

## PREFACE

In the late 1990s I began organising annual family trips to Normandy following in the footsteps of my grandfather, a sergeant in the 2nd Battalion the Lincolnshire Regiment. It was during one of these visits in the summer of 2000, that we became lost in the sprawling metropolis that is now Herouville-St-Claire, tracing the battalion's movements in Operation Charnwood.



*My grandfather, Sgt Alf 'Docker' Richardson*

A one-way system directed us down narrow ancient streets with towering, thick, stone walls and dense shrubbery, creating a feeling of claustrophobia as the sound of the car reverberated off the aging stonework. As we edged cautiously around the blind corner, I

became aware of a familiar tune emanating from an ancient church on the town square, Union Flags and French Tricolours were flapping in the fresh breeze against a virginal, blue sky. A collection of people, some old, some young, some English, some French. All paying respect to those who had made the ultimate sacrifice in liberating a small hamlet in a place far from their home, some 56 years previously.

Hence began a voyage for me, which has taken me thousands of miles, to all corners of the UK. Many hours have been spent pawing over frayed, discoloured manuscripts that are showing their years. I've searched the Internet, emailed veterans, historians, and enthusiasts in Canada, America, Austria, and Germany.

Photos have been scanned, cropped, pasted and manipulated. During that time I have had the privilege of visiting and talking to men who, like my grandfather, lived through a time of horror, comradeship and self-sacrifice. To listen to the memories of these great men, who are now in the twilight of their lives, leaves an indelible impression.



***The late Major General Glyn Gilbert with the Author***

This brief account of the 'Forgotten Battle of Herouville,' which occurred over sixty years ago, in the bloody summer of 1944, is the accumulation of this journey. I hope that it amplifies the official history of these events, which took place so many years ago. Here, in Herouville and throughout the bloody campaigns of WWII, many young lives were brutally cut short so that future generations could live in a free and democratic society. Their sacrifice must never be forgotten.

## CHAPTER I

### Herouville Prior to Operation Charnwood

The inhabitants of Herouville, like all those in the area, were woken in the early hours of 6th June by the air raid sirens sounding from Caen. At 5.30 am, all heard a violent bombardment. The coast was turned into a smoke-filled nightmare by the allied air force and navy, ahead of the approaching landing craft.

During the bombardment, the inhabitants of Herouville sought refuge in their cellars, in trenches, in the cellars of the Bouvier manor house near the church, in old chapels, or in caves. From time to time they ventured out of their hiding places, either onto upper floors or outside the village.



***Bouvier Manor House, the cellars of which were full of refugees. It was built in 1683 and destroyed by an incendiary on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1944. The present house was built in 1954.***

During June there was fierce fighting in and around the village. The British forces were forced to retire, leaving heavy casualties.

Two wounded soldiers, one of whom was called Stanley Gilchrist, were found lying at the end of the road next to the priory in

Herouville. Their section had been ambushed in LeBisey and Stanley had had his femur smashed by shrapnel.

The Germans had loaded them onto an ammunition cart and paraded them through the streets of the village before abandoning them. The villagers took them to a hut behind the school where they were cared for by M. Voisin and M. Poulain. The Germans returned and took them prisoner on 8th June.



***The destruction in LeBisey wood***

The Germans were on the road, near the Belles Portes and in the village as well as in LeBisey. The Allies occupied Blainville. Herouville was in the battle zone.

Fighting was incessant, causing substantial damage, destroying windows and roofs and leaving many casualties. Craters left by the bombs were everywhere and all the crops were destroyed.

The inhabitants of Herouville suffered terribly. People were crammed into trenches, covering their heads as the bombs dropped. The wife of a farmer returning from milking the cows found her house destroyed and husband dead.

On the Caen-Breville road an explosion killed a young couple pushing a pram, but sparing the baby who was thrown clear in the pram. Mlle. Odette Poulet (later to be Mme. Forestier) left the

safety of her shelter to help the schoolmaster, M. Voisin, to account for and bury the dead.

Six people were killed on 6th June alone. The dead were hastily buried in makeshift boxes. Odette Poulet tried to visit her fiancé, who with his family was hiding in another shelter, when she stumbled across a trip wire. A German soldier jumped out and threatened her with his gun shouting that the wire was linked to a mine.

On 10th June, the Wehrmacht command ordered the evacuation of Herouville and the inhabitants were forced to gather their few belongings and leave. The villagers pushed carts, wheelbarrows, and prams heaped with their belongings. Some carried suitcases. A sad line of refugees slowly walked towards Caen, taking extra care along the canal bank where the Germans had laid landmines.

Most of the refugees from Herouville, together with thousands from Caen, found shelter in the Malherbe College. However, Odette Poulet and her family walked all the way to the Loire valley, averaging 15 miles per day.

Herouville was empty, wounded, and abandoned. Frightened animals were left to roam the fields, where many died from their wounds. From then on it is difficult to know what happened.

The Mayor's subsequent re-telling of the story gives an idea of what life was like:

*'From the 6th to the 14th of June, the village was the scene of violent fighting. Apart from the hamlets of Calix and Beauregard, which hadn't suffered as much, the rest of the commune and that of LeBisey were completely destroyed.*

*'Only two out of the 26 farms had kept their livestock, fifteen had been totally destroyed. All the others had lost all their livestock. Crops were lost, vegetable gardens had either been ransacked or devastated so that there were neither potatoes nor vegetables left. The houses had also been ransacked and no one had anything with which to cut wood. The water system had been badly affected, the town hall had lost its roof and the church was badly damaged.'*

Mme. Luce Triboulet set out on 22<sup>nd</sup> June to visit her daughter in Caen:

*‘At the château of Beauregard, we stopped to tie white handkerchiefs to the handlebars of the bicycles, and went on, pushing the bicycles now, because we thought there might be Germans in the park who would fire on the road.*

*‘Then we came to a shell hole in the road and an area where the telegraph posts and wires were down. And just after that, we had to remount and cycle fast because shells were passing overhead, though they burst on the other side of the canal.*

*‘And then we came to Herouville—completely evacuated, the houses ruined, with tattered curtains fluttering in the shattered windows. Rounding a corner, we saw some Germans in a lorry, but they paid us not the least attention.’*



***RAF Mitchell bombers of 98 Squadron attacking the Colombelles factory district. The Orne canal, running south, with Herouville to its right, clearly visible. 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1944 (IWM)***

## CHAPTER II

### The Battle of Herouville An Overview

The 2nd Battalion the Lincolnshire Regiment (hereafter 2 Lincolns) landed on D Day, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, at Hermanville on Sword Beach, as part of 9 Brigade 3 British Infantry Division. They spent a somewhat frustrating first month in Normandy. The rapid advance and quick capture of objectives (including Caen itself) did not materialise as planned.

#### June 1944

In early June the battalion saw some action near the coast but soon they had consolidated in the area of Le Mesnil. Although the Allied advance was held up, every single fighting soldier in the battalion had experience of the many fighting patrols undertaken by day and night. Cambes Wood, Le Mesnil and Galmanche will be names forever etched in the memories of all those who served there. Thus the battalion maintained an offensive spirit in difficult circumstances. This period came to an end in early July.

Operation Charnwood, the capture of Caen, was 2 Lincolns' first major action. It was fought on a three division front with 3 British Infantry Division (3 Div) on the left flank, advancing parallel to the River Orne. 185 Brigade (185 Bde) was part of 3 Div and it was on the far left flank of the attack. Its objectives were to take LeBisey, its wood, and the high ground beyond, which overlooked Caen itself.

However, it was necessary for 185 Bde to have protection on its left and open flank. For that purpose 2 Lincolns was placed under that brigade's command. It was given the task of advancing with the leading battalions, capture the village of Herouville, (mistakenly termed *Herouvillete* at the time), and exploit the territory beyond, thus leaving its own flank exposed to the River Orne and the Canal de Caen.

#### 6<sup>th</sup> July

On the 6th the battalion moved to an area south of Blainville in order to prepare for the attack on Herouville.

## **7<sup>th</sup> July**

On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, Lt Col Welby-Everard (the CO) received orders from Brigadier Eric Bols (185 Bde Comd) that the attack was scheduled for the 8<sup>th</sup>.

*It Was a Perfect Summers Day.*

The afternoon was spent by Company Commanders in reconnaissance as far south as the southern edge of the grounds of the Château at Beauregard, from where a good view of the ground over which they were to advance was obtained. This was also to be the battalion forming up place and at last light D Coy, under Maj Hunter, moved into position there to protect the start line.

The plan was for B Coy, under Maj Colvin, to take and clear the village of Herouville, and for A Coy, under Maj Burgess, and C Coy, under Maj Gilbert, to pass through and exploit along the river bank as far as the junction of the Canal de Caen and the River Orne.

The main attack on Caen was preceded by a terrific air bombardment that evening. It was witnessed with awe by the battalion at Blainville.

## **8<sup>th</sup> July**

The air bombardment was followed in the very early hours of the 8<sup>th</sup> by a tremendous artillery concentration on Le Bisey (including the 16 inch guns of HMS Rodney). The determined assault on Caen brought about its fall with comparative ease.

But it was on the left flank—in the narrow strip of ground between the river and the rising ground—that the bloodiest fighting was taking place. Here, 2 Lincolns, practically unsupported and scarcely remembered in the flush of victory elsewhere, was meeting stiff opposition and stubborn resistance. The task of looking after the flank while the major assault rolled on to its objective, a comparatively simple one in prospect, was proving the hardest engagement of the day.

The whole of 2 Lincolns' operation was carried out under the enemy's observation. Not only did it occupy the high ground east of the river, but the factory at Colombelles, with its tall chimneys, still stood and had been recognised since D Day as one of his main observation posts.

It is therefore not surprising that when the enemy had finally given up Herouville, 2 Lincolns should be subjected to heavy fire from enemy mortars and guns on the other side of the river. This added considerably to the battalion's list of casualties.

Twice during the day the enemy attempted, but failed, to regain lost ground by counter attacks, on both occasions using tanks.

### **9<sup>th</sup> July:**

By the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> A Coy had reached the river beyond Herouville and during the afternoon the battalion consolidated in that area, with patrols forward to the outskirts of Caen and between the river and the canal.



*Photo taken from a hilltop overlooking Caen (the factory district visible on the left) on the 8<sup>th</sup> July as the battle rages (IWM)*

*This chapter is based upon the official history of the Regiment, "The History of the Tenth Foot 1919-1950" by Major L .C. Gates MBE MC, late of the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment*

## 2 LINCOLNS' ORGANISATION AT THE TIME OF OPERATION CHARNWOOD

Battalion HQ:	CO 2ic Adj IO	Lt Col C E Welby-Everard Maj D R Wilson Capt W R Chambers Lt J Harrod
A Company:	OC 2ic	Maj Burgess <i>unknown—Capt Hart wounded 6th June</i>
B Company:	OC  2ic	Maj L H B Colvin <i>wounded, remained at duty</i> Capt J Boys
C Company:	OC 2ic	Maj G C A Gilbert Capt J N Ebbutt <i>wounded</i>
D Company:	OC 2ic	Maj R S Hunter <i>unknown</i>
S Company:	OC OC Carrier Pl 2ic Carrier Pl OC Mortar P OC A/Tk P 2ic A/Tk P Aslt Pnr Pl	Maj E E H G Dawson Capt D J Kidney <i>wounded</i> Lt J R Pawlett <i>wounded</i> Capt J C Roll <i>killed in action</i> Capt P G Cliffe <i>wounded</i> Lt J A Hunt Lt T Pogson
HQ Company:	OC Sig Ofr MT Ofr QM	Capt P H W Clarke Lt P Robinson Lt H A N Mander Capt B O Kime
Attached:	MO Padre	Capt A W Little Capt Rev R G A Strutt

## CHAPTER III

### The Battle of Herouville PM 7<sup>th</sup> July 1944

Lt Col Welby-Everard held an O Group in the afternoon at Château Beauregard. H hour was set at 04.30 hrs on the 8<sup>th</sup>, when B Coy would cross the start line and assault the village of Herouville. A Coy and C Coy would then pass through and exploit along the riverbank.

From the roof of the château it was very clear that the enemy could watch their every move from the tall chimneys of Colombelles and the high ground to the east. They were left with no illusions—they would have a fight on their hands.

Prior to the attack, Maj Colvin organised a reconnaissance patrol to find the layout of the land. This patrol was commanded by Lt Canner, 10 Pl Comd.

Pte John Keenan recalls:



*'I was Lt Canner's batman. We moved to a château near Herouville, where the weather was quite beautiful. Whilst walking through the château grounds I came across five or six airborne graves, which were lying near a ditch. They must have been an*

*isolated drop as they were miles off target. The château was quite a beauty spot and we were being kept in reserve. I was with Lt Canner when Maj Colvin approached and ordered a patrol to be sent out. We were going on a reconnaissance patrol to the village of Herouville.*

*'Before we set off, Lt Canner reced the approach to the village on a bicycle in daylight. He cycled off down the road and came to a "knife rest," which was blocking the road. This he moved out of the way and continued, halting at a second knife rest. As he moved this he glanced over the hedgerow to see a startled*

*German. He jumped back on his bike and cycled as fast as he could without a shot being fired. This was not a good start to the patrol!*

*'We walked through the battalion area to the start line near a standing patrol next to the canal. At that time the nights were only four or five hours long and we were already late. We set off down the path next to the Caen canal to the left-hand side of the village, which was overlooked by the tall chimneys of Colombelles on the other side of the water.*

*'Low and behold we came under machine gun fire from the top of the church tower. We all dropped to the path and I felt a belt in the ear. I thought I was shot in the head but time passed in rapid motion and I realised I was deaf.*

*'We all wriggled down to the canal bank and at that moment a grenade exploded decimating us. L/Cpl Donnely and Pte Peabody were killed instantly. I was wounded in the shoulder by shrapnel and Lt Canner was unable to move due to a spinal injury. The other member of the patrol ran away.*



***A modern representation of the view 10 Pl would have had before the ambush***

*'I did not really know what to do, so I hid in a hole by the canal edge. After staying there a few minutes I decided nothing further was going to happen, so I moved back to the water's edge to find Lt Canner. He could not feel below his buttocks and I was unable to carry him. Rather than leave him, I decided to float him down the canal and I chucked my rifle in the water.*

*'Once I reached a position roughly adjacent to the standing patrol I beached him and left for help. Some stretcher-bearers arrived and he was evacuated. As I passed back through C Coy I met two friends from school in a slit trench, Harry and Jim Flemming. I arrived at the Regimental Aid Post (RAP) in the château and was debriefed by Maj Colvin. I informed him of the Spandau in the church tower and the position on the edge of the canal.'*

Captain Peter Cliffe was the A/Tk Pl Comd with three sections each of two six-pounder A/tk guns.



*'I think we left Cambes Wood during the evening of 5th July arriving on 6th July at our new position with the rest of the battalion to the South of Blainville in order to prepare for the attack on Herouville. After positioning the sections I occupied a slit trench, which the enemy had vacated.*

*'The next day, 7th July, I attended the CO's briefing of the Orders Group in the Château Beaugard within our Assembly Area. The battalion's role was to protect the left flank of 185 Bde who were to liberate Caen. Our left flank was on the Orne Canal.*

*'After the briefing we viewed the ground towards Herouville. I was not aware of the anti-tank ditch, which was concealed beyond our Start Line. I understand this obstacle subsequently*

*contributed to the delayed arrival of the A/Tk guns on the objective. I then briefed my platoon.*

*'During the evening we witnessed a heavy bomber raid by some 300 to 400 Lancasters and Halifaxes on the German positions covering Caen. The raid starting with the dropping of markers by the R.A.F. Pathfinders, and we thought about the devastation it must be causing.*

*'Later, during the night, my platoon moved into the Assembly Area. I next recall sitting on the floor in the Battalion HQ, which was in a large room in the château—it might have been a billiard room—while the leading company, B Company, led the attack. Two German prisoners were brought into the room and one, fumbling, dropped a stick grenade that caused a moment of consternation!'*

But B Coy were preparing to lead the assault the next day and Cpl Ronald Elvidge of 12 Pl B Coy led his section on a patrol. Cpl Elvidge recalls:



*'Before the main attack on Herouville, Major Colvin sent out my section on a listening patrol. It was the dead of night and we were supposed to listen out for enemy armour. We approached across no man's land but everything was deathly silent. We came across a burnt out German Mark IV with a dead German by the side and made our way back. We informed Major Colvin who asked us to retrieve the body for identification purposes. This we did and it turned out he was from 21 Panzer Division.'*

Lt Peter Bowskill (16 Pl D Coy) was elsewhere:



*'Before the attack on Herouvillette I spent the afternoon in Douvres-la-Deliverence with my batman Janker Teel. We were "on the scrounge." Passing South to the concentration area we passed a squadron of tanks from a cavalry regiment. The men were much older than us and they were eating an evening meal with their regimental silver! The night before the attack we witnessed the tremendous raid on Caen and that must have been terrifying.'*

On the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 460 heavy night bombers, flying in two waves between 21.50 and 22.30 hrs, dropped 4135 x 1000 lbs and 1925 x 500 lbs. The target area was a belt running from east to west across the northern edge of the city of Caen behind LeBisey and the main defensive belt.

A great pall of black smoke and dust rose to a great height, obscuring the city and the sun. Elements of the battalion were enveloped in the clouds of dust, making it difficult for them to see their hands in front of their faces. Returns to 3 Div HQ, at the time, emphasise the enormous morale effect of the bombardment, with men in the forward positions getting out of their dugouts to watch and cheer.



***Soldiers behind LeBisey watch the raid on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1944 (IWM)***

Staff officers of 9 Bde stated that the bombing was the only subject of conversation amongst themselves and the troops for about three days. Apart from this, they did not feel that the bombing had made any material difference to the whole operation.

The bombing raid lifted morale throughout the battalion. Pte P Troop of 7 Pl A Coy and Pte Ray Paine of the Mortar Platoon expressed typical reactions:

Pte P Troop: *'I was in 7 Platoon, A Company; my platoon commander was Lt GC Brown. I remember moving up to the starting line at dusk where we then lay in various trenches and dykes. During the late evening we witnessed the huge bombing raid on Caen. There were hundreds of Lancasters coming over us wave after wave. The sight was awesome and we thought this was going to be easy, how wrong we were.'*

Pte Ray Paine: *'During the evening of the 7th we watched as the RAF bombed the northern outskirts of Caen, followed by a stonk on the Le Bisey wood area involving HMS Rodney's 16 inch guns.'*



***Photo taken from one of the attacking aircraft during the heavy air assault on Caen, 7<sup>th</sup> July (IWM)***

Lt Ivor Norton in command of A Tp 33 Fd Regt RA recalls:

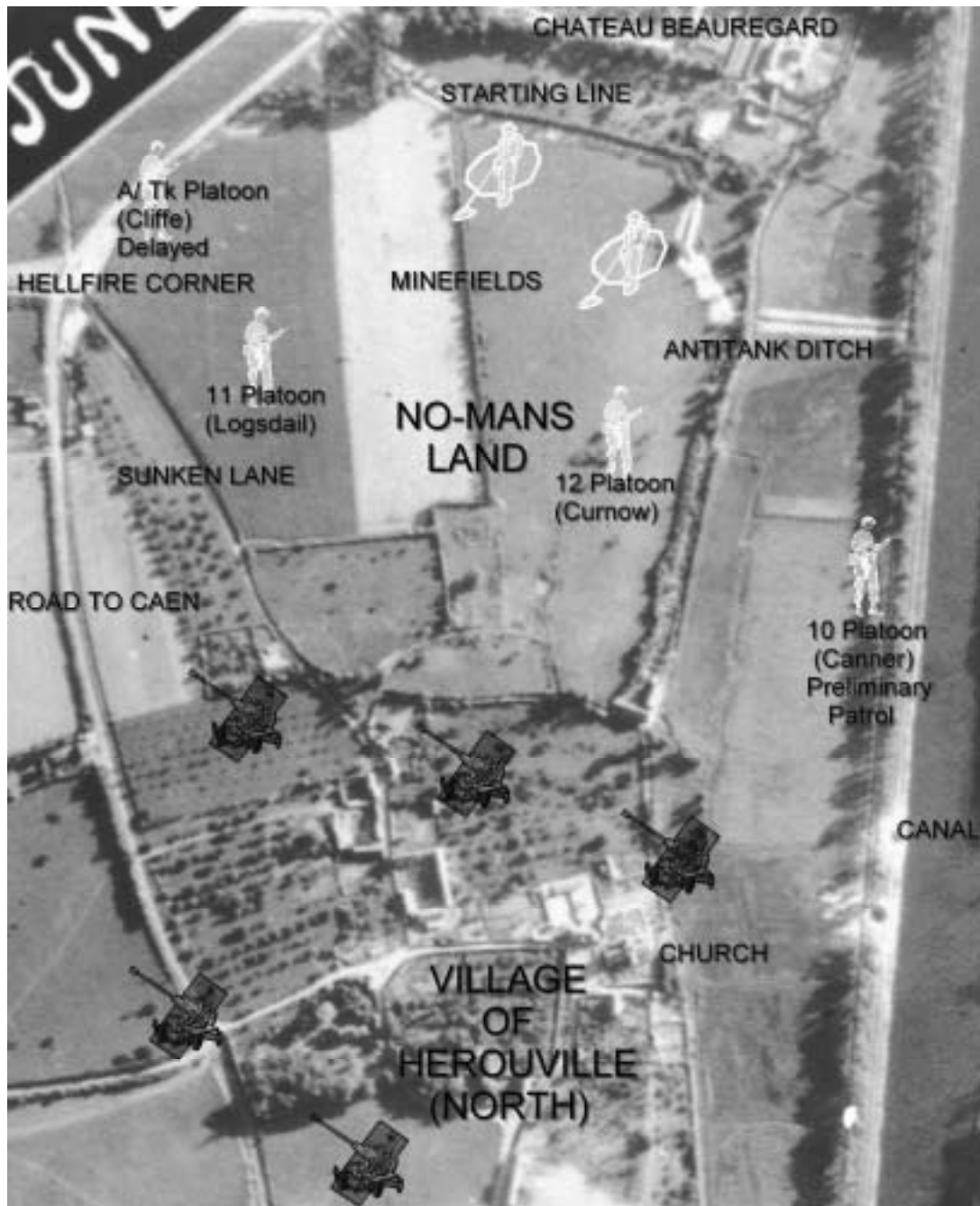
*'I was told, with Capt Jack Hunter, B Tp Comd, that we were to support the Lincolns' attack on Herouville, which was to coincide with the rest of the Division's attack on Caen. My party—Bates, Hill and Collier—went in the tank—Aurora—whilst McKnight went in the carrier. We concentrated in Blainville and at about midnight we moved forward to Château Beauguard and prepared to support the attack.'*



***Looking south from the Lincoln's start line***

At 23.30 hrs the battalion advanced to the assembly area within the grounds of the château. D Coy occupied some vacated German trenches at the southern edge, protecting the start line. At the same time a carrier and mortar group, under the command of Capt Kidney, occupied the high ground on the right of the château to protect the right flank of B Coy as it moved forward in the assault.

All was ready for Operation Charnwood. For many, the next day would be their first battle experience and sleep did not come easily that night. But everyone tried to nap for a few hours before the day that the battalion was to suffer 174 casualties.



*An aerial view of the village showing the position of German HMGs with B Coy advancing*

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **The Battle of Herouville 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944 B Coy Leads the Assault**

A creeping artillery barrage began at 04.20 hrs and 600 guns fired 18,000 rounds into Lebisey woods over a period of 1½ hours. However on the left flank, 2 Lincolns were basically unsupported.

At dawn on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 'H' hour, B Coy crossed the start line and immediately had to overcome a recently dug, six foot wide anti-tank ditch, which stretched from the banks of the canal, westward to Lebisey wood. Initially, only infantry were able to cross this obstacle, forcing the motorised support vehicles to use the main Caen road on the eastern boundary of the attack. This was under constant mortar, Nebelwefer and sniper fire making any advance extremely hazardous.

Advance down the main Caen road became impossible, forcing the right flank to advance down a sunken lane that led into the village itself. The junction of these two roads became known as 'Hellfire Corner,' (see opposite) due to the incessant accurate mortar and sniper fire, which caused numerous casualties.

The rest of B Coy advanced with little or no cover, in order to reach the outskirts of Herouville. They were under constant observation from the church tower and the east bank of the canal. 11 Pl, under Lt Logsdail, was on the right. 12 Pl, under Lt Curnow, drove straight across open fields for the village. 10 Pl were kept in reserve.

As they advanced across no man's land, they suffered casualties from anti-personnel mines, well concealed machine gun posts, and the dreaded sniper's bullet. Well directed artillery and mortar fire from the east of the canal rained down on the advancing troops and also on those waiting in the assembly area.

The battle line ran behind thick stonewalls along the road in Herouville some 200 yds from the canal bridge at the southern edge of the village.

Cpl Ronald Elvidge (12 Pl B Coy) again:



*'We started the attack at dawn without tank or artillery support. B Coy was leading with 11 and 12 Pls in front and 10 Pl in reserve. I was leading 9 Section of 12 Pl, with 7 Sec on my left, and 8 Sec in reserve.*

*'We set off from Beauregard across a small field that was mined. We saw two mines but managed to cross safely in single file and then set off up the road leading to Herouville.*

*'As we approached a road that ran into the village, a machine gun nest opened up on us. It was located behind a hedge. My section was on one side of the road and 7 Sec on the other. The corporal leading 7 Sec was shot and dropped to the ground. I shouted "Come on!" and we charged the nest. One of the Germans was shot and killed but the other managed to run away.*

*'With 7 Sec joining mine we advanced up the hill to the church where we tried to go right, but found a group of Germans in front of us. They were behind a big stone wall and one of the section gave me a hitch up to look over the wall. There were Germans all over the place. There was a trench seven yards inside the gateway full of Germans, then another lot in the church doorway. I got down sharpish and started throwing grenades over the wall but the Germans were soon throwing "potato masher" grenades back at us. One of my section, Arthur Bellamy, was killed, it was his 21st Birthday.*

*'We tried to make our way around the back of the Germans to meet up with 11 Pl, as we had lost all communication with them. As I made my way forward I was shot in the arm by a sniper in the church tower and was simultaneously blown five yards by an air mortar burst, collecting shrapnel in the shoulder and the back.'*

Bill Lamming recalls:



*'I was in 11 Pl B Coy under Lt Logsdail. At first light on the morning of 8th July the platoon was moving up the right flank of the attack on the village.*

*'Whilst we moved across the open fields we were incessantly shelled, having to dive for cover on numerous occasions.*

*On one occasion my "D-day" helmet, with the lobster extension, caught on my backpack rolling forward to cover my eyes and plunging me into darkness.*

*'We came across a thick stonewall that had a hole blown in it. By this time the platoon had spanned out and I was in a group of about eight headed by Lt Logsdail. We passed through the hole in the wall into a yard. Lt Logsdail who was leading dropped to the ground in front of us—he had been sniped.*

*'We were then attacked with small arms fire from the side of a building in the yard. Grenades were thrown and I believe Lt Logsdail was wounded again. Cpl Isles was wounded in the eyes by grenade splinters and had a TQ applied. Roy Bulevant was wounded and paralysed in the arm. Splinters from shrapnel caught us all.*

*'The Germans, who were under immense pressure in LeBisey wood, had spilled out sideways and trapped us. They had worked their way around the back of the stone wall and cut us off. Four of us who were not wounded badly were taken prisoner.'*

Under continuous MG and mortar fire, Maj Colvin reorganised the remainder of his company and successfully consolidated the main objective. Showing complete disregard for his own safety, he personally accounted for several of the enemy with his own rifle; this incident took place while he was standing at a road junction that was under direct MG fire, with the enemy only 100 yards away.

Alfie Curnow was the Pl Comd of 12 Pl B Coy:



*'I was leading my platoon, clearing the village itself. The Germans had turned a 20mm Ack Ack gun into an anti-infantry weapon and were firing down the centre of the road. While I crouched at the side of a wall Maj Colvin stood in the middle of the crossroads firing his 303 rifle from the hip with no regard for self preservation.*

*'Later as we passed up a road, a shot rang out from a slit window in an old farm wall and the corporal in front of me dropped dead. I ordered the platoon to throw grenades over the wall but unfortunately one bounced off the top, exploding on the road, and showering me with splinters. I was evacuated as far as the beaches, but I was declared fit for duty. I returned from whence I came, earning my second of three wound stripes.'*



***A view, from the Mairie, similar to the one that the Germans would have had of the advance.***

Pte Bud Abbott was in 10 Pl, which was initially the reserve platoon of B Coy:

*'I vividly remember the battle of Herouville. In my section I was the Bren gunner. I remember the huge bombing raid the night before the attack and the two tall chimneys of Colombelles that overlooked us all the time.*

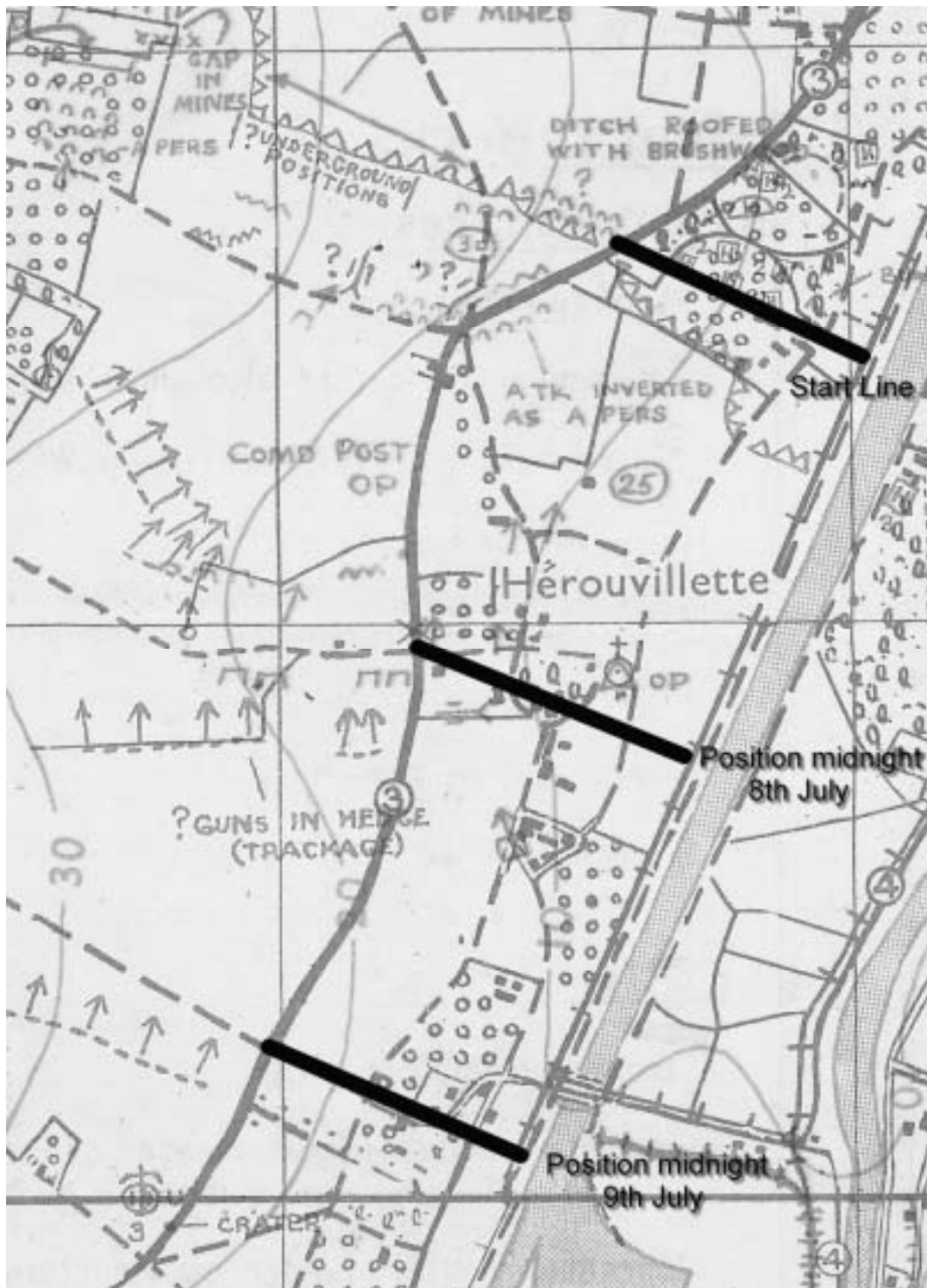
*'My platoon sergeant was Sgt Rippin. He was a small, quiet, unassuming man who was quite brilliant. We would follow him anywhere. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions at Herouville.*

*'10 Pl was kept in reserve for the attack but we were soon called forward, as I think 11 Pl got into trouble. There must have been two hundred Germans in the village.*

*'We became trapped at some crossroads with Maj Colvin. We were under sniper fire and every time we looked up a large calibre gun would fire right over our heads and knock boulders out of the barn wall, which was behind us. Maj Colvin calmly lit up a cigarette, stood up to assess the situation and the sniper shot him, cutting the cloth between his legs. He stooped down, picked up a rifle and shot the sniper dead. He turned to me and said "Look at this Bud," showing the webbing between his legs.*

*'I remember Pte Simpson (also know as Bull due to his eighteen stone frame) creeping up behind a German sentry and slitting his throat with a knife. We were stonked and Bull picked up a bit of shrapnel in his knee. As he made his way back to the RAP, down a lane a large salvo of shells landed right next to him and we never saw him again.*

*'I was later wounded at Vire on August 6th and took no further part in the war.'*



***Lt Ivor Norton, commander of A Tp 33 Fd Regt RA was in support of 2 Lincolns. This is his original army map, showing the German positions in and around Herouville, and dated 2nd July 1944. 2 Lincolns' advance is annotated.***

### 3. Weapons

#### (a) Artillery

Artillery Weapon (unspecified)					(M B)	
	Lt.	Med.	Hy.	In open position	In concrete or armoured turret	
Fixed coast gun						(M B)
Fixed coast How						(C O)
Mobile gun or gun-how	 Up to 105mm	 105 - 175mm	 Over 175mm			(M B)
Mobile How	 Up to 120mm	 120 - 175mm	 Over 175mm			(C O)
AA Gun	 less than 50mm	 50 - 75mm	 Over 75mm			(M B)
A Tk Gun	 less than 50mm	 50 - 75mm	 Over 75mm			(M B)

Note: 105mm coast guns (fixed) are light  
 105mm mobile gun-hows are light  
 105mm mobile guns are medium

Calibres will always be annotated in millimetres

Number of guns written below symbol, calibre written on left of symbol, e.g. 150 = "four 150mm howitzers".

The gun-emplacement symbol ( ) alone indicates "unoccupied", e.g. = "four unoccupied emplacements".

Railway guns in position are shown thus

#### (b) Infantry

Infantry Weapon (unspecified)					
	Lt.	Med.	In open position	In turrets or concrete	
M.G.					(M B)
Mortar	 Up to 80mm	 80 - 120mm			(C O)
AA MG					(M B)
Flamethrower					(M B)

*Legend of the same map*

The village itself consisted of narrow lanes, high stone walls, dense orchards, and ancient farmhouses—easily defensible and very difficult to attack. Houses had been turned into strong points and well camouflaged MG nests were scattered throughout the orchards, woods and farm outbuildings. Houses on the forward edge of the objective were cleared under intense mortar and machine gun fire with men showing complete disregard for their own personal safety.

11 Pl, the flanking platoon, with Lt Logsday wounded and out of action, infiltrated forward and was cut off. Under continuous machine gun and mortar fire Sgt Rippin organised resistance and several determined enemy counterattacks were beaten off although the platoon remained surrounded and cut off from the battalion.

This platoon, although finally reduced in number to ten, held on until relieved in the evening. The forward position held by them undoubtedly prevented the enemy from working round and infiltrating into the main battalion position. Sgt Rippin was later awarded the DCM for his actions.



*Hellfire corner as it is today, looking south*

## CHAPTER V

### The Battle of Herouville 8th July 1944 Support Company

Supporting the battalion in the attack on Herouville should have been a troop of tanks, a field regiment of artillery, and a troop of anti-tank guns. The B Coy assault had no artillery support and 144 Regiment Royal Armoured Corps with their Sherman tanks were held back due to confusion concerning their orders.

However, 2 Lincolns' mortar platoon was soon called into action, as Ray Paine explains:

*‘There was plenty to do during the morning of the 8th as the mortar platoon was called to give a lot of supporting fire, high explosive and smoke. We were situated in a wooded area or orchard to the south of the château and had dug roughly five mortar pits.*

*‘After a while we were having a smoke when Capt Roll came to see if we were all right. At that moment we heard in the distance a “Moaning Minnie” fire and knowing you had seven seconds to get your head down I said to the captain that he should get into our pit. He refused, saying that he had to see the other mortars and turned away. I threw myself into the pit, landing on Johnny Goodson in the process, just before the explosion roared around us.*



**Ray Paine and Johnny Goodson in a mortar pit in Germany, 11th April 1945, similar to that which they occupied at the Château**

*'The soil we had dug out filled our ears and eyes. The air in our lungs seemed to be sucked out of us. My head was full of ringing bells. I cannot say how long we lay there or even whether we blacked out. We slowly sorted ourselves out and heard the cry "stretcher bearers!" We stood up and looked around, climbing out of the mortar pit to see Capt Roll laying several yards away.*

*'The stretcher bearers took him to the RAP. They said later that there was not a mark on him—the bomb had landed at his feet and that the blast had killed him. The bomb had landed in the soil that we had thrown out when we had dug the pit, about three feet from the edge.'*

At 09.00 hrs the CO ordered the anti-tank guns to be brought forward but their arrival was delayed by the large anti-tank ditch, which was stretched across the front of the battalion's start line, from the banks of the canal westward to Lebisey Wood. Capt Peter Cliffe (A/Tk Pl Cmd) continues his recollections:



*'I gave orders to my platoon sergeant to prepare the platoon to move forward to the village. I then left on the back of the dispatch rider's motorcycle along the road on or close to our west boundary. I think he was Pte Key.*

*'We were about to turn off left along a sunken lane which led into the village when I saw at the far end of it a carrier on fire, probably belonging to B Coy. The Dannert wire, which stretched across the lane in front of it, had obviously held it up.*

*'A small group of soldiers were standing at the corner of the road junction. I do not know who they were with. They warned me that there was an enemy MG position in the top-right corner of the small orchard bordering the right edge of the lane, obviously covering the battalion's line of advance.*

*'I thought I could run along the lane, pass the carrier, get over the low wire obstacle and enter the village. I told Pte Key to try*

*to find a way over the field to our left and to meet me beyond the wire obstacle.*

*I had reached the burning carrier. Its ammunition was exploding like firecrackers, and I was about to pass it when I felt a kick in my lower back and right wrist, and realised that I had been hit from behind. I fell on to the verge to the left of the carrier and crawled back away from it. Then Pte Key, having been unable to get across the field to our rendezvous, roared up to me. I shouted that I had been hit and told him to tell the Platoon Sergeant to bring the guns forward. He then sped off back along the lane. I expected him to be hit also and at any moment.*

*'Being unable to walk I crawled to a small crater on the verge and hoped that someone on our side would soon appear. Whilst waiting I heard the noise of battle in the village and the shells and Nebelwerfer rockets passing overhead on their way to the château. Then I saw to my horror one of the three RAF Boston bombers, flying over on their way to the Colombelles factory, drop a bomb short on to the battalion's route into Herouville. I heard later that it had killed and wounded some of C Coy who were moving up.*

*'All this time the German MG in the top corner of the orchard was firing intermittently, presumably at our follow-up troops advancing towards the village. Some of the rounds kicked up the soil uncomfortably close to my feet.*

*'Eventually the battalion 2ic—Major Douglas Wilson—came along the lane with stretcher-bearers. He reported that the enemy MG had been dealt with.'*

Lt Mike Hunt (2ic A/Tk Pl) takes up the story:



*'As 2ic, I stayed back with Sgt Poole and the six 6 pounder gun sections awaiting the call to go forward. I went with Sgt Poole to inspect the A/Tk ditch which stretched across our front to the Caen road. It was over six feet deep with steep sides*

*and quite wide, so utterly impossible for the towing carrier to cross let alone with the six pounder.*

*'The only way forward was along the Caen road and this was constantly under fire from mortars and a heavy machine gun down the centre line of the road. In view of the delay I guessed something was wrong so went forward, hugging the side of the road to the junction with the lane down to the village. This junction was under fire from mortars and snipers. Many casualties were there including Sgt Lord who was killed by snipers.*

*'I then saw Sgt Hague who appeared from the Caen side. I never saw the D/R, Pte Kay who I believe had also been hit. I believe Sgt Hague was the only survivor of the group who went forward with Peter Cliffe. He told me what had happened and that a substantial barricade topped with wire blocked the lane into the village. We went down to have a look, but came under fire and had to take cover. We both returned fire and suddenly an armoured car from the City of London Yeomanry appeared, saw the position and sprayed with the BSA heavy machine gun over the side of the barrier and hedge.*

*'There were immediate shouts of "Kaput" and two snipers wearing the ankle-length camouflage gowns came through a gap in the hedge. We were taking them back to the road junction when we met Douglas Wilson. He arranged some of the men to clear the barrier and Sgt Hague and I went back to*

*fetch the six pounder guns. We were able to take them straight down into the village. The guns were sited with one covering the Caen road and one on the forward edge of the Caen side of the village.*

*‘There was a counter attack that night and we heard sounds of Armour and voices. The gun on the forward edge was loaded with solid shot but the attack petered out on the left. I believe the Mk IV German tank was destroyed by a PIAT from a rifle company.*

*‘We moved forward into the orchard on the western side of the village, re-sited the guns and established a Pl HQ. Unfortunately one of the slit trenches there received a direct hit killing Pte Cottle. Things then quietened down and the Canadians on our right moved into Caen and we consolidated in the Orchard in Herouville.’*



*View from the church bell tower looking north (2003)*

## CHAPTER VI

### The Battle of Herouville 8th July 1944 A, C, and D Coys and the Supporting Royal Artillery Units

Once the B Coy assault had reached Herouville, A and C Coys were ordered to clear the village and exploit along the river bank. The late Major General Glyn Gilbert, then a major in command of C Coy, recalls:



*'We endeavoured to catch two or three hours sleep. Very early in the morning of the 8th—about 3 am as I remember—we moved from Blainville to Chateau Beauregard which was to be our start line for the attack on Herouville. As I led C Coy through the grounds of the Chateau we came under heavy mortar fire from Colombelles which killed my CSM, wounded my 2ic and caused a number of other casualties. Not a good start.*

*'In the meantime the attack had started, led by B Coy commanded by Major Leslie Colvin and his 2ic, Captain John Boys. After hard fighting, B Coy captured Herouville, and C Coy was ordered to clear the village. This we were glad to do as we were still under heavy mortar fire and taking continuous casualties back at Chateau Beauregard. Just as we reached the edge of the village, a friendly aircraft bombed us and I lost about half of one platoon. I well remember the very large craters and being surprised that we had not suffered more casualties. By then my company strength was reduced to 40.'*



***Aerial photograph showing the bomb craters from the friendly fire incident***

A Coy were taking heavy casualties too, as Pte P Troop of 7 Pl remembers:



*'On the morning of the attack we slowly crept forward across open fields. As we broke into a trot, the Germans came out of holes in the ground like rats and unleashed hell. Mortars rained down on us, machine gun bullets were flying everywhere. Ahead of me, Lt Brown and his batman were killed. I then trod on a mine and was blown into the air, collecting a bullet in the arm at the same time.'*

The heavy casualties inflicted upon both A and C Coys meant that the reserve company, D Coy, were soon involved in the battle. But Lt Peter Bowskill, 16 Pl Comd D Coy, did not get as far as Herouville, as his continued recollections make clear:



*'My platoon sergeant was a chap called Lofty Warne (owing to his 6 foot 4 inch frame). On the morning of the attack, we made our way forward. Being quite thinly disposed of, Sgt Warne was on one side and I was on the other. I became pinned down in a field short of the village with a section of C Coy. As the order came to advance I was enveloped in a devastating field of fire: a friendly aircraft had dropped its bombs on us and I believe a batch of Moaning Minnies with their deafening screams had simultaneously landed. My batman managed to haul me into a shell hole where I lay on a less fortunate soul who had been killed.'*

O troop of 20 A/Tk Regt (RA) was ordered to support 2 Lincolns and then to withdraw into a mobile reserve position as soon as possible. At 12.30 hrs on the 8th they were in reserve in a sunken road, north of 'Hellfire Corner', one of their carriers having being destroyed by a mine. They did, however, become engaged in the enemy tank and infantry counterattack in the late afternoon.

Later in the day, once the roads were cleared of mines, A Tp 33 Fd Regt RA moved into the village. The OC, Lt Ivor Norton, continues his story:

*'At great cost the village was taken and consolidation started. The tank was positioned in the square in front of the church with the carrier in front of the Marie.'*

*'In the middle of an O Group a runner came and reported that enemy infantry and tanks were moving into the village. The O Group dispersed. The tank was facing down the slope towards the canal so rather than making a lot of noise in turning it around, I rotated the turret 180 degrees. To depress the gun sufficiently we had to push all the rations, which were on the engine cover plate, onto the ground. An anti-personnel shell was loaded and all the Brownings tested.'*

*'During the counterattack, a mortar hit the corner of the Marie sending the corner stone crashing down onto the unoccupied'*

*carrier smashing the 19 Set. Gunner Hill also dropped a 36 grenade into the bottom of the tank!*

*'We did not get a shot, the most we saw was the top of a turret about 50 yards away. The counter attack was eventually beaten off and consolidation resumed. During this time an A/Tk Officer<sup>†</sup> who had been shot in the legs by the tank feigned death for one hour, in full view of the tank, until it was safe. His cheerfulness amazed me. In the evening, those who had been killed were laid in the square in front of the church.'*

Meanwhile, C Coy were “digging in.” Maj-Gen Glyn Gilbert continues:



*We then assumed a defensive position in an orchard on the southern edge of the village, and twice German tanks and infantry counter-attacked us. Fortunately we repelled both attacks and destroyed one tank, but with further losses including a very fine young Canadian officer, Lt John Richardson, who was killed in the afternoon.*

*'The remainder of the day was relatively quiet although the ever-present mortars at Colombelles harassed us. Late in the day we learnt that Caen had been liberated.'*

It was at about 20.00 hrs that the Germans counterattacked with infantry and tanks. Everyone must have heard the terrifying thunder of the tanks as they sped toward the Lincoln's forward positions.

---

<sup>†</sup> The A/Tk officer mentioned by Ivor Norton is almost certainly Lt W Penney, who was their only officer casualty on that day.



*Photo of the square taken looking North with the church on the right and the Mairie straight ahead (notice the rubble). Autumn 1948.*



*A similar view taken in November 2002*

Pte Thompson of C Coy, who had positioned himself behind the imposing gateway of “Le Prieur” manor house, distinguished himself with the PIAT. A force of enemy about two platoons strong, supported by three Mark IV tanks, attacked his company’s position. Pte Thompson engaged the leading tank with his weapon and knocked it out in the centre of the road with a shot, at close range, into its left flank. The second one, damaged by a further shot, turned away, the third followed suit and the attack petered out. Major Colvin and Capt Boys, who were sheltering in a small Café facing the Caen road, witnessed the destruction of the tank.

As Maj Gilbert recalled, Lt Richardson OC 13/14 Pl, C Coy, was killed leading his men, beating off the enemy counterattack, in an orchard to the south west. Under heavy machine gun fire from tanks, LSgt Pretty immediately rallied the platoon, which later accounted for several of the enemy and assisted in defeating the counterattack.

Two platoons of 2 Middlesex Regiment (No 11 and 13) were heavily committed in support of 2 Lincolns and helped drive back the counterattack. Cpl Jenner won the Military Medal (MM) for his courage and tenacity in keeping an Observation Post (OP) manned and working in full view of the enemy and under continuous shell and MG fire.



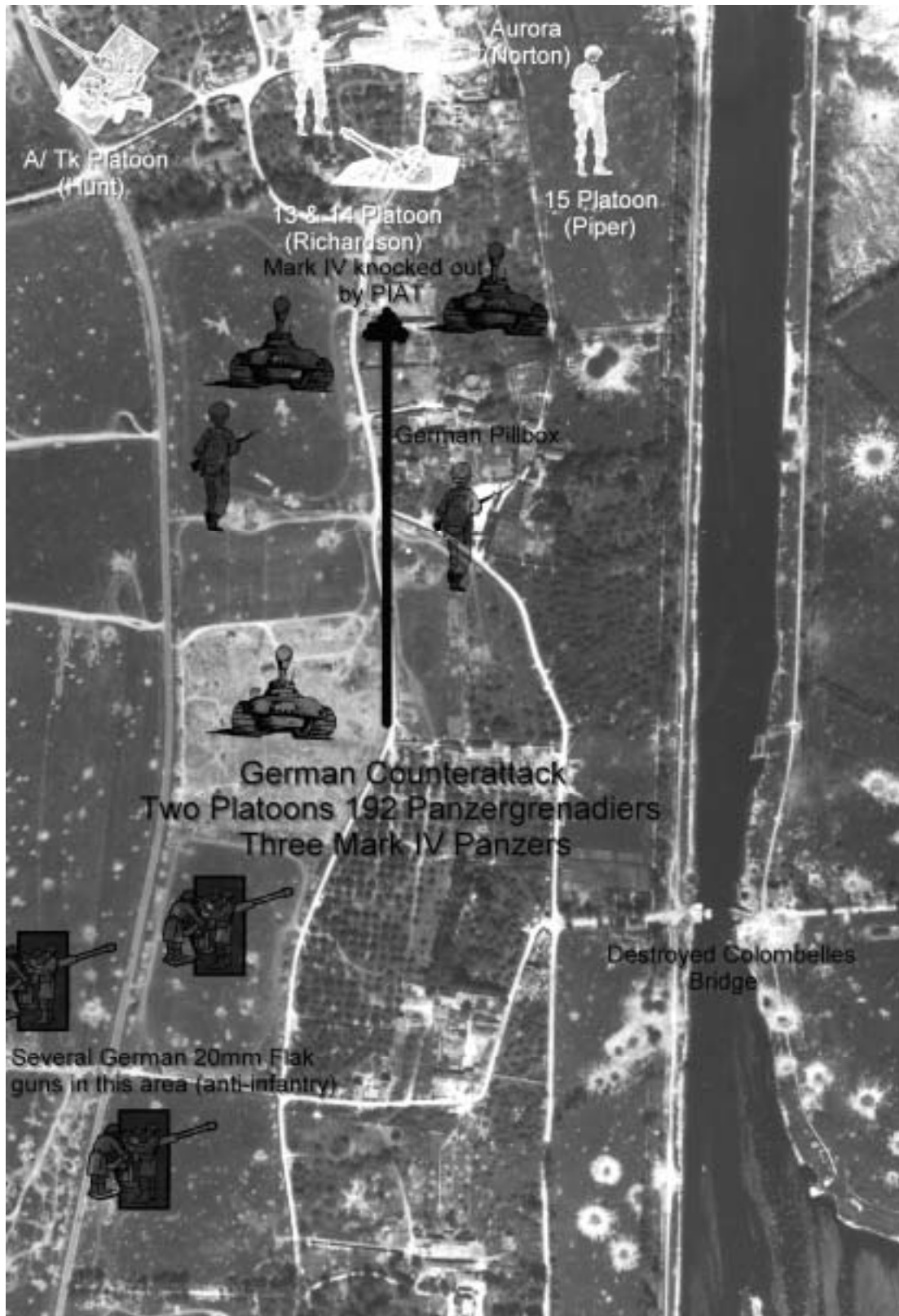
***A Panzer Mark IV, similar to the one knocked out by the Lincolns, being recovered after the battle (IWM)***

At 21.00 hrs, the Bde Comd again visited the CO, informing him that the battle on other sectors was progressing well. At last light enemy infantry approached the Lincolns position but did not press on, the attackers being content with harassing MG fire.

During the day, 30 prisoners were taken and identified as GAF personnel with men of 192 Panzer Grenadier Regiment.



*Members of 16 GAF taken prisoner on the 8<sup>th</sup> July (IWM)*



***An aerial view of the southern edge of the village showing the German counterattack on the afternoon of 8<sup>th</sup> July***

## CHAPTER VII

### The Battle of Herouville 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July 1944 Consolidation

The German position became untenable and the order to withdraw across the Orne was given in the early hours of 9th July. The Lincolns pushed back those that remained. By the morning, A Coy had reached the river beyond Herouville. During the afternoon, the Battalion had consolidated the area—commanding the Colombelles Bridge with patrols forward to the outskirts of Caen.

One more recollection of the battle epitomises the terror and yet the ordinariness of an 18 year old's first taste of action. Pte Syd Smith from 9 Sec, 15Pl, C Coy tells his story with the good humour typical of a Linconshire Regiment soldier:



*‘So I found myself at Chateau Beaugard. We were hanging about in the grounds there and a couple of shells came over and I said, “By, they were close,” and this lad came out of a building, one of the Lincolns, and he said, “No, this were close!” and he showed us. I think it must have been a cigarette case that had been hit and he was LOB, you know, left out battle, from the day before.*

*‘We hung about there two evenings, and then they walked us up into Herouville. I went up there, walked into the village, walked past the tank to some big houses on the right-hand side and there were tame rabbits running about and we left all our gear there. Every single lad took just his arms and a small pack and we walked up and put in a trench with the lads.*

*‘Anyway, they started stonking the area and they said a fighting patrol had gone out. So we were pushed into a trench that was covered in, a trench with a roof on, and they were*

*stonking like hell. They were saying, "Get back. Get back. Get back." We couldn't go no further back without pushing the end of the trench out, you know. The Spandau was rattling away and they said a fighting patrol had gone out and contacted the enemy, I suppose. That was my first night in action and I really got stonked.*

*"Then the following morning we went through the graveyard there down to the bottom and there was a wall that ran round the village then—as far as I could see, it went right round the village. We just crossed over this little wood road and dug in and we were facing the chimneys at Colombelles—the two big chimneys. There is a piece of land and then the canal was at the bottom of the land in front of us. I do not know how far it went—it may have been a hundred yards, actually, I cannot remember. About three days I think I stayed there. We were stonked and machine gun bullets whistled over our heads from across the water to crash against the old stonewall behind us.*

*'It was all new to me. I mean, I had just been pushed into action. I mean I was only 18. That is when I met Corporal Ward—I was put with Corporal Ward the following morning and he was talking to me and he broke down, saying, "I've lost all my friends," and all this, and I thought, "I'm in for a bloody rough time here," you know.'*

The Battalion was denied the privilege of entering Caen and on the morning of 10<sup>th</sup> July it was relieved by 3 Recce Regiment. However, the action of 2 Lincolns on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944 significantly contributed to the success of Operation Charnwood. Commendations were bestowed on several members of the Battalion (see Appendix 1) in recognition of its outstanding performance. Success, however, came at a terrible price.

Captain JC Roll, Officer Commanding the Mortar Platoon and Lieutenant Richardson, a "Canloan" officer, together with 30 other ranks were killed. Lieutenant HR Logsdail, a platoon commander of D Coy, and three other ranks died of their wounds received at Herouville. In all, six officers and 152 other ranks were wounded.

Others were taken prisoner. Pte Bill Lamming was one:



*“The German soldiers were young men in regular uniform just like us. They informed us the war was over for us and marched us to a large house. From there we marched many miles to some railway sidings. There we met thousands of British and American troops, prisoners like ourselves.*

*“The Germans sorted us into rail cars, 52 to a wagon. It took us ten days to travel to Luxembourg, standing still for 1½ days as the lines had been bombed. Between us we had five “bread loaves” and a bucket of water. Eventually we saw some huge bombing raids and watched cities glow. I ended up in a sugar factory in East Germany where we worked with very little to eat.*

*‘On May 8th we heard tanks coming a few miles away and you can imagine the noise and excitement from the lads. We got a shock as it was the Russian army and they wouldn’t let us out of our camp until the fighting troops had gone through. They gave us some cigars and a bread loaf, which we couldn’t eat as we had not had anything solid to eat for 10 months! We were eventually evacuated by plane to Holland.’*

Five of the Veterans who have contributed to this account were wounded. They all have stories to tell.

Pte John Keenan: *‘I met Jacky Lindley in the RAP and was put on a stretcher and transferred by jeep to the Advanced Dressing Station. Whilst in the RAP a fighter strafed us and there were several casualties. An ambulance took us to the field hospital and we were flown back to England in a Dakota. Before take off we sat on the runway for hours and as it was a fine day I was brazed. We landed at an airport near Oxford. I learned later that a flying fortress had dropped a bomb on C Coy as they advanced and caused many casualties.’*

Pte P Troop: *'I was dragged back to the RAP that was basically a hole in the ground with a tent over it. I was temporarily blinded, a piece of shrapnel had passed through my helmet into my skull, my legs were peppered, and I had a hole in my shoulder. I recognized the voice of the MO and Jack Lindley who removed all my clothes apart from one sock. I was patched up and moved to a barn, where I was to be evacuated back to the UK in a Dakota. Bad weather intervened, however, and a DUCK then took me to a hospital ship off the beachhead. This was soon full with thousands of soldiers and we soon set sail, landing at Southampton docks. From there I was moved to Basingstoke and onto Nottingham where I spent the next three months in and out of hospital. I returned to the Battalion towards the end of October and hardly recognized anyone.'*

Cpl Ronald Elvidge: *'Major Colvin came forward and ordered a stretcher-bearer to help me back. Holding on to his arm, I managed to hobble back to the RAP where I removed my webbing and was given a shot of morphine. The next thing I remembered was waking on a boat back to England.'*

Lt Peter Bowskill: *'I was dragged to the RAP and then onto a General Field Hospital outside Bayeux. Then I was flown back to the UK in a Dakota, where I was placed on the top pallet of three or four with my nose two inches from the ceiling! I spent time in Watford hospital and then the York clinic at Guys.'*

Captain Peter Cliffe: *'The stretcher bearers took me on the back of an armoured car to the RAP from where I was evacuated by Jeep ambulance together with a wounded enemy POW to the Casualty Clearing Station or Field Hospital where the casualties were gathered in a large open barn. Here Captain John Pawlett, zic of the Carrier Platoon, who had been shot in the arm, found me and we exchanged experiences before I was taken into the Operating Theatre.'*

*I awoke later in the hospital ward (a marquee) and found that the surgeon had tied a chipped 9mm bullet round my neck so I presumed that it was from a Schmeisser sub machine gun. While there Lieutenant Hugh Logsdail from, I think, B Coy called across to me and we exchanged a few words. I was saddened to hear later that he had died of his wounds. After about two days I was evacuated by Dakota back to the U.K.'*



***Wounded being evacuated by Dakota (IWM)***

8<sup>th</sup> July had been a long day. Private Jim Wisewell, 223 Field Ambulance, RAMC, describes the carnage wrought upon 185 Bde on that one day in 1944 in Operation Charnwood:

*'At 5 am, the first wounded came back—cheerful, optimistic. We splinted fractures, covered wounds with sterile dressings and relieved each other for breakfast at 6.30 am.*

*'As the day wore on, sunny and scorching hot, the tide of casualties rose. Dozens and dozens were carried in. Our treatment centre always had three upon the trestles being attended to and soon the approaches were lined with a queue. Hour after hour we worked and evacuated and still the flow continued.*

*'Ghastly wounds there were, of every type and state of severity. Heads with skulls so badly smashed that bone and brain and pillow were almost indivisible; faces with horrible lacerations; jaws blown completely away leaving only two sad eyes to plead for relief from pain. Chests were pierced through with shrapnel and lungs that spouted blood from gushing holes. Arms were mangled into shapeless masses left hanging by muscle alone and waiting the amputation knife. There were abdomens pierced by shell splinters and displaying coils of intestine—deadly wounds. Buttocks were torn and in some cases spinal injury had followed bringing paralysis.*

*'But the leg wounds! Thigh bones splintered, knees without knee caps, legs without feet. Red, mangled flesh and blood flooding the stretcher. And others trembling uncontrollably, sobbing like children, strapped to the stretcher and struggling to be free, screaming. And when a shell landed near the ADS [Advance Dressing Station], shouting, "They're coming again! Oh God they're coming again!"*

*We ate our lunch of biscuits and corned beef with bloody fingers and when relieved by 9<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance at 6 pm we had treated 466 British soldiers and 40 Germans.'*

# CHAPTER VIII

## The Aftermath

After the battle had passed, the villagers slowly returned to their village. All the houses had been either damaged or destroyed, there was no electricity or running water and all their livestock were dead. Repairs were slowly carried out whilst many slept rough and every effort was made to find food and materials. The rubble of the ruined village was dumped in the Orne, close to the Garenne.

There were a total of 216 'declarations of disaster' relating to the damage caused by tanks, shells, or lorries; lost livestock; ransacked or damaged homes. Even as late as 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1944, a headless body was found.

In December, the hamlet of Garenne was given some land to build emergency accommodation for refugees and a footbridge was built over the Orne. After the war ended, the men from the village who had been taken for slave labour returned minus the six who had died far from their home.

By November 1945, life had resumed in Herouville. The battlefield however had not been fully cleared. On 1<sup>st</sup> December a schoolchild found a live mortar and as he was showing it to his friends it detonated. Seven innocent schoolchildren died in the blast along with the local policeman who was trying to intervene.



*Plaque commemorating the tragedy in December 1945*

Alongside the plaque commemorating the schoolchildren who were tragically lost on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1945 is another, commemorating the Lincolns who gave their lives in the liberation of Herouville.



*The two memorial plaques on the churchyard wall*



*The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion, 1994, including Maj Gen Glyn Gilbert, Maj Gen Dick Gerrard-Wright, Lt Col Dick Chambers, and Maj Leslie Colvin*

# APPENDIX 1

## Awards

### **Military Cross**

Major **Leslie Hubert Boyd Colvin** 129446 *B Coy*

On 8<sup>th</sup> July, Maj Colvin's company was detailed as the assaulting company in the Battalion attack on Herouville. Shortly after crossing the start line, Maj Colvin exploded an enemy mine and was wounded in the leg, besides receiving small splinters in several other parts of his body. In spite of this he continued to lead his company in the attack and reached his objective.

On reaching the objective, the leading platoon of B Company infiltrated forward and were cut off by the enemy. Under continuous machine gun and mortar fire, Maj Colvin reorganised the remainder of his company and successfully consolidated the main objective.

Showing complete disregard for his own safety, he personally accounted for several of the enemy with his own rifle. This incident took place while he was standing at a road junction which was under direct MG fire with the enemy only 100 yards away.



*Maj Colvin receiving his MC from Field Marshall Montgomery (IWM)*

Throughout the whole action he showed very great bravery and his example of coolness and courage was an inspiration to the whole company. On previous occasions also, Maj Colvin's coolness under fire and leadership have had an inspiring effect on his men.

## **Military Medal**

**LSgt Arthur William Pretty** 4801544 *A Coy*

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944, during the Battalion attack on Herouville, Lsgt Pretty's platoon commander was wounded very early during the assault. This NCO immediately took command of the platoon and led it with great dash and bravery, successfully clearing several houses on the forward edge of the objective.

During the attack and subsequent consolidation, Lsgt Pretty, showing complete disregard for his own personal safety, moved about his men under intense mortar and machine gun fire, encouraging them and setting a fine example of personal leadership.

During the evening of the same day, his platoon was counterattacked by the enemy, and one of his section commanders was killed and the section was without a leader. Under heavy machine gun fire from tanks, Lsgt Pretty immediately rallied this section, which later accounted for several of the enemy and assisted in defeating the counterattack.

He was a fine example to all who saw him, and materially affected the successful outcome of the battle.

**Cpl Albert Stephen Daubney** 4804401 *A Coy*

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944, during the Battalion attack on Herouville, the platoon to which Cpl Daubney belonged was ordered to attack a house and surrounding defences. Whilst undergoing this attack, the platoon became pinned down in an orchard, sustaining heavy casualties. Without hesitation and on his own initiative, Cpl Daubney rallied his section and led them into the assault against one of the machine gun posts. This post was destroyed and while the other one was being similarly dealt with by a flanking movement, this NCO moved about under intense machine gun fire assisting the wounded.

A little later he led his section against the house itself and personally accounted for several of the enemy, killing some and capturing many others.

Throughout the whole of the action and later in the day during the enemy's counterattack, Cpl Daubney's bravery and leadership was an inspiration to his men and was very largely responsible for the success of his company's attack. On several occasions under heavy machine gun and mortar fire he showed complete disregard for his own personal safety and continued leading and encouraging his men.

## **Distinguished Conduct Medal**

**Sgt Thomas Rippin** 4799923 *B Coy*

During the battalion attack on Herouville on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944, B Company was the leading company in the assault. On arrival on the objective, Sgt Rippin's platoon infiltrated forward under the leadership of the platoon commander. Shortly afterwards the platoon was cut off and the platoon commander was seriously wounded. Sgt Rippin immediately took command and, under continuous MG and mortar fire, organised the resistance and beat off several determined enemy counterattacks, although the platoon was completely surrounded and cut off from the battalion.

This platoon, although finally reduced in number to ten, held on under the inspired leadership of Sgt Rippin until finally relieved. By his personal courage and bravery, this NCO inspired those of his platoon that had not become casualties to hold onto their position under the greatest difficulty. The forward position held by this platoon undoubtedly prevented the enemy from working round and infiltrating into the main battalion position. Sgt Rippin showed complete disregard for his own personal safety and was an inspiration to his men.



## APPENDIX 2

### Roll of Honour

Most of the soldiers who gave their lives in the liberation of Herouville in 1944 are now buried in Ranville British Military Cemetery. They were initially laid to rest in an orchard in the grounds of Chateau Beauregard but were reburied in their present resting place in June 1946.

The four soldiers who sadly died of their wounds after being evacuated to Aid Posts further afield can be found in the military cemeteries of Hermanville and Douvres-La-Deliverance. The two who were killed during the preliminary reconnaissance patrol organised by Major Colvin have been laid to rest many miles away in Bannerville-La-Campagne military cemetery. They were perhaps hurriedly buried by the Germans and then reburied by the British at a later date.

This Roll of Honour includes the personal details of those who died together with layouts of the relevant cemeteries illustrating the position of their gravestones.

*They're not with us now, the lads we used to know*

*Some, we left sleeping all in a row*

*And their names, we all know so well*

*We were with them when they fell*

*It was a shame their youth sped so quickly by*

*They crossed half the world to fight and die*

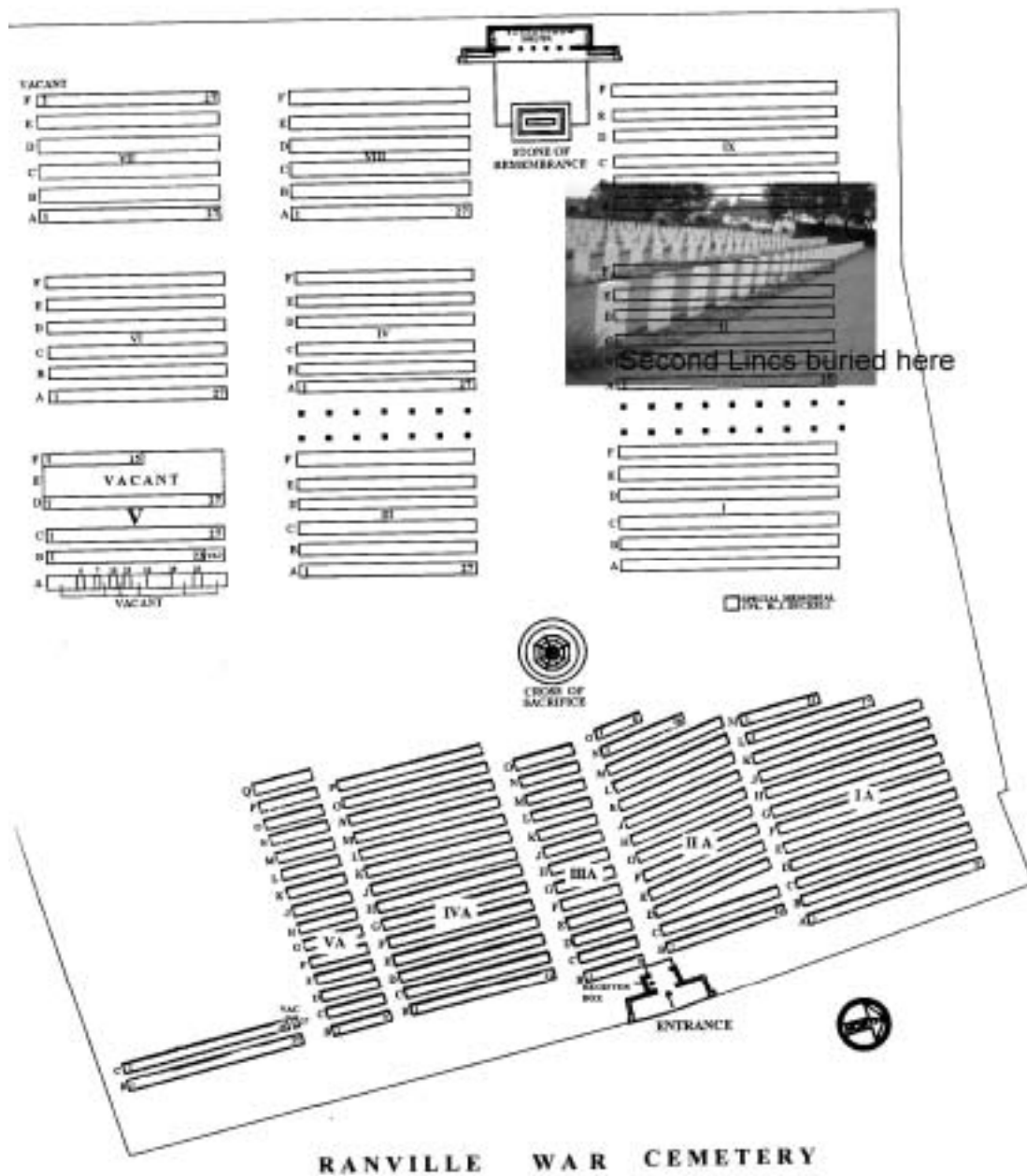
*And their faces are with us until our life ends*

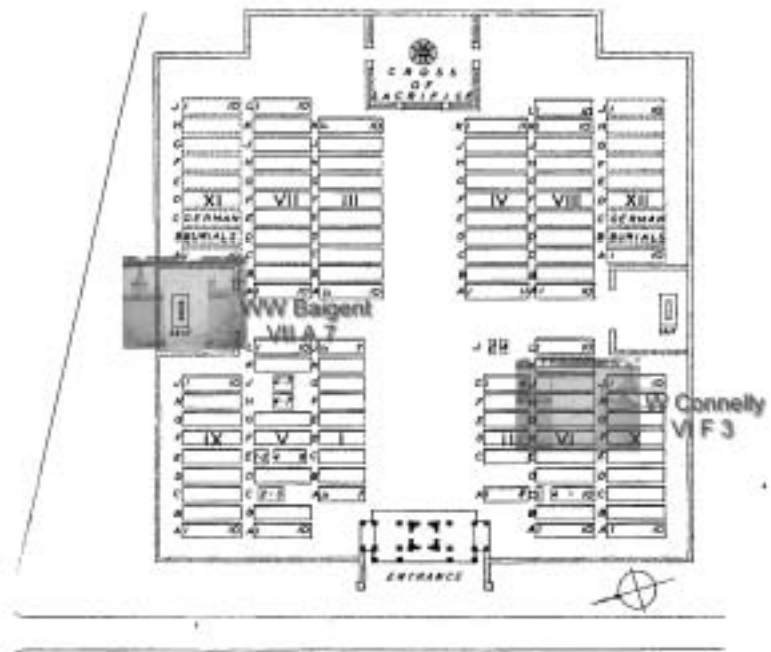
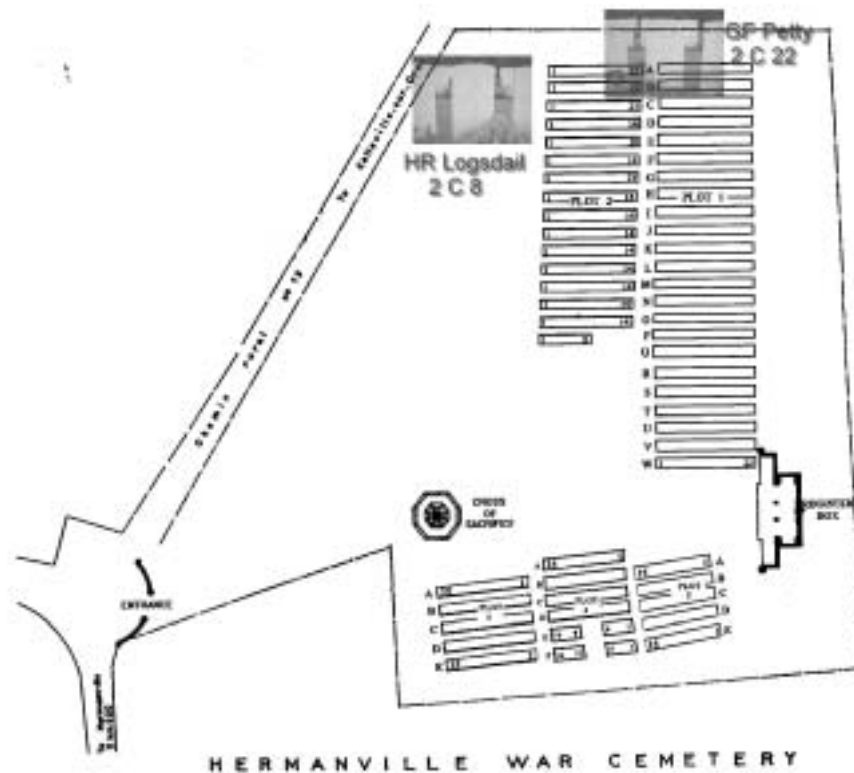
*So lets drink a toast to absent friends*

*So raise your glasses and hold them high*

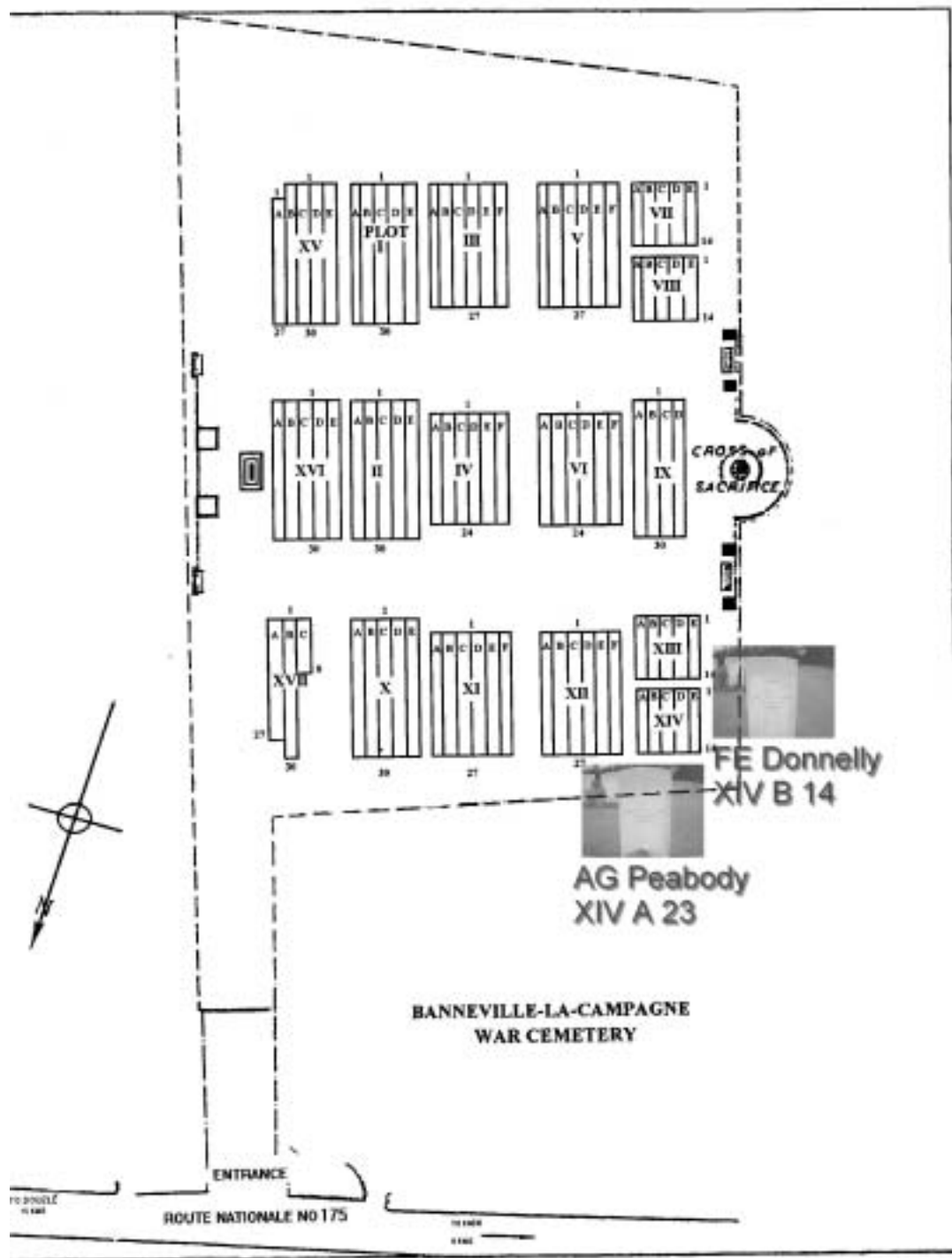
*And think of them who had to die.*

# Plan for RANVILLE WAR CEMETERY





# Plan for BANNEVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE WAR CEMETERY



George William Barber  
Private  
7905731  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 24  
RANVILLE II.B.2



Arthur Bertram Bellamy  
Private  
5892026  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 20  
RANVILLE II.C.33  
Son of Bert and Ada Bellamy, of Kettering,  
Northamptonshire



Norman Clifford Bellamy  
Private  
5890858  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 22  
RANVILLE I.C.31  
Son of William and Lillian Bellamy, of  
Kettering, Northamptonshire; husband of  
Olive Bellamy, of Kettering



Basil Jeffrey Botting  
Private  
6403527  
KIA Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944.  
Aged 19  
RANVILLE II.B.14  
Son of Harry Edwin and Ida Dorothy  
Botting, of Haywards Heath, Sussex;  
husband of Bridget Botting, of Haywards  
Heath



Eric Lawrence Brown  
Private  
14644714  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 19  
RANVILLE II.B.17



George Colin Brown  
Lieutenant  
296195  
DOW  
Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 24  
RANVILLE II.C.24  
Son of W Brown and Charlotte Brown, of  
Chigwell, Nottinghamshire



William Ernest Kenneth Brown  
Private  
2892035  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 20  
RANVILLE II.B.9  
Son of Ernest and Kathleen Brown, of  
Walton, Peterborough, Northamptonshire



Samuel Brunt  
Corporal  
4799200  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 33  
RANVILLE I.C.27



Arthur Victor Bunting  
Private  
5780764  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 24  
RANVILLE I.C.29



John William Codd  
Private  
4800957  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 31  
RANVILLE II.B.4  
Husband of Florence Codd, of Gateshead,  
Co Durham



Basil Robert Coley  
Private  
14223672  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 19  
RANVILLE II.B.6  
Son of Ada Coley, of Grimsby,  
Lincolnshire



George Cottle  
Private  
5341684  
KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.  
Aged 27  
RANVILLE II.C.32



Henry Roland Edward Denton

Private

4804987

KIA Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

Aged 25

RANVILLE II.B.13

Son of Alfred and Hetty Denton, of  
Branston Booths, Lincolnshire



Frank Edward Donnelly

Lance Corporal

5891091

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 21

BANNERVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE  
XIV.B.14

Son of William and Emma Donnelly, of  
Leeds, Yorkshire



Herbert Fawcett

Private

4541917

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 28

RANVILLE I.C.32

Son of John Willie and Sarah Fawcett, of  
Low Moor, Yorkshire; husband of Hilda  
Fawcett, of Low Moor



George Walter Fitch

Private

5341548

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 24

RANVILLE II.B.7

Son of George Walter and Lucy Fitch, of  
Poplar, London



Alan Fussey

Corporal

4541686

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 26

RANVILLE II.B.19

Son of Robert and Ada Fussey, of Preston,  
Hull, Yorkshire; husband of Constance  
Fussey, of Preston



William Gilbert

Corporal

4799655

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 33

RANVILLE I.C.28

Husband of Lily Gilbert, of Bilston,  
Staffordshire



Thomas Wallace Govans

Private

1568184

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 30

RANVILLE II.B.1

Son of Hugh and Susan Govans; husband  
of Mary Govans, of Marnock, Ayshire



Arthur Hall

Private

14661068

KIA

Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 19

RANVILLE II.B.5

Son of Bernard and Edith Hall, of Leeds,  
Yorkshire



William Smith Hall

Private

4798895

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 33

RANVILLE II.B.11

Son of Ernest and Mary Hall, of West  
Kensington, London



Frank Hearn

Private

5510535

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 37

RANVILLE II.B.16

Son of Joseph and Agnes Hearn, of  
Chesham, Buckinghamshire; husband of  
Phylis Hearn, of Chesham



Sidney Hudson

Private

977178

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 24

RANVILLE II.C.25

Son of George and Charlotte Hudson, of  
Colby, Norfolk



Ronald James Hunt

Private

14650737

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 19

RANVILLE II.C.26

Son of Eliza Hunt and stepson of Thomas  
Baker, of Islington, London



William Fred Hutchins

WO II

54935277

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 37

RANVILLE II.B.15

Son of William and Elizabeth Hutchins;  
husband of Constance Hutchins, of  
Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex



Walter Charles Lee

Corporal

5341475

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 26

RANVILLE II.B.8

Son of Alfred and Heather Lee; husband of  
Lillian Lee, of Acton, Middlesex



Alfred William Lord

Sergeant

5341510

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 27

RANVILLE I.C.33

Son of Alfred and Violet Lord, of Stoke  
Newington, London



Albert Reginald Magson

Private

14661095

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 19

RANVILLE II.B.20

Son of Gordon and Lucy Magson, of  
Appleton-le-Street, Yorkshire



Ernest Needham

Corporal

4806310

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 29

RANVILLE II.C.31

Son of John and Ann Needham; husband  
of Florence Needham, of Lincoln



Walter Paulson

Lance Corporal

2567682

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 31

BAYEUX Panel 13:2



Alan George Peabody

Private

5891406

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 20

BANNERVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE  
XIV.A.23

Son of Leonard and Henrietta Peabody, of  
Northampton



Frederick Arthur Rimes

Private

4800414

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 27

RANVILLE II.C.35

Son of Martin and Netta Rimes; husband  
of Audrey Rimes, of Anerley, London



Frank Ringham

Private

4804509

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 25

RANVILLE II.B.3

Son of John and Sarah Ringham, of  
Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire



John Castledine Roll

Captain

155657

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 28

RANVILLE II.B.21

Son of Henry and Elizabeth Roll, of  
Epsom, Surrey



Leslie Edward Russell

Private

4807066

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 24

RANVILLE I.C.30

Son of Charles and Ivy Russell, of  
Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire



Leslie Sedgwick

Sergeant

4798712

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 35

RANVILLE I.C.34

Son of William and Mary Sedgwick;  
husband of Olive Sedgwick, of  
Chesterfield, Derbyshire



John Richard Simpson

Private

4799258

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 35

RANVILLE II.B.10

Son of John and Sarah Simpson, of  
Navenby, Lincolnshire



Charles Ernest Skelton

Lance Corporal

14404664

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 20

RANVILLE II.C.29

Son of Ernest and Margaret Skelton, of  
Desborough, Northamptonshire



Thomas Robert Weston

Private

4799893

KIA Saturday 8th July 1944.

Aged 34

RANVILLE II.B.12

Son of John and Ethel Weston, of Ashby,  
Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire



Walter William Baigent

Private

14602972

DOW Sunday 9th July 1944.

Aged 36

LA DELIVERANCE VII.A.7

Son of Frederick and Agnes Baigent;  
husband of Lottie Baigent, of Lightwater,  
Surrey



William Connelly

Private

5341552

DOW

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

Aged 24

LA DELIVERANCE VI.F.3

Son of Jane Connelly, of Stepney, London;  
husband of Louisa Connelly, of Stepney



Archibald Lamont

Private

7901294

KIA Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

Aged 25

RANVILLE II.C.30

Son of Mr and Mrs Duncan Lamont, of  
Partick, Glasgow



Thomas Murphy

Private

4541704

KIA Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

Aged 24

RANVILLE II.C.28

Son of Henry and Sarah Murphy, of  
Castleford, Yorkshire



George Frederick Petty

Private

4798104

DOW Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

Aged 36

HERMANVILLE 2.C.22

Son of Mr and Mrs George Petty; husband  
of Elsie Petty, of Beesby, Lincolnshire



Leonard James Richardson Lieutenant  
CDN/191

KIA Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

Aged 23

RANVILLE II.B.18

Son of Charles and Ellen Richardson, of  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



Hugh Robb Logsdail

Lieutenant

189216

DOW Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 1944. Aged 22

HERMANVILLE 2.C.8

Son of Edward and Constance Logsdail, of  
Clifton, Bristol



## **Captain John Castledine Roll**

Captain Roll had been with the Battalion for over three years, and his cheerfulness was a tonic for everyone, as his enthusiasm was an example. By his death the battalion lost a fine officer and a fine man. He was killed in the grounds of Chateau Beauregard by a Nebelwerfer salvo as he rallied his men.



***Captain Roll (1943)***

## Lieutenant Leonard James Richardson

No.	Rank	Lieutenant	Name	RICHARDSON, Leonard James				
Unit	Cde. - 1st Bn. 1st Canadian Trench B Coy.			Date of death	9th July, 1944			
Died at						France		
Cause						Killed in Action.		
Death occurred on strength of Forces.H.Q.						332-103-257		
N/K						Mrs. Ellen Richardson	Relationship	Mother
Address						Ste. 18, Highworth Apts., Winnipeg, Manitoba		
Remains buried in						M.R. 070719 Chateau grounds Beaugard Cemetery		
Grave location						C.A.K. ✓		

OVER

*Copy of document sent to the next of kin detailing original burial in the grounds of Chateau Beaugard*

BURIAL REPORT TO N.K. JUN 6 1946	REBURIAL
RETURN TO BUR. OF STAT. JUN 13 1946	Ranville British Cemetery, Ranville, France.
ROYAL MESSAGE DESP'D. AUG 30 1944	Grave 18, row B, plot 2.
CAN. MESSAGE DESP'D. 28/7/44	HI & CR Form Despd. JAN 13 1947
	Photographs Despatched APR 28 1948

*A later document which details his reburial in Ranville in 1946*

## **Pte Norman Clifford Bellamy**

### **KETTERING LEADER & GUARDIAN**

Fri August 4<sup>th</sup> 1944

### **KETTERING SOLDIER KILLED**

*'Pte Norman Clifford Bellamy, second son of Mr & Mrs W Bellamy of 4 Legion Crescent, has been killed while serving in France. Pte Bellamy who was a native of Kettering, joined the army in Feb 1940 & went abroad for the first time on D Day. He was educated at the Parish Church School, Kettering & employed by Messers, Pratts, heel builders (shoe industry) Grafton Street Kettering. Pte Bellamy, who was 23, was married & had one son, Richard, who is 6 months old. His elder brother, William, has been serving with the Central Mediterranean Forces for 4 years'*



## APPENDIX 3

### An Interesting Miscellany

#### **Battlefield Scene Recreations**

*By the late Michael Colvin*

The following scenes were amazingly recreated from photos that I took in the summer of 2002, which were then subsequently manipulated with the surviving veterans' recollections in mind.



*B Company advancing towards Herouville on the morning of the  
8<sup>th</sup> July 1944*



*The original photo*



***The unfinished recreation of the scene at the sunken lane as remembered by Peter Cliffe. The Anti-tank platoon finds its way obstructed by Dannert wire and a burning carrier. Later an allied plane dropped a bomb load onto the now advancing C Coy.***



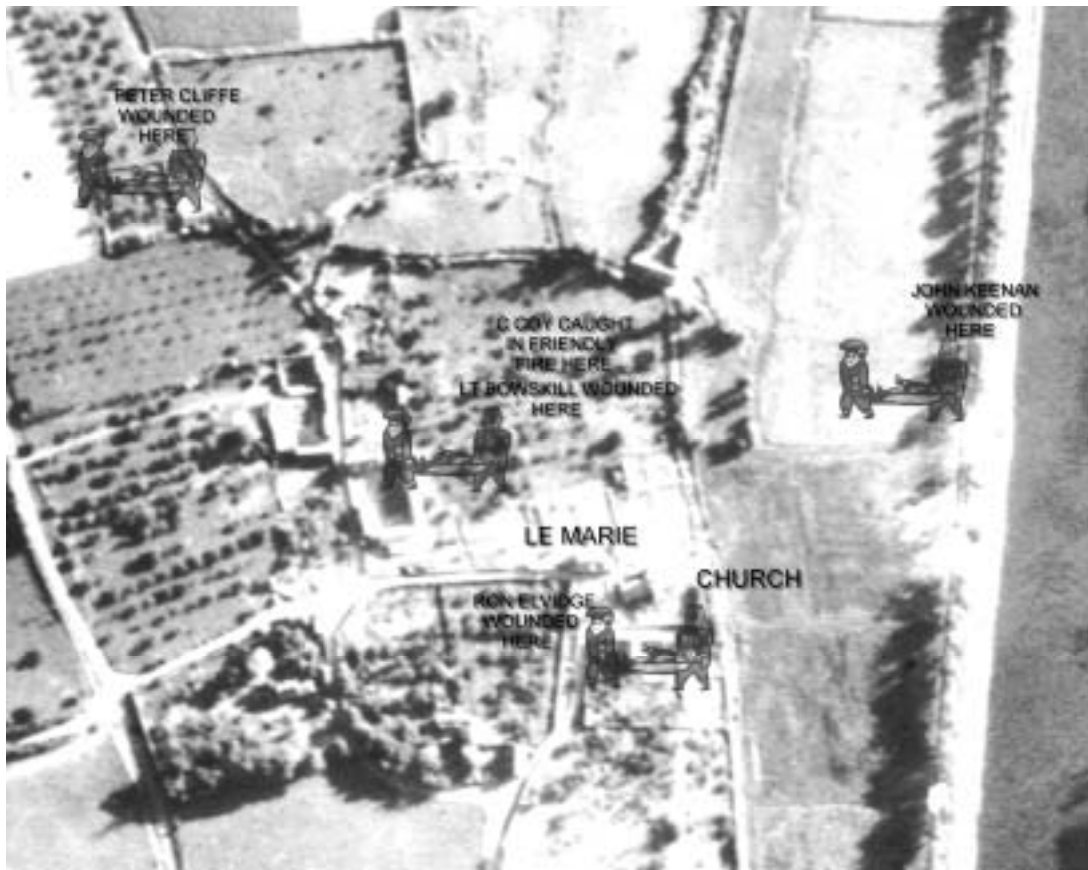
***The original in its early stages of manipulation. Syd Smith is in the passenger seat of the author's hire car on the left (not the carrier!)***



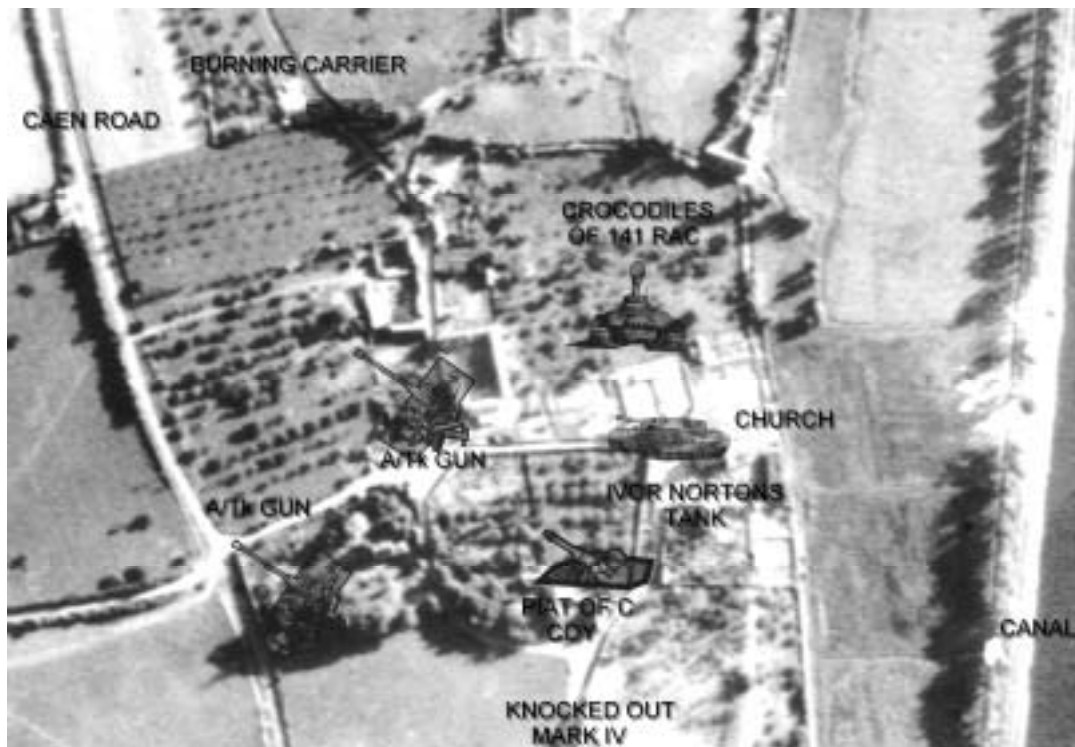
***The leading Mark IV brews up in front of C Coy's position as the counterattack by the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division is seen off on the afternoon of 8<sup>th</sup> July***



***The original***



*An Aerial view which illustrates the rough positions where some of the veterans were wounded on the 8<sup>th</sup> July*



*An aerial view that illustrates the rough positions of some of the armour*

## **Then and now photographs**

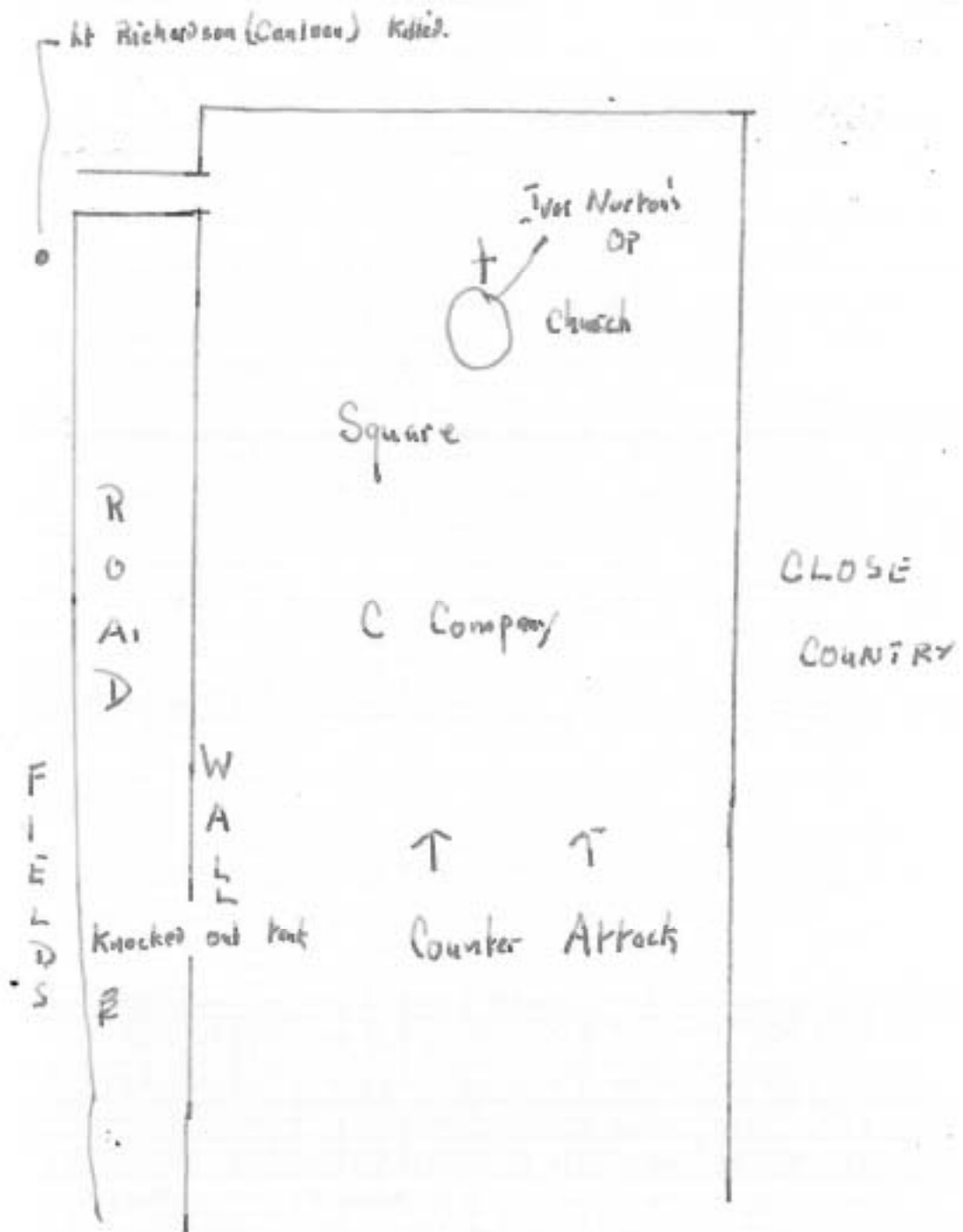
These show the North face of the Marie, towards which the  
Lincolns advanced.



*The north face of the Marie, taken in 1944*

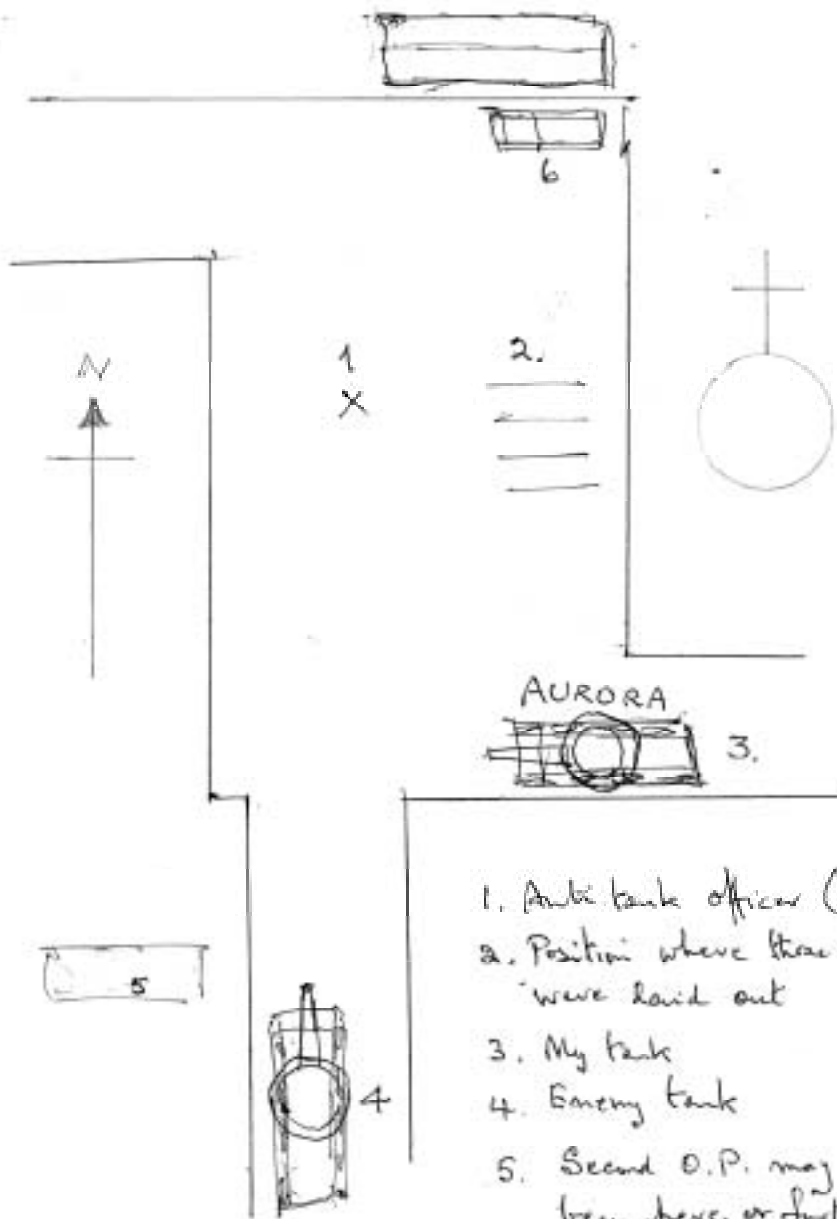


*A similar view in 2002*



***A sketch by the late Glyn Gilbert showing the enemy counterattack: an amazing recollection after 59 years***

Not to scale.



1. Anti tank officer (wounded)
2. Position where those killed were laid out
3. My tank
4. Enemy tank
5. Second O.P. may have been here, or further south.
6. My carrier, damaged by falling masonry from bldg.

***Another amazing recollection: Ivor Norton's sketch showing his position***



## APPENDIX 4

### A German Perspective

*The following edited account has been extracted from the unpublished text, Der Weg der 21. Panzer-Division ("The History of the 21st Panzer Division"), which was supplied by Werner Kortenhuis, a surviving German veteran.*

To the north of Caen, the German defensive positions had been built up since the invasion. Many positions had been surrounded by minefields and turned into fortresses by the concealment of anti-tank guns (PAK) and tanks. LeBisey, La Bijude (16 GAF), and Cuvre-Chef, Galmanche, Grunchy, Francqueville (12 SS Panzer) in particular were turned into very strong defensive positions. Point 64 to the Southwest of LeBisey was a key point from the German point of view as it dominated the northern approach to the city of Caen.

On the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1944, 467 Halifax and Lancaster bombers of Bomber Command flew over our front line positions in the direction of Caen between 21.50 and 22.30 hrs. Not one bomb was dropped within 4 Km of the British and Canadian troops occupying their front line.

The bombing carpet covered an area of 3.5 km by 1 km. Bomber Command dropped 2562 tonnes of bombs, an equivalent to that used on the Dresden raid later in the war. This produced a huge crater landscape. Within 40 minutes this attack destroyed the northern aspect of the city of Caen and caused many French civilian casualties. Bomber Command were apparently trying to destroy German reserves and block the approaches to the city from the German positions to the South. However in the bombed area there were no German troops.

The emotional effect of the bombs falling behind them was incredible, especially for the soldiers of the 16 GAF. This division had just relieved 21 Panzer Division having just arrived from Holland where they were part of the 'quiet' occupational army. They were not prepared for the front line.

When the bombers turned away, the enemy artillery opened fire at 23.00 hrs onto positions behind the German lines. The guns of the battleship HMS Rodney and the cruisers Belfast, Emerald and Roberts joined them. On the dawn of 8<sup>th</sup> July at 04.20 hrs, enemy

artillery opened up on German frontline positions firing 40,000 shells. Behind this 'fire wall' advanced the troops of 3 Canadian, 3 British and 59 British Infantry Division, assaulting Caen from the north and northwest.

The lines of the 16 GAF were overrun by 185 Brigade (supported on its left flank by 2 Lincolns) of 3 British Division supported by rocket firing Typhoons. The villages of LeBisey and Herouville were occupied quite quickly. They reached the important height of Point 64 during the evening at 19.55 hrs.

At 16.30 hrs, the division commander of 21 Panzer Division Generalleutnant Feuchtinger got the following information:

*'The enemy has been successful after heavy bombardment and occupied the northern part of Caen. The situation is still unclear. Familiarise yourself with the situation and go to the position of the 16 GAF, which is in Caen. Release the commander of the 16 GAF and take command yourself. All parts of the 16 GAF are under your command. Regarding the situation you have to lead a counterattack with 21 Panzer Division and get in charge of the situation.'*

Generalleutnant Feuchtinger reached the command post at 18.00 hrs. It became immediately obvious that the enemy was already in Caen and that all the infantry of the 16 GAF, who were meant to defend the city and prevent the enemy to get a further hold, were not there. The 16 GAF had suffered losses of 75 % and all battalion and most of the company commanders were dead or wounded. Demoralised parts of the division had already retreated over the Orne.

Tanks of I Battalion, 22 Panzer regiment in the north of Caen had been destroyed in the battle. Two companies of the 192 Panzergrenadier regiment and tanks of the II Battalion, 22 Panzer regiment were sent over the rail bridge of Bellemais over the Orne. During the afternoon, heavy battles around Herouville took place but were unsuccessful despite the infliction of losses to the Enemy.

At 23.38 hrs, the order was given to 21 Panzer Division to lead a counterattack during the night south of Herouville to get back height 64. The order of attack was to involve 192 Panzergrenadier regiment with three battalions of 200 Field regiment at Herouville. In addition to that a regiment of 16 GAF, which had not been involved in the fighting so far, was to take part as well. Other parts

of 192 Panzergrenadier regiment were led over the Orne to prepare themselves for a counterattack against the enemy south of LeBisey during the dawn hours of 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944.

After the counterattack during the night, which was unsuccessful, 21 Panzer Division was ordered back over the Orne with the remaining parts of the 16 GAF.

At 21.00 hrs, Field Marshal Rommel appeared at the command of the Panzer Group West and gave orders to withdraw all heavy firearms over the Orne on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>. Heavy infantry backed up by pioneers were to stay back as long as possible.

At 02.00 hrs orders were given for all troops to withdraw east of the Orne where 125 Panzergrenadier regiment was already in position. All the heavy firearms and all remaining functioning tanks of 22 Panzer regiment were back over the Orne by 08.00 hrs on 9<sup>th</sup> July.

Under heavy fire at 10.00 hrs on the 9<sup>th</sup>, we very slowly left Caen. Our neighbour, 12 SS Panzer Division were fighting for every metre of ground. At Malon far north of the city a group of them were fighting heavily with the British on the 9<sup>th</sup> July. The North Staffordshire regiment (3 Bde), which had only landed in the morning, suffered high losses. The remaining elements of 12 SS Panzer Division withdrew over the Orne at 13.00 hrs on 9<sup>th</sup> July.

Ab schrift.

85a

Geheim Kommandosache

GEHEIME KOMMANDOSACHE

2. Abschriftausfertigung  
2. Abschriftausfertigung

von Panzergruppe West.

8.7.44

KR.

an Heeresgruppe B

nachr. AOK 7

Tagesmeldung 8.7.44

Nach schwerster Artl. Vorbereitung durch Kaliber aller Art ~~von Land~~ vom Land, See und aus der Luft, die bereits in den Abendstunden des 7.7. begann, trat der Gegner an 8.7. früh zu dem erwarteten Grossangriff auf Caen mit starken Kräften von Nordosten, Norden und Nordwesten an. Nach harten Kämpfen in Abschnitt röm. 86.A.K. ging Herouville und Lehissey verloren. Bron wurde, nachdem es vorübergehend verloren gegangen war, wieder genommen. In den Nachmittagsstunden gelang es dem Gegner die Höhe 64, die die Stadt Caen von Norden her beherrscht zu nehmen. Ein Gegenangriff durch Teile 21.Pz.Div. zur Wiederherstellung des Lage auf Höhe 84 ist im Gange.

In Abschnitt 12.SS-Pz.Div. gingen Gensac, Buron, Gruchy, Authie und Franceville mehrstündigen schweren Angriffen des Feindes verloren. *f. 1309* Starker Druck feindl. Panzer aus Buron und Authie hält an. Gegner versucht mit sich ständig verstärkenden Kräften den Durchbruch nach Caen zu erzwingen. Die Kämpfe im Hülsenkopf waren besonders ~~stark~~ hart. Die Verluste auf beiden Seiten erheblich. Die westl. der Opus eingesetzten Inf. Teile der 16.Lw.-Feld.Div. hatten 75% Ausfälle. Verlustmeldungen von 12.SS-Pz.Korps stehen noch aus. Die Kampfführung wurde durch den Mangel an Artl.-Munition massgeblich beeinflusst. Röm.1. und röm. 2.SS-Pz.Korps verfügten z.Zt. nicht mehr als 1/2 Mun.-Ausstattung.

In Abschnitt röm.47.Pz.Korps trat der Feind mit schwächeren Kräften bei Torteval und nördlich davon zum Angriff an. Es gelangen ihm 2 Einbrüche (an der Strasse Caumont-Caen südl. Grauville und nördl. des Bois de St. Germain), die jedoch schon z.T. beseitigt sind oder deren Beseitigung für die Dämmerung befohlen ist, sodass mit Inbesitznahme der alten A.K. noch am Abend des 8.7. zurechnen ist. 2 Feindvorstöße in Kp. Stärke (bei Langraye und Bricquessand) wurden abgewiesen. An der übrigen Artl. und S.M. Truppenaktivität.

Absicht: Abwehr feindl. Angriffe in Linie Ostrand Calix - Höhe 64 - Nordrand St. Germain - Flugplatz 500 - ~~stark~~ süd. Cerpiquet. Zäh kämpfendes Ausweichen vor überlegenen Feindangriff auf Linie Südrand Caen - Nordrand Bretteville.

In den Kämpfen an der Invasionsfront hat sich ein SS-Pz. mit unterstellten Verbänden des Heeres und der Waffen-SS besonders bewährt. Von Verbänden dieses Korps wurden allein 628 Panzer vernichtet und 97 Flugzeuge abgeschossen. In Nahkampf und bei der Pz. Bekämpfung hat sich das SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 25 und das SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 12 besonders hervorgetan.

Panzergruppe West  
röm. Ia Nr. 236 / 44 g. Kdos.

V.d.R.d.A.

Oberleutnant

*An original Panzergruppe West daily report from 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944, detailing the loss of Herouville*

Copy

Security: Command Level

Copy No 2

From Panzergruppe West

8.7.44

to Army Group B  
For info AOK7

Daily Position Report 8.7.44

After the heaviest artillery preparation from guns of all calibre from land, sea and from the air, which began in the evening of the 7.7, the enemy launched the expected major assault on Caen early on 8.7 with strong forces from the North East, North and North West. After hard fighting in LXXXVI Corps' area, Herouville and Lebisey were lost. Ebron was retaken after being initially captured. In the afternoon the enemy succeeded in taking Pt 64 which commands the town of Caen from the North. A counter attack by elements of 21 Panzer Div to restore the position on Pt 64 is in progress.

In 12 SS Panzer Div area, Galmanche, Buron, Gruchy Authie and Franceville were lost after numerous heavy attacks by the enemy. Strong pressure by armour from Buron and Authie was held. The enemy is attempting to force a break through to Caen with ever-increasing strength. Fighting in the bridgehead was especially hard. Losses on both sides considerable. The infantry elements of 16 Luftwaffe Field div positioned to the west of the Orne suffered 75% casualties. Reports of losses from 12 SS Panzer Corps are still awaited(?). The conduct of the battle was decisively affected by shortage of artillery ammunition. I and II SS Panzer Corps dispose at the moment of no more than 1/2 their ammunition establishment.

In XLVII Panzer Corps area the enemy attacked at Torteval and northward of it with weaker forces. They succeeded in making 2 break ins (on the Caumont-Caen road south of Grauville and north of the Bois de St. Germain) which however have now either been cleared out or have been ordered to be cleared at last light so that re occupation of the old Main Battle Line is to be expected by the evening of 8.7. Two enemy thrusts in company strength (at Langraye and Briquessard) were repulsed. In the rest of the area only artillery and recce activity.

Intention: Hold enemy attacks on the line east edge Calix - Pt 64 - north edge St Germain - airfield 500 m. south of Carpiquet. Give ground with heavy fighting in the face of overwhelming enemy attacks to the line south edge of Caen - north edge of Brettville.

In the fighting on the Invasion front I SS Pz with supporting units from the Army and Waffen SS has been especially reliable. Units from this Corps alone has accounted for 628 AFV and shot down 97 aircraft. In hand to hand and armoured fighting SS Pz Grenadier Regt 26 and SS Pz Grenadier Regt 12 have particularly distinguished themselves.

Panzergruppe West  
Ia Nr 236/44 g.Kdos.

F.d.R.d.A  
(Illegible)  
Oberleutnant

*English translation (Michael Colvin)*

## Recollections of Lt Hans Holler

Lt Hans Holler supplied the following account of his experiences in Herouville, prior to Charnwood:



*'On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1944, we (21 Panzer Division) moved our line 1 km back into Herouville and the Caen factory area of Colombelles, as a second line of defence.*

*'We drove through the Chateau's park and down to the Orne and up onto the heights of Colombelles. From there two iron bridges crossed both arms of the Orne, parallel to the ocean. My anti-tank section, with three 75mm self-propelled anti-tank guns, was emplaced on the left bank of the Orne in Herouville whilst on the right bank, in Colombelles we emplaced the 20mm Flak and mortar section.*

*'With my unit I survived in Herouville for a month in a living hell. The bridges were shelled constantly from the sea and the land. Jabos dropped bombs and made craters so large that houses could have been built in them.*

*'The main battle line ran behind thick stonewalls along the road in Herouville some 200 yards from the Canal bridge, and across the two roads running parallel with the canal in the direction of Lebisey. The area up to the chateau (at Beauregard) was no-mans land, and the scene of frequent patrol actions. About the middle of June, a strong party of Tommies had even penetrated into Herouville as far as the stone wall along the road, but were thrown back with the loss of their officer.*

*'It was in Colombelles that our battalion commander, Major Zippe, beloved for his prudence and care of his men, was killed during intense air activity. He was, as always, on the front line with his men.*



***Lt Hans Holler (8.Kp./ II. Btl./ PzGrenRgt 192/ 21.P.D.) on reconnaissance, Herouville, June 1944***

*‘On the right of the Orne we were responsible for a sector stretching from the edge of the factory to the bridge. In front of the church we emplaced a wheeled 20mm flak and further up the fence we emplaced a mortar. Overlooking the bridge we had very good trenches but bombs and artillery caused us a lot of trouble. The bridge at the southern edge of the village had been repeatedly attacked from the air, without the least success as it was too well covered by flak until the beginning of July when our own frogmen appeared!*

*‘The bridges in Benouville caused our generals a lot of grief since they connected Tommy’s eastern bridgehead. So at the*

*end of June some frogmen came to Colombelles to be briefed by us. One put on his suit, took a torpedo into the water, and towed it behind him on a lead, and without a sound swam off in the direction of the enemy. The next morning at about 2 am he was back, with the torpedo, having found his way barred by an obstacle.*

*'He decided to try again by starting from the far side of the barrier, which he did. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of July the bridge at Benouville was blown up at 5 am. We were forewarned of the time and we were anxiously looking at our watches. Dead on time came an enormous detonation from downstream. But at the same time our bridge at Herouville, 100 yards from my dug out, blew up in our faces. One of the frogmen had tied his torpedo to the wrong bridge! The mistake was only noticed when the frogman climbed out of the water behind us.*

*'On 6<sup>th</sup> July, we were taken out of the line and relieved by an infantry unit of White Russians.*

*'We were withdrawn 15 km to the southeast of Caen to make good losses and to clean up. This was a joy after a month of uninterrupted battle and I wrote as much in a letter home dated 8<sup>th</sup> July'*



***Milking cows in an orchard in Herouville, June 1944***

## APPENDIX 5

### A Present Day Driving Tour of the Battlefield

The best place to start the tour is at the gates of Chateau Beauregard. In order to find this, take the southbound D515 from Ouistreham towards Caen. Take the exit to Beauregard, which is the exit after Blainville (D141), opposite the docks. Follow the minor road to Beauregard passing over the speed bumps (during the war, this was the main Caen road). This is the road the Lincolns took. Park the car by the tower, which dominates the entrance to the Chateau.

① Looking down the road, you face south west towards Caen. The A/Tk ditch ran from the canal on your left, crossing in front of you, and rising to the heights of LeBisey (at 2 o'clock). You are on the far right flank of the starting line; it was from here that the bombing raid on the night of 7<sup>th</sup> July 44 was witnessed. The mortar platoon was positioned in the close country to your left, while the carrier platoon was in the high ground behind and to your right. From here one can appreciate the advantage the Germans had. The church tower (OP and MG post) can clearly be seen at 11 o'clock, and the chimneys at Colombelles across the canal would have dominated the skyline. The Germans, who occupied the ground East of the Orne, could watch the Lincolns' every move. The fields in front of you and to your left were the minefields the Lincolns had to cross.

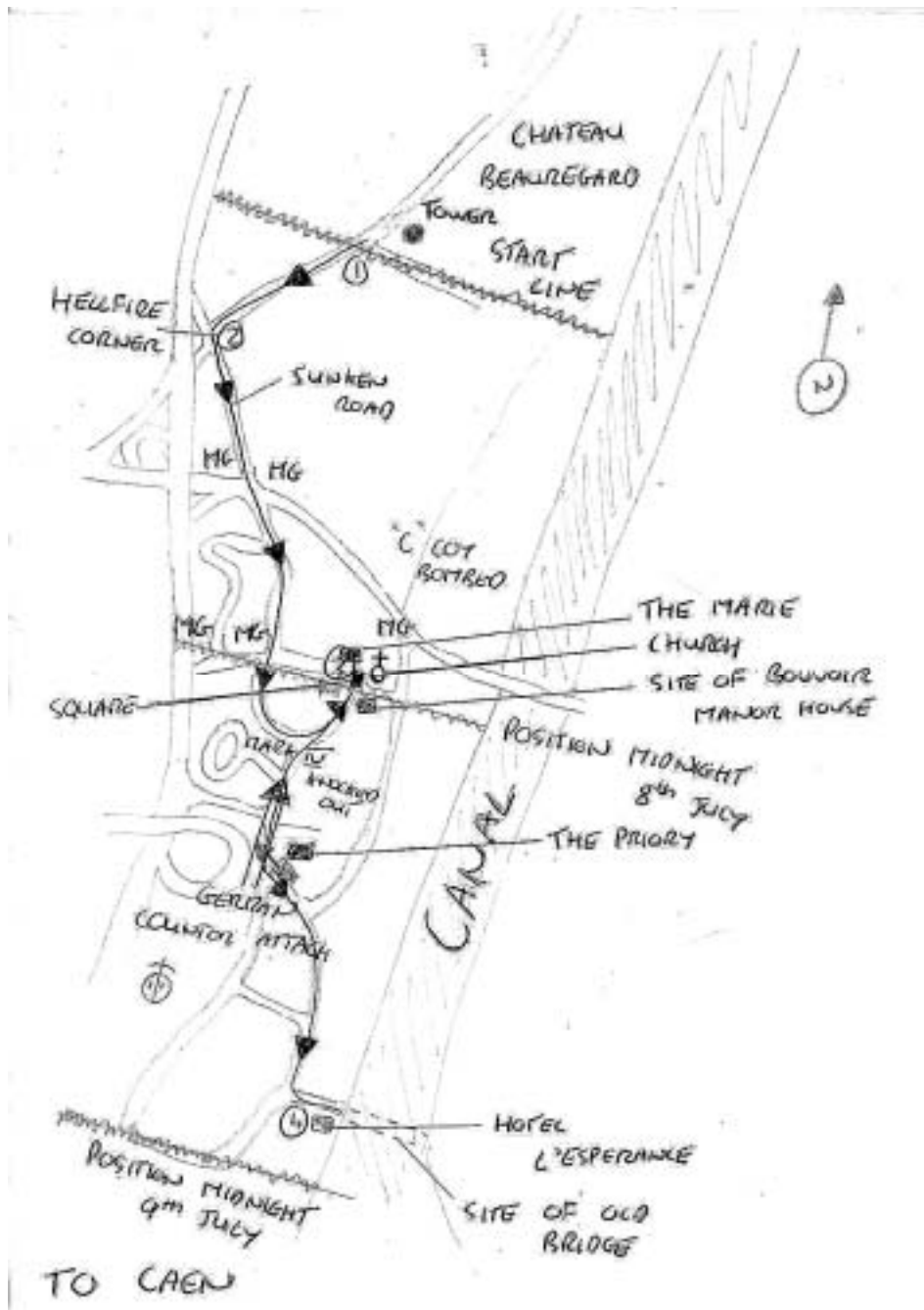
② Continuing by car and driving for 250m (French car) you reach 'Hellfire Corner.' *Beware the road system has changed considerably since WWII.* Straight ahead (No entry) would have been the impassable road to Caen. Here there were many casualties from both mortar and sniper fire. B Coy advanced across the fields on your left, but the carriers were forced down the road you have just driven along due to the A/Tk ditch. Taking a left into the 'sunken road' you are now following Peter Cliffe's route. There were two MG posts situated at the end of the road, one on the right and one on the left. These caused considerable casualties. There were also snipers in an orchard, which then existed on your right. All the time one is under the constant observation of the church tower (11 o'clock). The field over the high bank on your left is

where some of C Company were caught in 'Friendly Fire'. On reaching the T junction (the road you are about to cross did not exist) pass straight over into Herouville. Passing down the narrow streets one can see how much easier it was to defend than attack. Proceed straight over at the crossroads, following the 'Autres Direction' sign. This is where Mike Hunt positioned one of the A/Tk guns. The narrow lane will lead you around to the left and to a further T junction. Take a left and you will find yourself in the Church Square (Place du 1<sup>st</sup> Decembre). Park your car.

③ Facing the church, you will find two plaques, one commemorating the Lincolns who gave their lives and the other the school children who were tragically lost on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1945. It is here that the Lincolns who were killed in action were sadly laid out at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> July. The Mairie (to your left) and the church in particular, still show the scars of war, both having been extensively damaged. As you turn to face 'Le Mairie,' imagine Ivor Norton's carrier buried under rubble that fell from the roof as it was hit by a German mortar. Doing an about turn you now face Nos 24 & 46 Rue de la Fontaine. This is where the impressive 'Bouvoir Manor' once stood. Built in 1683, its cellars were used by the refugees in June 1944 before the Germans occupied it and placed a radio transmitter there. It was destroyed on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1944. In front of the ruins, Ivor Nortons tank, Aurora, would have stood. In the cemetery stands the War Memorial to the civilians who lost their lives.

Walking to the south (down the road which you have just driven up) past the orchard on your left you are passing through C Coy's position when the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division counterattacked with tanks on the afternoon of 8<sup>th</sup> July. The leading Mark IV was knocked out roughly where the road joins from the right. There would have been open fields in front of you and to the right. This is the position the Lincolns held at midnight on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944. Following the road you can see remnants of one of the old farms on the left (an old stone arch). Walking still further, you reach The Priory, on the left. On the corner with 'Rue de Belle Vue' there was a concrete German MG nest. In the open fields, which would have been ahead and to the right, there were several 2cm Ack Ack guns which were used in an anti-infantry role. Following the 'Rue de Belle Vue' for 400 meters, a left fork takes you to the Canal. This was the maximum extent of the Lincolns' advance on 9<sup>th</sup> July.

④ The old bridge crossed the river here at 'Hotel L'Esperance' but there are no signs of it today.



**Sketch map to be used as an aid for the driving tour, the numbers correspond to those in the text**

**NOT FOR RESALE**

**REFERENCE ONLY**

**COPYRIGHT © 2004 Edward Dunstan.**