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn near BORGERWALD. It was uncovered after the wires had been removed and dragged out of the hole by a tank, then hauled a safe distance out in a field behind a halftrack. 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn built a 50' DS Bailey about three miles southwest of SOGEL and 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn a 30' SS Bailey about a mile east of the town.

BREDDENBURG (about a mile north of LORUP) was taken from a strong force of German paratroopers and the two Brigades joined to advance through NUAREMBURG to FRIESOYTHE supported by 8 Fd Sqn.

FRIESOYTHE was captured after a brisk encounter during which civilians again took part, killing the CO of the Argyles. 8 Fd Sqn filled many craters on this stretch and came across more magnetic sea mines. They replaced a scissors bridge on the southern outskirts of the town with a 40' SS Bailey and on 15 April 9 Fd Sqn moved in and took over the lead. Both 1 and 3 Troops of 9 Fd Sqn built 70' SS Baileys between the town and the KUSTEN CANAL and filled several craters. 6 Fd Pk Sqn also moved into FRIESOYTHE on 15 April, set up a stores dump and began to pile rubble from the burnt buildings.

At WERLTE a task force of S.A.R.s with 2 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn took off to try to take OLDENBURG from the south. They concentrated at VREES about two miles north of LINDERN on 13 April. Lt Baker of 8 Fd Sqn accompanied the force as engineer reconnaissance officer. No Bailey bridge or any other engineer equipment was allotted for the expedition so Lt Newcombe depended entirely on his own resourcefulness and material available on the route. The first obstacle was a stream between VREES and PEHIEM over which a timber bridge was constructed just opposite NEW MARKHOUSEN. S.A.R. tanks hauled timber for the party. Having crossed this bridge the task force set out for DWERTGE on the way to GARREL, its first objective. During this morning, Lt Newcombe stepped on a Schumine by an abatis the sappers were clearing and lost a foot. Lt Baker then took charge of the Troop and continued to the end of the operation. The next obstacle, a 40' gap over the river about two miles west of VAREL-BUSCH was overcome by constructing another timber bridge utilizing the still intact centre pier. Logs were again cut from a forest nearby and the S.A.R.s passed over without incident. On 16 April after a hard fight the force took its first objective, GARREL, to which the approach roads were heavily mined and studded with craters blown by 250 kg bombs. The engineers were hampered by both small arms fire and shells and had to have close tank support most of the time.

At GARREL, the S.A.R.s were reinforced with a company of the L & W Regt. From here the force fought their way against stubborn opposition towards BISSEL, which was captured on the night of 19 April. During the last advance 2 Troop removed numerous magnetic sea mines from the road as well as filling craters caused by those that had detonated. The largest single task was the construction of a 50' improvised bridge. After a careful recce the trestles were cut and assembled well back from the site, then hauled up in lorries. At BISSEL, Lt Mercer arrived to assist Lt Baker as Recce Officer. From BISSEL the force advanced on three routes to OLDENBURG, and each had its full share of craters, mines and tree road blocks to be dealt with by the sappers.

1 May saw the capture of WALDENBURG and on 3 May the force reached the KUSTEN CANAL at two points, where the CO of the S.A.R.s decided that his engineer strength was a little light to tackle the 200' water gap. On 4 May the force crossed 'Algonquin Bridge' and 2 Troop rejoined the Squadron. From 13 April to 4 May, 2 Troop was entirely on its own and had contact with the Squadron only by Liaison Officer. They built 14 improvised bridges, filled or circumvented 27 craters and removed 19 road blocks of various sorts. In addition they lifted several hundred anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, removed a large number of heavy aerial bombs and magnetic sea mines, some with booby traps, and checked and signed 50 miles of roads. In spite of this amazing accomplishment, the general opinion of the Troop was that the magnificent cooperation and understanding shown by the S.A.R.s had made it a pleasure rather than a chore.

By 18 April all Squadrons had concentrated in FRIESOYTHE preparatory to the crossing of the KUSTEN CANAL, and Div HQ had camped about 2½ miles north. Several officer changes occurred in this area. Lt Beavan became 2IC of 9 Fd Sqn and Lt Hodgkinson came to 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn to replace Lt Rollefson who went on course in England. The task was divided into two parts. The first, construction of the bridge whatever size or type required was assigned to 9 Fd Sqn. The second, maintenance or rather building the approach road three miles from FRIESOYTHE to the canal was assigned to 8 Fd Sqn. 3 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn went under command of 9 Fd Sqn to construct a class 9 raft as soon as possible after the assault. To put the road in shape, 8 Fd Sqn had, in addition to the remaining two Troops, two batteries of the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment, one battery of 8th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, two sections of pioneers, one platoon of RCASC 60 cwts, two sections of tippers, one Troop from 31 Fd Coy and 159 civies. Bulldozers and mechanical shovels were used to pile rubble from the town of FRIESOYTHE, and by the time 9 Fd Sqn had completed the bridge some 15,000 tons had been placed on the peat bog where the road used to be, so it was in shape to take the Division. In addition to spreading rubble, numerous sea mines of both magnetic and spherical contact types had to be dug out and hauled away. Some of these mines were obviously only cratering charges,

but some of the magnetic types were almost certainly set to function as a magnetic mine after a set number of vehicles had passed.

The actual construction of the bridge called 'Algonquin Bridge' after the Regiment who formed the bridgehead, undoubtedly ranks among the finest engineer accomplishments of the war. The story can best be told in the words of Maj Leggat, bridge commander and OC of 9 Fd Sqn.

The assault by 10 CIB across the canal took place at 2400 hrs on the night of 15-16 April 1945. The Algonquin Regiment were assigned the job of making this initial assault. The task of 9 Fd Sqn was to support the initial assault by first of all constructing and operating a class 9 ferry and secondly, to construct a class 40 bridge.

The road leading to the site was clear except for an abatis 400 yds this side of the canal. Sgt Burlton and his advance section were given the job of removing this abatis and also checking the road for mines to the canal. Work commenced on this task at 2300 hrs. Unfortunately, the enemy had this obstacle pinpointed by mortar, SP 88 mm and machine gun fire and Sgt Burlton and his crew had great difficulty in working. Eventually after a very heavy pounding by enemy fire and suffering three casualties an armoured bulldozer, driven by Spr Grieve, cleared a passage through the block. The time was now 0400 hrs and it was beginning to get light.

The initial assault by the Algonquins had not penetrated as deeply across the canal as was hoped, and by 0200 hrs the enemy began to counterattack strongly, making the position of our own troops extremely precarious.

The initial recce of the bridging site was made by Lt Pyke from a house on the bank of the river, shortly after dark and before the assault went in. It was so dark that he could not observe very much, however, he heard German sentries parading up and down on the far bank. Actual ground recce of the bridging and rafting site was made by Lt Pyke, Lt McAdam and myself at approximately 0300 hrs. A suitable rafting site was chosen some 200 yds east of the existing demolished bridge, and a bridging site was chosen just to the west alongside the demolished bridge. None of us were at all satisfied with our bridgehead, however, we decided to have a crack at the job.

At 0400 hrs an armoured dozer was put to work on the near side approach. A considerable amount of approach work was required in order to build up the

roadway into the proposed bridge. The cat operator, Spr Grieve, did a wonderful job carrying on amid a hail of enemy fire.

The rafting site, fortunately, did not involve any approach work but it was drawing very accurate enemy fire. Lt McAdam, with great coolness, brought down two class 9 lorries at approximately 0700 hrs. No sooner had his party commenced to offload when a great burst of fire came down and badly damaged most of the equipment. It was now agreed that the site was under very accurately observed fire. Work on the ferry was temporarily halted with the hopes that our aircraft would soon be actively flying about, and thereby quieten down the enemy fire. At about 1000 hrs it was decided to try and take a pontoon down on a sled towed by a halftrack. No sooner did the halftrack appear at the canal than it was immediately shot up and several of Lt McAdam's men were wounded. By now most of our rafting equipment was holed and I gave Lt McAdam orders that he was to make no further attempt at building his ferry until further instructions.

My HQ at this time was, with Maj Stock of the Algonquins, at the back of the house alongside the bridge site. After activity ceased on the rafting site the enemy opened up with everything he had on and around the bridge site. The house we were behind started to fall down, brick by brick.

At 1030 hrs two bridging lorries were brought down to the site and offloaded. There were four bridging lorries at the surge point some 400 yds up the road waiting to come down as soon as the first tow had been offloaded. No sooner had the first two lorries been offloaded than one of them received a direct hit by an 88 shell and commenced to burn, at the same time the four lorries up the road were hit and one of them set on fire. Things now got so hot that all work was ordered to cease and the armoured cat was pulled in behind the house.

Our losses now consisted of several men wounded, five bridging lorries shot up and most of the class 9 raft equipment damaged.

Everything remained the same until 1700 hrs on the 16th when it was decided to commence operations again. Lt McAdam and L/Cpl Weiss, in the meantime, had patched up two of the pontoons that had been damaged. In doing this they had done a bloody good job, as it meant sitting in the open alongside the canal bank, with absolutely no cover. There were still snipers wandering around and spasmodic shell fire which ranged up and down the canal between the rafting site and the bridging site.

Lt McAdam, using a minimum number of personnel, completed his raft at approximately 1800 hrs on the 16th. This raft was operated from slit trenches. Unfortunately it took a great deal of persuasion to get anybody to use the raft, and there was about a two hour delay before the first traffic started to cross.

Lt Pyke, Bridge Commander, started the cat to work again on the near side bridge approach at 1800 hrs on the 16th and in spite of heavy fire the work was progressing very well. By dusk the bulldozer work was almost completed and the advance party had moved down to the site. It began to look as though the bridge would be built that night.

Suddenly, just at dusk, the enemy counterattacked and broke through the defences on the far side approaches. A German SP 88 advanced down to the far bank and shot up everything on the home side including the armoured D-6, Lt McAdam's scout car, two bridging lorries which had come down to offload and Lt Pyke's office truck. It was impossible to do any more work that night.

Things now got so hot that 2 Troop, who were bivouacked some 500 yds back from the canal, and 1 Troop, approximately the same distance away, were forced to withdraw. Luckily no more vehicles or men were lost.

During the night the bridgehead was reinforced by the Argyles, who encountered great difficulty in crossing the canal, but finally managed to take up a position on the far side.

The following morning, 18th April, broke clear and hot again in more ways than one. In spite of the reinforced bridgehead the enemy had carried out a fair amount of infiltration during the night and now anybody who appeared on the bridge site was immediately picked off by small arms fire. Conditions did not change during the day.

Later that afternoon things had become desperate in the bridgehead. The enemy had been reinforcing their troops with men and medium artillery. It was decided by Brig Jefferson that the remainder of his brigade would cross under cover of darkness, namely the Lincolns and Wellands, and that he would form a small tight bridgehead immediately around the site. Also after dark as many carriers and anti-tank guns would be taken over on the raft as was possible.

At 1700 hrs on the 18th the bridging job commenced again for the third time. Everything had been fairly quiet as far as shell fire went for the last couple of hours. Lt Pyke, Sgt Joudrey and myself decided that we would check the gap and if possible not do anymore bulldozer work and thus cut down on the noise. Lt Pyke crossed the canal and we no sooner measured the gap and decided on the position of the bank seats when we heard a shell coming which landed in the centre of the canal and cut our chain in half. This was followed by several more which landed short and long around the site.

As soon as the first lull came Lt Pyke started work laying out the rollers. By dusk the work on the near side was almost complete. We had decided not to move any bridging lorries down to the site before dark and also not to move the D-4 across until dark.

As soon as it became dark offloading commenced and the D-4 crossed and started work on the far side approach. The organization for building the bridge was as follows:

<i>Lt Pyke</i>	<i>- Bridge Commander</i>
<i>Lt Cole</i>	<i>- IC Surge Point</i>
<i>Maj McManus</i>	<i>- IC Marshalling Area</i>
<i>1 Troop – Sgt Joudrey</i>	<i>- IC Top Storey</i>
<i>2 Troop – Sgt Durham</i>	<i>- IC Bottom Storey</i>
<i>3 Troop – Lt Glendenning</i>	<i>- IC Offloading all equipment</i>
<i>Adv Sec – Sgt Burlton</i>	<i>- IC Adv Party Work far side</i>

A phone from the bridge site to the surge point to the harbour area had been installed by the sigs.

Once it was dark the shelling and mortaring was not particularly accurate. Shells and mortars fell around the site but fortunately there were no direct hits. Small arms fire caused the most concern as sudden bursts of it would strike all around the site and bounce off the panels.

Once work got underway, everybody pitched in with a will and worked so hard that there was no time to give any thought to the enemy situation. About this time the ‘moaning minnies’ began to fly around the place and this added to the din.

Offloading of everything except the ramp lorries was completed by 2300 hrs and Lt Glendenning took his men back to camp. Bridge construction was coming along very well in spite of the fact that it was a pitch black night. The D-4 working on the far side was doing excellent work, and all in all at 2400 hrs it looked as though the bridge would be completed in good order.

For the next hour everything was reasonably quiet but about 0130 hrs a runner told me that Maj Stock wanted to see me in the cellar of the house.

I found Maj Stock and the boys in the cellar in a worried frame of mind. The enemy had counterattacked again, and were making good progress through the leading companies in the bridgehead. Maj Stock thought that we had better suspend operations until the situation became more settled. However, the infantry were informed that the bridge was going through come 'hell or high water', and they would have to stem the tide of the enemy attack.

By 0300 hrs the enemy had infiltrated to within about 200 yds of the site and Spr McNevin of 6 Fd Pk Sqn, the cat operator, on the far side was finding it rather warm. However, after the first fusillade of small arms fire he settled down and really did a grand job.

The big thing that was worrying the authorities now was whether or not the SP would break through again as on the previous night.

At 0400 hrs it was getting light and it was suddenly noticed that there were no rollers to launch the bridge onto the far side. There was still about another hour's construction to be done before launching. Also at this time the SP began firing down the road and things began to get really hot. SSM Sargent volunteered to take a jeep down the road and collect the rollers at the marshalling area. Nobody thought that he would get through as the shells from the 88 were flying straight up the road, knocking down trees and the odd vehicle and bridging lorry that happened to be in the way. Also at this time the 'minnies' were falling pretty thick.

Luckily, the dozer work on the far side was now completed. Also, fortunately, our bridge was offset slightly from the centreline of the civilian bridge otherwise the SP would have scored several direct hits.

By now the boys were really pitching in with a will, the hotter the fire the harder they worked. Too much cannot be said for the behaviour and leadership of such men as SSM Sargent, Sgt Durham, Sgt Joudrey, L/Sgt Eddy, Cpl Bond, Sgt Burlton and Cpl Ness. Sgt Burlton had a particularly tough job as he was IC Advance Party work on the far side.

At 0445 hrs the SSM returned, much to everybody's relief. The bridge was almost ready for launching. As soon as the rollers were installed on the far side, the armoured cat was put in position and Lt Pyke coolly launched the bridge into position at 0530 hrs.

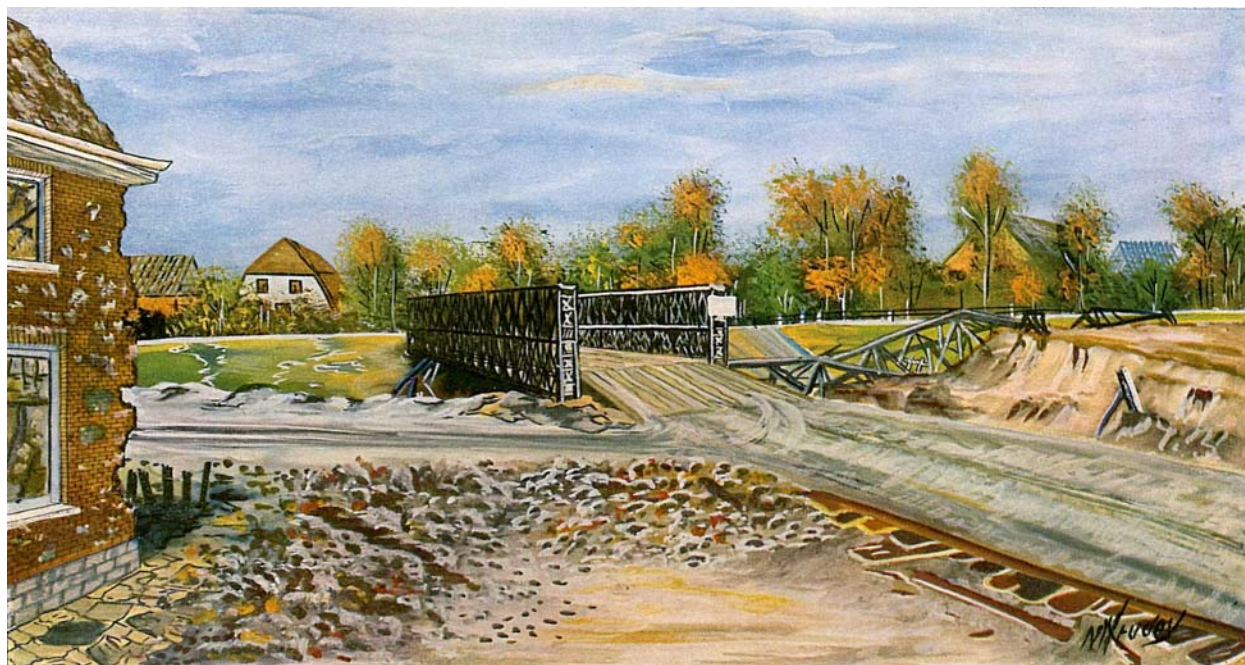
Jacking down now commenced and about this time two more SPs commenced firing cross fire. The house alongside the bridge was hit several time, but although the infantry suffered casualties no sappers were hit.

Lt Cole, who had been taking a terrible pounding all night from mortars, now began to be beaten up by 88s. However, he now got a call to send down the two ramp lorries. Only one lorry reached the site, the driver ditched the other trying to dodge 88s.

Jacking down was completed and a ramp was improvised for the near side. Now all was ready for the tanks to cross. It looked as though the bridge would be knocked out before any tanks had a chance to cross, and everybody had their thumbs crossed. The time was now 0700 hrs and the visibility was getting clearer.

The first troop of tanks rumbled down the road at 0800 hrs, there had been an unforgivable delay of one hour, during which time the bridge could quite easily have been knocked out. As each tank crossed the bridge an 88 from the right flank opened up and there were several narrow misses. The seventh tank to cross was hit in the tail, but luckily it did not start to burn until about 200 yds up the road.

The only fatal casualty 9 Fd Sqn suffered was that afternoon, when Cpl Duruisseau, MM, was killed by a shell while working on the bridge approaches.



Algonquin Bridge

On the night of 19-20 April, the bridge was hit by a shell, but it was repaired by 2 Troop in record time. After 'Algonquin Bridge', a 130' DD Bailey, was opened 9 Fd Sqn took over all maintenance south of the canal and 8 Fd Sqn took the lead again. Fighting was very bitter and shell fire heavy over the whole area. 1 Troop of 8 Fd Sqn was strafed by a rocket firing typhoons while supporting an advance eastwards by the L.S.R.s. It was not until 25 April that 8 Fd Sqn was able to cross 'Algonquin Bridge' and harbour on the north side of the canal. About this time Maj McManus of 6 Fd Pk Sqn left for a new command being replaced by Maj C.F. Cameron and Maj Turner and Capt Rochester arrived to take over 8 Fd Sqn.

The Division was advancing towards BAD ZWISHENAHN on at least three routes, one up the main road and with flanking force to the east and west. The weather was horrible, the roads studded with mines and craters and the ground littered with German dead. The engineers were hopelessly swamped with work. 9 Fd Sqn crossed to lend a hand shortly after 8 Fd Sqn. 1 Troop had a bad time with the first crater they encountered. A grillage lorry was shot full of holes and destroyed and they took four prisoners on the site. Spr McDonald was wounded.

On 1 May the success of the left flanking force was largely responsible for the capitulation of BAD ZWISHENAHN. This had been a very costly advance for 8 Fd Sqn who lost one officer and four ORs wounded and two ORs killed. Lt Taylor with one section supporting a small

armoured column when enemy SPs opened up with both A.P. and H.E. His Humber received a direct hit wounding Lt Taylor in the head and killing his driver Spr Esmond. After the fall of BAD ZWISHENAHN, 9 Fd Sqn supported an advance to the north and west and 8 Fd Sqn to the east and northeast. Lt Hodgekinson and 2 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn opened a road west to APEN in support of the 12th Manitoba Dragoons¹⁸. There they found the roads so badly cratered that it was impossible to advance further along the route. 8 Fd Sqn opened up the road to OLDENBURG and cleared a bypass around on the west side. About this time rumours of unconditional surrender became rampant and work in the rain and intense shellfire was unpleasant indeed. Both Sgt Durham and L/Sgt Reichert with 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn were highly commended by the COs of the Armoured Car Regiments. On 5 May word was broadcast by the B.B.C. of the unconditional surrender of all enemy forces in Northwest Europe. That night after having heard the news Lt Pyke and L/Sgt Reichert with 1 Troop of 9 Fd Sqn worked all night long in the rain and under heavy shell fire to open a road northeast towards VAREL.

The end of the war, unfortunately, had very little effect on the sapper's life. Things were a little improved by the absence of mortars and shells but the roads were an indescribable mass of mud, craters and blown bridges. Yet they had to be opened to make possible the movement of our own troops and facilitate the execution of surrender orders. So many Bailey bridges were built that it would impractical to attempt to describe them all here. It will suffice to say, that in one 30 day period, over 30 Baileys were erected. The 4 Div Engrs were absolutely swamped with work. There was more work done north of the KUSTEN CANAL than on the entire stretch up to it from the RHINE RIVER.

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities, Divisional HQ moved to RASTEDE, 8 Fd Sqn back to BAD ZWISCHENAHN, 9 Fd Sqn near VAREL and 6 Fd Pk Sqn to LEHMDEN. Here they continued to fix roads and erect more bridges. Minefield maps of the area were obtained from the Germans and 8 and 9 Fd Sqns set about checking and clearing each entry. The road to WILHELMSHAVEN was opened and maintained. The non-fraternization order was of course in force then and was carried out faithfully during the day, however at night – well you can't say because you can't see very well at night. The German girls (you've never seen a blonde until you go to Germany) generally speaking did everything they could to aggravate the situation. A platoon of German Wrens near WILHELMSHAVEN marched down to the ocean, stripped off their clothing and sunbathed nude in front of a group of Canadian soldiers.

On 24 May the Squadrons ran off a well organized tabloid sports meet at the BAD ZWICHENAHN airfield, 9 Fd Sqn taking most of the honours. On 26 May the Division packed up and moved back to HOLLAND. HQ camped at NIJVERDAL and the Squadrons in the

¹⁸ The Corps-level Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment of 2 Cdn Corps

RAALTE area, for the most part in billets. 4 CAB came by way of FRIESOYTHE which was nearly all on the road in the form of rubble. One enterprising inhabitant had built a small lean-to shelter on the ruins of his house. When he saw the tanks coming down the road on the way back he didn't wait for the Canadians, he knocked the shelter down himself.

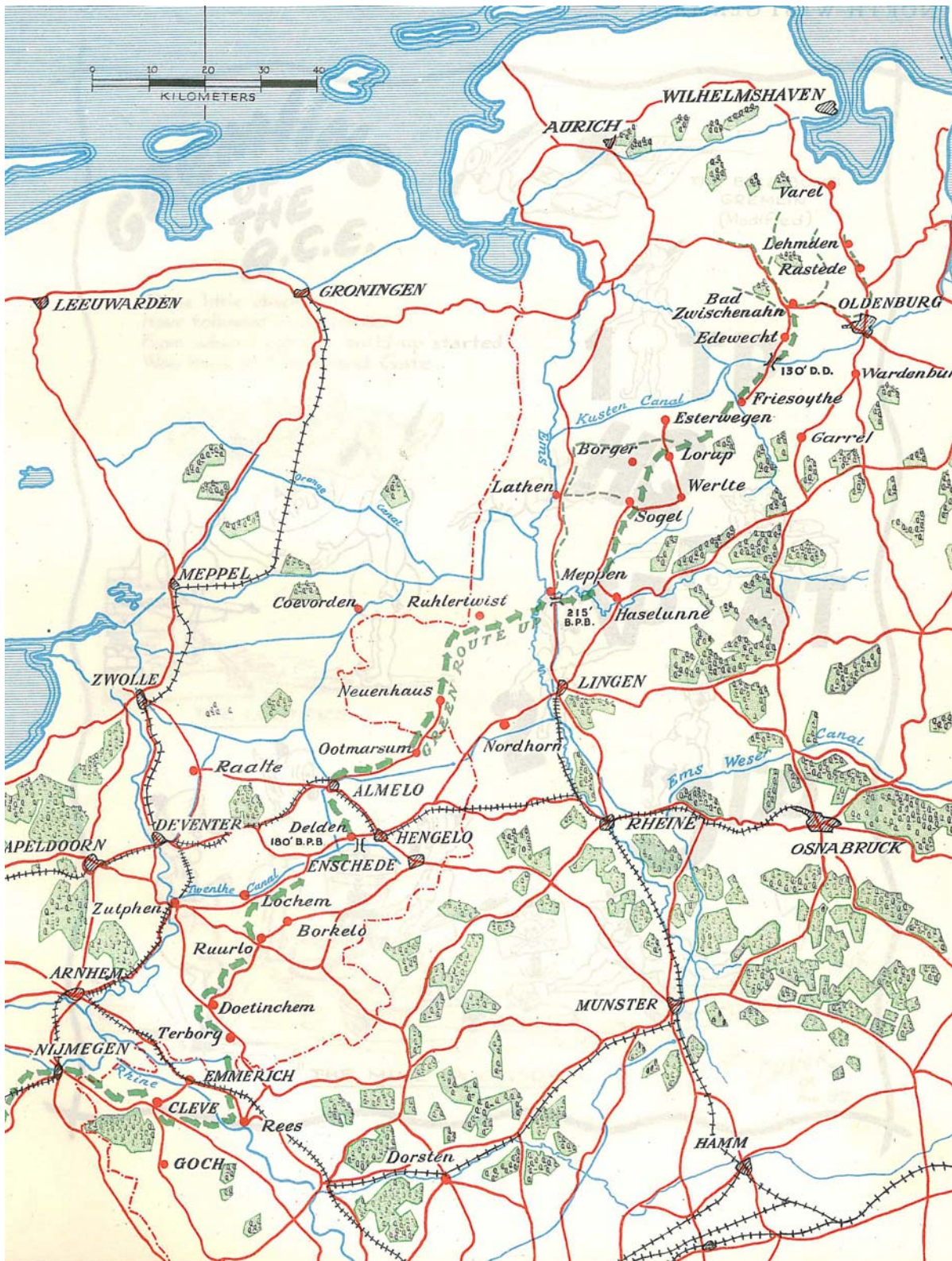
At the end of May, Division HQ moved to ALMELO leaving 'I' Branch RCE with the Squadrons in RAALTE. Officer posting during the month were Capt Kayes (Adj) to OC 6 Fd Coy, Lt Livingstone (FE-1) to Adj, Lt Rollefson to IORE and Lt Cole to FE-2.

Thus ended the operational career of 4 Div Engrs. They had travelled 600 miles and passed through part of FRANCE, BELGIUM, HOLLAND and GERMANY. Over 100 Bailey bridges were erected which if placed end to end would be approximately 6,000 feet long and weigh about 1,300 tons. In the erection of these bridges practically every speed record for construction had been captured. Thousands of mines of all types were lifted and hundreds of large aerial bombs and sea mines of different types. In addition every conceivable form of road block often in great quantity was encountered and successfully dealt with.

6 Fd Pk Sqn has seldom been mentioned, the reason being that in each important operation, their task was substantially the same. That is, supplying 8 and 9 Fd Sqns as well as all other units of the Division with every kind of engineer material necessary. This includes both military and local resources. A few of the items produced by 6 Fd Pk Sqn and delivered are 56,800 signs of all sizes and shapes, 16,300 barber poles or lane markers, 1,221 crosses, 4,000 drift pins and 8,000 timber dogs. In addition thousands of tons of innumerable other stores were hauled from Corps dumps or requisitioned from civilians. Their skilled workers had to operate many times under the most adverse of conditions.

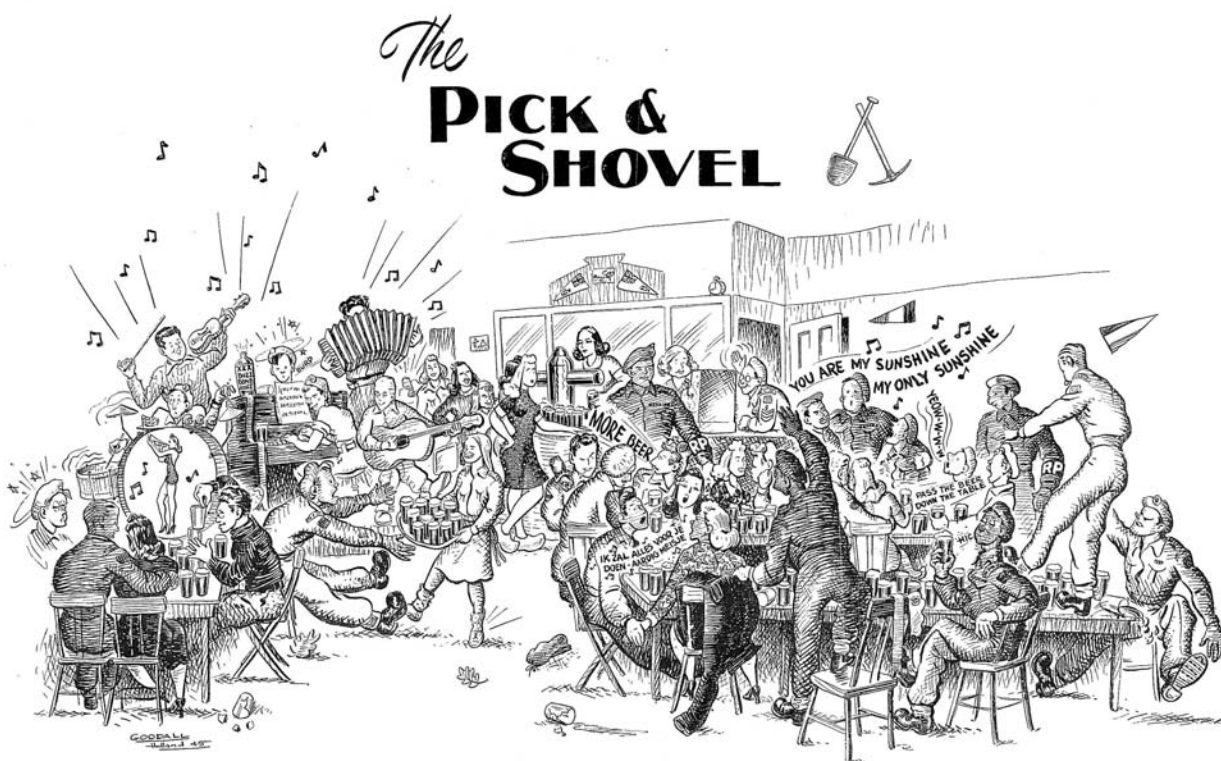
It may well be pointed out here that armoured divisions have only two field squadrons whereas infantry divisions have three field companies. Armoured divisions also carry twice the number of class 40 loads.

Map of Northwest Germany



Concentration in Holland awaiting Repatriation

Shortly after their arrival in RAALTE the engineers were given a warm welcome by the local inhabitants. The brass band made the rounds and the Burgomaster addressed troops and civilians together. The first problem was the organization of a recreational centre, so the CRE appointed a representative committee headed by Maj Cameron. The combined picture house and dance hall and an adjoining cafe were requisitioned and an annex added to provide extra space for dancing. The cafe was renovated by unit craftsmen and an outdoor beer garden provided. In order to serve hamburgers it was of course necessary to have cattle so SSM Dyson (naturally) was chosen to provide a heard. His methods of requisitioning are still a matter of some uncertainty, and since at the time of writing he is on the way to Canada, it will suffice to say that he provided about 27 choice German cows. The canteen was then opened and offered hamburgers, cakes, coffee and Belgian beers to the engineers and any other 4th Divvers who happened to come. After a few service difficulties were overcome, the PICK & SHOVEL, later changed to the MERRY SAPPERS TAVERN, ran smoothly under the efficient management of Lt Rae and Supervisor Elliot of the Auxiliary Services. Dances were held twice a week at which there was no shortage of female partners.



About 1 June, 6 Fd Pk Sqn moved from several miles east of RAALTE to the quiet village of LEMELERVELD and there were joined by HQ RCE. 8 and 9 Fd Sqns remained in requisitioned schools and cafés in RAALTE.

Word was then received that an RCE regatta consisting of rafting, rowing, storm boat racing and swimming contests was to be held at NIJMEGEN towards the end of June. The CRE then appointed a regatta committee consisting of Maj Leggat as I/C, Lt Rollefson as whip and a representative from each Squadron to prepare 4 Div Engrs entries. The required equipment was brought to a site chosen on the IJSSEL RIVER at WIJHE by 6 Fd Pk Sqn who set up a dump with maintenance party. Each Squadron spent several days training teams following which a preliminary Division Regatta was run off. From the results the best team for each event was chosen and sent to the lake at NIJMEGEN to train for a week on the actual courses. 6 Fd Pk Sqn had the jeep ferrying team with class 5 raft, 8 Fd Sqn had the F.B.E. rowing race and 9 Fd Sqn the class 9 raft, pontoon rowing and assault boat paddling races. A composite crew from 6 Fd Pk Sqn and 9 Fd Sqn under L/Sgt Cox took on the storm boat, while all Squadrons entered the swimming and jousting contests and the hurry scurry recce boat races.

In spite of the fact that watermanship is not an armoured engineers first responsibility, 4 Cdn Div's team scored seven entries in the semi-finals on 28 June against fifteen formations from the five Divisions and Corps and Army troops.

On 29 June the finals were run off before a large audience including Dutch civilians. 3 Bn RCE¹⁹ had erected reviewing stands, decorated everything with flags and RCE colours and laid out the courses. Col Birmingham headed the Regatta Committee. An RCE Band played while the events were run off with speed and precision. However bad luck marred the limited success 4 Div expected, since timings in the semi-finals were extremely good.

The pride and joy of the team was L/Sgt Cox's storm boat crew who had won their heat in the semi-finals. A bad start put them in the wake of the leading craft and their only consolation was an evil satisfaction in driving over the top of 5 Cdn Armd Div's boat which had crossed their bows. In spite of this L/Sgt Cox placed third in the race. 4 Div did not exactly cover themselves with glory by placing halfway down the list but the main objective had been attained, everyone had a good time.

The beginning of July saw the Squadrons well established in HOLLAND and reconciled to the fact that nothing could be done but wait and hope for a speedy return home. Most of our CEF volunteers of whom there were many, were called up and proceeded to England. Leave vacancies doubled so everyone had ample opportunity to get away from it all. Besides this all Squadrons frequently sent sightseeing parties to ROTTERDAM, AMSTERDAM and to VIMY RIDGE. Many of these went under the official title of "Educational Tours" but in most cases our

¹⁹ Formerly 19 Fd Coy, the sister unit to 8 and 9 Fd Coys in 4 Cdn Inf Div.

Dutch hosts were the ones who received the education. In addition to these excursions, vocational training was provided by all Squadrons on a scale as extensive as possible. Subjects included mathematics, carpentry and other trades and motor mechanics. 6 Fd Pk Sqn was severely cramped however by the continuous demand for material from all units of the Division. Over 100 loads were brought from Germany. Weapons, wireless sets and innumerable items of military equipment had to be crated and shipped before units could disband. For this 6 Fd Pk Sqn made hundreds of boxes as well as issuing hundreds of thousands of board feet of timber.

In addition to the above program, 4 Div Engrs embarked on an extensive canal clearance task, removed the tangled wreckage of dozens of demolished bridges from the TWENTHE, OVERIJSEL and SCHIPBEEK CANALS and the ZIJKANAAL. 6 Fd Pk Sqn supplied many extra bulldozers for this work and the removal of a number of road blocks in the area. They also built roads for the L & W Regt and the RCASC petrol point. Throughout this period water points at ALMELO and NIJVERDAL were maintained.

8 Fd Sqn sent sixty tradesman to NIJMEGEN to construct huts for the repatriation camp being organized there. While on this task L/Cpl Hanke was detached to supervise a party of Germans in mine clearance. He stepped on a Schumine losing a leg and died from the effects after serving through the whole Northwest Europe campaign.

Lt Reynolds took his Troop from 8 Fd Sqn to ANTWERP where they erected a 40' SS Bailey for the exhibition of Allied and enemy military equipment. He was very unhappy on returning and it was found that he also contributed several thousand cigarettes, several pistols and all his personal gear to the exhibition. 9 Fd Sqn erected a huge dance floor in RIJSSEN park for the benefit of all 4 Div units and had a terrible struggle putting a canvas roof on it. The first rain brought the immense roof crashing down whereupon a small one was put up with more success. A 4 Div officer's dance subsequently held was a great success. In September 9 Fd Sqn commenced driving piles for an icebreaker for the 2 Bn RCE bridge at ZWOLLE and were involved in this task for some time.

During the month of August rumours were rampant of a move to the UTRECHT area and everyone was enthusiastic since 1 Cdn Inf Div had reported it as the next thing to the Garden of Eden. Many recce parties were sent and each time the area was changed, much to everyone's exasperation. However by 1 October everything had been straightened out and HQ RCE, 6 Fd Pk Sqn and 8 Fd Sqn were comfortably settled in BILTHOVEN, a few kilometres from UTRECHT. 9 Fd Sqn moved to ZWELLE with the intention of rejoining those in BILTHOVEN when the icebreaker job was completed. 8 Fd Sqn embarked on an extensive accommodation improvement plan and had most of their tradesmen busy renovating houses for many units of the Division. At DE BILT a new recreational centre was taken over from 2 Cdn Inf Div which was

much larger and more luxurious than that in RAALTE. In addition to this numerous clubs and cafés for both officers and ORs were available only a few kilometres distant in UTRECHT and HILVERSUM.

In these pleasant surroundings, those officers and men of the formation who still remained, awaited their chance to board ship for Canada and return to a peaceful civilian life. As repatriation draft after draft reduced the strength of the old originals, incoming drafts from other units disbanding, took their place until at the present date 4 Div Engrs, as the body that performed their operational history, has ceased to exist.

In the words of our Chief Engineer, Brig G. Walsh, ‘There are no bad troops, there are only bad officers’. He was right, there are no bad troops, but there are better ones – we had them!

Postscript

On 9 December, 8 and 9 Fd Sqns and 6 Fd Pk Sqn of 4 Div started on the long road home, thus completing the homeward move of RCE units out of Northwest Europe. HQ RCE closed on 27 December along with Div HQ. The Squadrons spent Christmas 1945 in England and on 9 January left for Canada, reaching New York on the 14th. 8 Fd Sqn was disbanded in Toronto, 9 Fd Sqn in Regina and 6 Fd Pk Sqn in Lethbridge in March 1946²⁰. On their last parades there were few present that had been with the units on VE Day. Draft after repatriation draft had reduced the numbers of the originals, their places begin taken by other sappers whose home areas were appropriate to the various Squadron designations.

²⁰ General Order 111, 8 May 1946.

Annex A – Honour Roll

6th Field Park Squadron, RCE, C.A.S.F.

Spr Laughlin, A.I.Road Accident.....Vught, Holland
Spr Marchmont, C.H.W.Shellfire.....Seine River, France
Spr Rudd, T.W.Shellfire.....Caprique, Belgium

8th Field Squadron, RCE, C.A.S.F.

Capt Greenhalgh T.F.Small ArmsSogel, Germany
Lt Jennings, B.P.Shellfire.....Rouvres, France
Lt Zimmerman, F.N.Small ArmsSogel, Germany
L/Sgt Alexander MM, A.G.Shellfire.....South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Christenson, K.Small ArmsMoerkerke, Belgium
Spr Cluff, W.J.Shellfire.....South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Culbertson, J.Small ArmsSouth of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Dunlop, G.R.Road Accident.....Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
Spr Esmond, B.Shellfire.....Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Feldman, L.Small ArmsSogel, Germany
SQMS Forster, F.Bomb.....Mondeville, France
Spr Hanson, N.C.Shellfire.....Four, France
Spr Johnston, C.MineSouth of Wildert, Belgium
Cpl Lewis, R.S.Shellfire.....Near Sassy, France
L/Cpl Livingstone, D.I.MineBaardwijk, Holland
Spr Mills, C.R.Shellfire.....Hochwald Forest, Germany
L/Cpl MacDonald, M.A.MineNoordeind, Holland
L/Sgt MacLeod, D.H.Shellfire.....St. Sylvain, France
Spr McCaw, L.R.MineNoordeind, Holland
Spr Pettit, H.C.Shellfire.....Steenbergen, Holland
Spr Rankin, H.D.Small ArmsSogel, Germany
Spr Robertson, D.B.Shellfire.....St. Sylvain, France
Spr Serada, J.Small ArmsSogel, Germany
Spr Trithart, N.W.MineNoordeind, Holland

Total – 24

9th Field Squadron, RCE, C.A.S.F.

Spr Anderson, S.B.....	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Brown, H.E.....	Mine	Waalwijk, Holland
L/Cpl Cayford, M.....	Small Arms	Moerkerke, Belgium
Spr Davidson, I.J.....	Road Accident.....	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
Spr Duncan, A.....	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Cpl Duruisseau, M.	Shellfire.....	Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr Feir, W.I.	Shellfire.....	Seine River, France
L/Cpl Haigh, J.H.	Mine	Camp de Brasschaet, Belgium
Spr Halderson, B.....	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Janke, A.	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Kavanaugh, P.J.....	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Lainez, A.	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Larson, C.J.....	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
L/Sgt Neil, R.J.	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Nilson, T.A.	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Partridge, H.S.	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Richards, W.F.....	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Cpl Wannaker, W.J.	Booby Trap	Trun, France
Spr Weatherall, W.J.	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France
Spr Westhaver, R.J.....	Shellfire.....	Grainville Langanerie, France

Total – 20

Annex B – Honours and Awards

Distinguished Service Order

Lt-Col Jones, J.R.B. ,..... CRE
Maj Allan, M.H.C.W. 8 Fd Sqn

Order of the British Empire (Officer)

Lt-Col Jones, J.R.B. ,..... CRE

Military Cross

Maj Leggat, W.S. 9 Fd Sqn
Maj Sharon, W.F. 9 Fd Sqn
Capt Beavan, A.P. 9 Fd Sqn
Lt Ditchburn, H.F. 8 Fd Sqn
Lt McAdam, A.B. 8 Fd Sqn
Lt Rollefson, M.O. 9 Fd Sqn
Lt Ward, J.L. 8 Fd Sqn

Order of the British Empire (Member)

SSM Dyson, S. 6 Fd Pk Sqn

Military Medal

Sgt Burlton, A.V. 9 Fd Sqn
Sgt Durham, M.G. 9 Fd Sqn
Sgt McPhail, P. 8 Fd Sqn
Sgt Shaw, C. 8 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Alexander, A.G. 8 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Dunkeld, R.H. 9 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Harris, G. 9 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Schell, H. 9 Fd Sqn
Cpl Durand, G.A. 8 Fd Sqn
Cpl Duruisseau, M. 9 Fd Sqn
Spr Grieve, W.K. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
Spr Kruger, C.H. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
Spr Squires, F.R. 9 Fd Sqn

Mention in Dispatches

Lt-Col Jones, J.R.B. ,..... CRE
Maj Leggat, W.S. 9 Fd Sqn
SSM Sargent, I. 9 Fd Sqn
Sgt Dunkeld, R.H. 9 Fd Sqn
Sgt Joudrey, C.W. 9 Fd Sqn
Sgt MacQuarrie, D.M. 9 Fd Sqn
Sgt McIntosh, J. 8 Fd Sqn
Sgt Wark, A.N. 9 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Eddy, J.J. 9 Fd Sqn

L/Sgt Stewart, P. 8 Fd Sqn
Cpl Bond, R.W. 9 Fd Sqn
L/Cpl Edwards, J.J. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
L/Cpl Shedden, J. 8 Fd Sqn
Pte Decoste, L. 9 Fd Sqn
Spr Finch, R.E. 9 Fd Sqn
Spr Perrin, H.E. 9 Fd Sqn
Spr Patray, T.H.D. 8 Fd Sqn
Spr Ring, P. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
Spr Scott, R.W. 8 Fd Sqn

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SQMS Cameron, E.S. 9 Fd Sqn
SQMS Hoyt, J.W. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
Sgt Grant, L.M. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
L/Sgt Coutts, M.W. 8 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Eddy, J.J. 9 Fd Sqn
L/Sgt Stewart, P. 8 Fd Sqn
Cpl Cliffe, R.J. 9 Fd Sqn
Cpl Burns, H.E. 8 Fd Sqn
Cpl Gom, D.M. 9 Fd Sqn
Cpl MacNeil, F.J. 9 Fd Sqn
Spr Betts, J.O. 8 Fd Sqn
Spr Boudreau, L.P. 8 Fd Sqn
Spr Demers, D.D. 9 Fd Sqn
Pte Durfy, R.A. 9 Fd Sqn

FOREIGN AWARDS

French

Croix de Guerre avec Etoile de Bronze

Spr N.J. Hore 6 Fd Pk Sqn

Belgian

Croix de Guerre (1940) avec Palme

Lt Livingstone, R.D. 6 Fd Pk Sqn
Lt Pyke, R.B.W. 9 Fd Sqn

Ordre de Léopold II avec Palme (Chevalier)

Lt Livingstone, R.D. 6 Fd Pk Sqn

Annex C – Personnel Who Were Wounded in Action

6th Field Park Squadron, RCE, C.A.S.F.

Spr Arbour, N.W.	Shellfire	Oostcamp, Belgium
Spr Gould, G.S.	Shellfire	Seine River, France
Spr Martin, T.A.	Mortar	Oostcamp, Belgium
Spr Punkari, A.J.	Mine	Caen, France
Spr Wentzell, C.I.	Small Arms	Southwest of Almelo, Holland

8th Field Squadron, RCE, C.A.S.F.

Maj Allan, M.H.C.W.	Small Arms	Sogel, Germany
Lt Baker, H.C.	Bazooka	Near Sonsbeck, Germany
Lt Newcombe, E.C.	Mine	South of Oldenburg, Germany
Lt Taylor, W.H.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Lt Ward, J.L.	Mine	Wildert, Belgium
Lt Zimmerman, F.N.	Small Arms	Sogel, Germany
Spr Artindale, H.R.	Mine	North of Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr Barker, C.A.	Shellfire	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Batryn, J.	Shellfire	Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr Belisle, J.A.	Shellfire	Hochwald Forest, Germany
Spr Bernard, W.J.	Shellfire	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Spr Bertrand, A.	Shellfire	Hochwald Forest, Germany
Spr Bishop, F.E.	Mine	Boxtel, Holland
Cpl Bolduc, J.M.	Shellfire	Four, France
Spr Boudreau, L.D.	Mine	North of Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr Boudreau, L.P.	Mine	Baardwijk, Holland
Spr Bradley, E.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Cpl Buchanan, A.	Mine	Wildert, Holland
Spr Bunce, L.A.H.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Cpl Cameron, J.F.	Small Arms	Near Labbeck, Germany
Spr Caughey, J.W.	Mine	Maas River, Holland
Spr Chester, J.	Shellfire	Noordeind, Holland
Spr Cliffe, J.H.	Shellfire	Steenbergen, Holland
Spr Cluff, W.J.	Shellfire	South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Clutchey, F.	Mine	South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Cpl Concordia, F.	Shellfire	Noordeind, Holland

Spr Cooper, J.F.	Shellfire	Hochwald Forest, Germany
Spr Cran, J.C.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Crossman, S.W.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Crowe, R.G.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Debock, M.E.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Dube, C.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Duncan, J.	Shellfire	South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Cpl Durand, G.A.	Mine	Noordeind, Holland
L/Sgt Ell, L.	Shellfire	Wouwsche Hil, Holland
Spr Ellerton, G.G.	Shellfire	Noordeind, Holland
Spr Ellis, R.C.	Shellfire	Sonsbeck, Germany
Spr Elmer, N.J.	Small Arms	Sogel, Germany
Spr Fulham, A.L.	Shellfire	Wildert, Belgium
Spr Garside, T.H.	Shellfire	Herrouville, France
Spr Gillis, H.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Girardin, N.A.	Shellfire	North of Capryche, Belgium
Spr Glavin, F.J.	Shellfire	Wouwsche Nil, Holland
Spr Glenn, G.W.	Shellfire	Steenbergen, Holland
Spr Griswold, F.W.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
Spr Hall, H.H.	Mine	Steenbergen, Holland
L/Cpl Hampton, W.J.	Mine	Moerhuizen, Holland
Spr Hancock, E.R.	Small Arms	Sogel, Germany
Spr Hanson, H.E.	Shellfire	Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr Harris, J.F.	Shellfire	Noordeind, Holland
L/Cpl Highmoor, E.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Hingley, J.T.	Mine	Near Le Grand-Mesnil, France
Spr Johnston, C.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
L/Sgt Johnston, P.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
L/Cpl Kinch, E.J.	Shellfire	Hochwald Forest, Germany
L/Cpl Kirby, F.C.W.	Bombing	Mondeville, France
Spr Langford, E.C.	Shellfire	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Levesque, I.J.	Shellfire	North of Kusten Canal, Germany
L/Sgt Manning, W.L.	Mine	Near Bergen op Zoom, Holland
Spr Masiowski, S.C.	Shellfire	Moerstraten, Holland
Spr Matyas, W.A.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
Spr Maye, W.T.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Milbourne, G.G.	Bombing	Gaumesnil, France
Spr Mullen, G.M.J.	Shellfire	Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr MacDonald, H.E.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland

Spr MacNab, R.J.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr McCann, R.P.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
Spr McCaw, L.R.	Mine	Strooibrug, Belgium
Sgt McIntosh, J.	Shellfire	Strooibrug, Belgium
Spr McKinnon, P.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Nadon, J.E.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Neely, H.R.	Mine	Near Le Grand-Mesnil, France
Sgt Nicol, C.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
Spr Noble, J.	Shellfire	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Panchyshyn, W.	Shellfire	South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Penrose, E.W.	Shellfire	Moerhuizen, Belgium
Spr Pothier, L.J.	Shellfire	South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
Spr Pressley, J.R.	Bazooka	Near Sonsbeck, Germany
Spr Regnier, A.	Shellfire	South of Bad Zwischenahn, Germany
L/Sgt Robson, T.	Bombing	Mondeville, France
Spr Ross, A.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Scott, R.W.	Mine	Hochwald Forest, Germany
Spr Sequin, J.R.	Shellfire	St. Sylvain, France
Spr Serada, J.	Shellfire	Strooibrug, Belgium
L/Cpl Smith, C.R.	Mine	Near Le Grand-Mesnil, France
L/Cpl Steele, R.A.	Shellfire	Kusten Canal, Germany
Cpl Stewart, P.	Mine	Noordeind, Holland
Spr Studer, W.C.	Mine	Maas River, Holland
L/Cpl Taylor, W.H.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Tibble, K.R.	Shellfire	Strooibrug, Holland
Spr Topolnicki, J.	Shellfire	Mondeville, France
Spr Watson, H.L.	Shellfire	Near S'Hertogenbosch, Holland
Spr Wilks, F.T.	Mine	Maas River, Holland
Cpl Williams, O.C.	Mine	Noordeind, Holland
Spr Wolfe, W.N.	Mine	Twenthe Canal, Holland
Spr Wurst, I.	Mine	Hochwald Forest, Germany

Total - 96

9th Field Squadron, RCE, C.A.S.F.

Maj Henselwood, E.W.	Mortar	Damblainville, France
Capt Glazie, J.A.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Lt Mateer, J.D.	Mine	Sas Van Gent, Holland
Lt Pike, R.B.W.....	Shellfire.....	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Lt Reynolds, J.W.	Small Arms	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
Lt Sheppard, A.F.	Shellfire.....	Criqueboeuf, France
Lt Whittier, A.C.	Small Arms	Veen, Germany
Spr Allingham, O.C.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr Anderson, A.....	Mortar	Caen, France
Spr Anderson, E.A.	Mortar	Oostcamp, Belgium
Cpl Andrews, P.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr Aspinall, J.....	Mortar	Leopold Canal, Belgium
Spr Baird, D.O.	Mortar	Bretteville Le Rabet, France
Spr Barkhouse, C.J.....	Mortar	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Billard, F.S.	Mortar	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
Spr Blais, F.....	Mortar	Kusten Canal, Germany
L/Cpl Blunt, W.L.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr Bolt, D.E.....	Mine	Camp De Brasschaet, Belgium
Spr Bullock, A.W.....	Shellfire.....	Udem, Germany
Spr Campbell, H.J.....	Mine	Camp De Brasschaet, Belgium
Cpl Carson, B.....	Small Arms	Philippine, Holland
Spr Chevie, H.C.....		Shooting Accident
Cpl Cannon, J.E.	Mortar	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Spr Conway, J.B.	Bombing.....	Cintheaux, France
Spr Constley, N.D.....	Mortar	Criqueboeuf, France
L/Cpl Craig, E.P.....	Mortar	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Cpl Faries, G.G.	Mine	Isabella, Holland
Spr Fee, A.	Mortar	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
L/Cpl Forsythe, A.J.....	Small Arms	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Gagnon, R.F.	Mine	Trun, France
Cpl Gallup, R.I.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr Glass, R.A.....	Road Accident.....	Ghent, Belgium
Spr Gray, L.M.....	Mine	Trun, France
Spr Hamilton, L.A.....	Small Arms	Maele, Belgium
Spr Harrison, J.E.....	Shellfire.....	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Spr Hower, T.F.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr Hyduk, M.....	Mine	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland

Spr Jebson, G.W.	Mortar	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Cpl Johnson, H.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
L/Cpl Johnston, R.C.	Shellfire	Grainville Langanerie, France
L/Cpl Kearns, M.	Small Arms	Trun, France
Spr Kusch, C.H.	Mortar	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Lang, A.B.	Shellfire	Cormelles, France
Spr Laronde, A.	Mine	Kusten Canal, Germany
Spr Lawlor, J.F.	Mine	Huijbergen, Holland
Spr Livesey, H.	Mortar	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Livingstone, J.E.	Mortar	Criqueboeuf, France
Spr Lyons, E.L.	Mine	Camp De Brasschaet, Belgium
Cpl Mallete, L.J.	Mortar	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Spr Mannion, V.L.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr Massia, P.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
Spr MacEachern, D.W.	Shellfire	Cormelles, France
Spr MacGreggor, T.N.	Bombing.....	Cintheaux, France
Spr McCormick, A.J.	Shellfire	Cintheaux, France
Spr McEvoy, A.J.	Shellfire	Oostcamp, Belgium
Spr McInnes, B.R.	Mine	Steenbergen, Holland
Spr Nelson, L.G.	Bombing.....	Cintheaux, France
L/Cpl O'Connor, J.	Mortar	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Spr Patterson, W.	Mortar	Kusten Canal, Germany
Cpl Robins, J.J.	Small Arms	Oostcamp, Belgium
L/Sgt Saunders, H.C.	Mine	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
L/Sgt Schell, H.	Mortar	Kapellsche Veer, Holland
Spr Schwartz, W.D.	Mortar	Moerbrugge, Belgium
Spr Smith, C.R.	Mine	Near Le Grand-Mesnil, France
Spr Szobolics, W.D.	Buzz Bomb.....	Kaatsheuval, Holland
L/Sgt Tooley, R.H.	Flying Debris	Bergen Op Zoom, Holland
Spr Vatcher, G.A.	Shellfire	Oostcamp, Belgium
Spr Whittle, H.	Bazooka.....	Colombelles, France
Spr Wright, J.C.	Mine	Camp De Brasschaet, Belgium

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