

Month and year : June 1944

Commanding Officer : Brigadier The Lord Lovat, DSO MC

1st June 1944

Place: Southampton

The Bde remained in Concentration Area Camp C 18. Briefing of troops continued.

5th June 1944

The Brigade left Camp C 18 and embarked for Operation OVERLORD at WARSASH in LCI(S) of the 200th and 201st LCI(S) Flotilla. (Senior Naval Officer, Lt Commander L.R. Curtis, RNVR).

6th June 1944 - D Day

Place: France

4 Cdo with Adv Bde HQ landed at LA BRECHE at H 30. They were 500 strong and their objective was the coastal battery at OUISTREHAM. 4 Cdo suffered 40 casualties while landing including the CO. C Troop of the Cdo engaged the defences and gained the main coast road, followed by the rest of the Cdo. Fighting French Troops led the Cdo towards OUISTREHAM, coming under heavy fire. They over ran the casino area and the assault on the battery commenced. After severe fighting the position was taken. Casualties on both sides were heavy. R/T contact by Bde HQ was made with 6 Airborne Div and it was learnt that the bridges which the Bde intended to use were intact. Bde HQ and 6 Cdo landed at 0840 hrs under heavy gun and mortar fire. 6 Cdo took the lead when the road was gained and the advance to the bridges commenced. Progress was slow because of the marshy ground and enemy mortar fire. The forming up point was reached in 1 hr, by which time 3 Cdo and 45 RM Cdos had landed and they caught up with 6 Cdo. They had suffered few casualties. They were reached at 1230 hrs and contact made with 6 Airborne Div. 6 Cdo crossed the bridges and sent their cycle troop forward to capture LE PLEIN. Bde HQ halted E of the river br. 45 RM Cdo passed over the bridges towards their objectives at MERVILLE and FRANCEVILLE PLAGE. 3 Cdo who had been held up, crossed the bridges at 1530 and were diverted to protect Div HQ. Thus the original plan was abandoned and the Bde Comd decided to hold the high ground from MERVILLE to BREVILLE. 45 RM Cdo were ordered to remain at MERVILLE for the night.

Bde HQ moved to ECARDE and 6 Cdo consolidated in LE PLEIN. 4 Cdo rejoined the Bde at 2000 hrs, and dug in at HAUGER they had suffered heavy casualties in fighting during the day. At the end of the day, 3 Cdo were still detached.

7th June 1944

Place: France

At 0300 hrs 3 Cdo re-joined the Bde. At 1200 hrs, Maj Gen Gale, Comd 6 Airborne Div visited Bde HQ and ordered 45 RM Cdo to take FRANCEVILLE PLAGE. The Cdo suffered heavy casualties in the assault, and after bitter fighting withdrew to MERVILLE. Two troops of 3 Cdo on loan to 45 RM Cdo joined them, after suffering casualties while silencing a gun battery. 45 RM Cdo were out of touch with Bde. The enemy attempted to penetrate the Div area but was repelled. 6 Cdo were being mortared and a patrol was sent to clear BREVILLE, prisoners and weapons being captured. At 1900 hrs 3 Cdo moved to LE PLEIN to join up 4 & 6 Cdos. Enemy attempts to infiltrate were reported at 2130 hrs. This was prevented.

8th June 1944

Place: France

In the early hours, runners arrived at Bde HQ from 45 RM Cdo, who were still cut off. Before assistance could be sent to 45 RM Cdo, an enemy attack in force developed during which a troop of 4 Cdo was forced to withdraw. Eventually a counter attack by 3 Cdo restored the position. A patrol from 6 Cdo broke up an attack, and attempts to infiltrate were prevented. 45 RM Cdo suffered heavily during the day and they were withdrawn inside the Bde positions. It was decided to hold the ridge of ground from HAUGER to BREVILLE at all costs. A large scale attack was expected. Bde HQ moved from ECARDE to LE PLEIN.

9th June 1944

Place: France

Infiltration attempts were made throughout the day. 45 RM Cdo moved into positions at AMFREVILLE to complete a defensive ring round the high ground. The Bde was still isolated from 6 Airborne Div. GONNEVILLE and LE BAS DE BREVILLE were heavily shelled during the day, being likely enemy

forming up points. FRANCEVILLE PLAGE was bombarded by rocket ships. Further infiltration attempts by the enemy were sealed off. Enemy mortars were active during the night.

10th June 1944

Place: France

6 Cdo were heavily mortared at 0800 hrs, and the whole Bde front was ranged. 4 Cdo suffered heavy casualties. An enemy attack was launched at 0815 against 6 Cdo, probing of 3 and 4 Cdos positions also occurred. The enemy was driven back with heavy losses. Minor thrusts supported by an SP gun against 3 & 4 Cdos repulsed, but a further attack, of 2 battalion strength developed on 4 Cdo. Some infiltration occurred, and by 1145 hrs 4 Cdo HQ was in danger, being shelled and mortared. Bitter fighting resulted in heavy casualties to both sides. At 1400 hrs, the enemy withdrew, badly mauled. A further attack was made in the afternoon, against 4 Cdo, and though infiltration occurred, the positions were not over run. 45 RM Cdos positions were mortared, but the lines everywhere held firm, although seriously depleted in strength. Prisoners taken were eager to talk, and it was clear that the battle was won. 346 Div (consisting of 875 and 858 Inf Regts) and 857 Inf Regt were identified. 4 Cdo who had suffered heavily were withdrawn. Their place was taken by 12 Para Bn. Two SP guns arrived in the Bde area and were used by 3 Cdo for offensive patrols towards SALLENELLES and BREVILLE.

11th June 1944

Place: France

After a quiet night, shelling began at first light, units and Bde HQ suffered casualties. A fighting patrol from 45 RM Cdo entered SALLENELLES and found it clear. 3 Cdo supported an attack by the Black Watch on BREVILLE. A further patrol by 45 RM Cdo entered AMFREVILLE and found it empty; evidence was discovered of 21 Pz Recce Regt in the area. Brig Durnford Slater, Dep Comd SS Gp, visited Bde HQ. 4 SS Bde took over 12 Para battalion positions. Shelling recommenced at 2200 hrs, 3 & 6 Cdos suffering more casualties. After dark patrols were sent to BREVILLE and SALLENELLES. The Bde Major was injured and evacuated. First line reinforcements arrived and carried out a successful raid without loss.

12th June 1944

Place: France

Patrols during the night made contact with the enemy. 6 Cdo were shelled before dawn, and an attack was expected. Arty and counter battery fire was directed against the battery believed responsible for the shelling. No attack developed. 4 Cdo returned to their positions at midday. A strong patrol to the area of LA GRANDE FERME DU BUISSON to support movements of 4 SS Bde, by 3 Cdo was unopposed. More heavy shelling of 6 & 45 RM Cdos occurred from 1400 to 1800. Several casualties resulted. At 2100, 12 Para battalion supported by tanks formed up in the Bde area for an attack on BREVILLE. A heavy artillery barrage was laid down at 2145, shells falling short in 6 Cdo area and causing casualties to 12 Para battalion and 6 Cdo. Enemy fire was also falling in the same area. During this melee, the Bde Comd was severely wounded. BREVILLE was in the hands of 12 Para battalion by midnight. No opposition was encountered by a patrol probing towards GONNEVILLE. A sleeping prisoner was taken with his weapon. Lt Col D Mills-Roberts DSO MC assumed command of 1 SS Bde.

13th June 1944

Place: France

Apart from spasmodic shelling during the morning, the enemy remained quiet throughout the day. CCRA 6 Airborne Div and CCRA 1 Corps visited Bde HQ during the day to discuss counter battery action to stop the enemy shelling. A message to the Bde was received from Brig The Lord Lovat DSO MC.

14th June 1944

Place: France

There was no enemy activity during the day. Patrolling was continued, one patrol from 10 Cdo passing agents through the enemy lines during the night and guided them to pre-selected points.

15th June 1944

Place: France

Patrolling and sniping continued. The patrolling policy was confirmed at a Div conference attended by Brig D Mills-Roberts DSO MC. The Div front was divided up into patrol areas. Likely enemy harbouring areas were subjected to fire from arty and Naval guns. PsW confirmed the enemy dislike for the latter.

16th June 1944

Place: France

Early in the morning the Bde area was again mortared and shelled, and another enemy attack was expected. At first light Naval support was called for to nullify likely forming up points. No contact was made with the enemy, and the threat developed elsewhere.

17th June 1944

Place: France

Patrolling continued. The enemy were observed to be digging in, and penetration by own troops was difficult, except in small numbers.

18th June 1944

Place: France

Alternate recce and fighting patrols were sent out. When sufficient information was in hand a carefully planned raid was mounted with arty and Naval support.

19th June 1944

Place: France

Increased mortar fire and shelling occurred in the Bde area, causing casualties. The enemy showed no inclination to come out in daylight.

By night it was impossible to approach their lines without drawing fire. A patrol was sent out with the idea of destroying enemy supply points.

21st June 1944

Place: France

After a quiet day a patrol of 6 Cdo broke into a defended locality bordering the GONNEVILLE road. Satisfactory results were reported. Some casualties were caused by inaccurate arty support.

22nd June 1944

Place: France

Lt Gen M.C. Dempsey DSO, Commander 2nd Army, visited Bde HQ and expressed his admiration for the Bde. A deception patrol was sent out by 3 Cdo. The Germans however, refused to leave their lines.

23rd June 1944

Place: France

The enemy still showed reluctance to leave his lines. A patrol making a close recce failed to draw any fire.

24th June 1944

Place: France

An extensive sniping programme was decided upon. The enemy no longer held the initiative, and were content to mortar only the more obvious patrol approach and withdrawal routes.

26th June 1944

Place: France

A sortie by 3 Cdo penetrated the enemy positions undetected and a prisoner was taken.

28th June 1944

Place: France

After a careful recce patrol, a large scale raid was launched by 45 RM Cdo on the LONGUEMARE area. Everything went according to plan, and objectives were attained. Damage and casualties were caused to the enemy. Gen Gale GOC 6 Airborne Div praised this patrol, commending No 1 SS Bde and 45 RM Cdo.

29th June 1944

Place: France

Maj Gen Sturges GOC SS Gp visited the Bde.

Month and year : July 1944

Commanding Officer : Brig D. Mills-Roberts DSO MC

1st July 1944

Place: France

Staff as at July 1st (Inc. attached officers) :-

Bde Comd : Brig D. Mills-Roberts DSO MC

B.M. : Major H.H. Blissett

GSO III : Capt T.A. Donnelly

S.C. : Capt L.M. Harper Gow

I.O. : Capt A.D.C. Smith

B.T.O. : Capt J.A. Lawrence

S.O.R.E. : Capt R.E.W. Holmes

M.O. : Lt J.A. Tulloch (Att'd from 10 IA Cdo)

L.O. : Lt J.E.D. Watkins

F.S.O. : Capt Viscount A.de Jonghe (Att'd from 10 IA Cdo)

L.O. : Capt G.R. Franks (Att'd from 10 (IA)Cdo since returned UK

Padre : Capt (Rev) C. Pritchard

Padre : Capt (Rev) D.J.R. Thomas

2nd July 1944

Place: France

It was noticed that slackening of naval bombardment on centres of enemy resistance owing to needs of other priority targets resulted in the enemy becoming a little more adventurous. A patrol of 6 Cdo encountered an enemy patrol in front of enemy FDLs for the first time for some days.

4th July 1944

Place: France

A Propaganda Broadcast was made in conjunction with a raid on enemy FDLs by 6 Cdo. 6 Cdo inflicted damage and casualties on enemy positions and captured a prisoner, though he was killed in the withdrawal.

6th July 1944

Place: France

4 Cdo carried out a raid at the northern end of the Bde front and confirmed the fact that the enemy were digging in and rapidly strengthening their positions by wiring and booby traps.

7th July 1944

Place: France

4 Cdo moved from HAUGER to BREVILLE taking over from 6 Air landing Bde. 4 SS Bde took over 4 Cdos positions in HAUGER.

12th July 1944

Place: France

Maj Gen RN Gale GOC 6 Airborne Div visited Bde HQ.

14th July 1944

Place: France

Detachments from Bde HQ and all units took part in the 'JULY 14' celebrations in the village of LE PLEIN which included the consecration of a Memorial set up on the village green in memory of those members of the First Special Service Brigade who lost their lives fighting in Normandy. The Service was followed by a March Past of the detachments and a party of **Les Anciens Combattants** of the village at which Brig J Durnford Slater DSO, Deputy Comd SS Group took the salute.

15th July 1944

Place: France

General Sir Miles Dempsey KCB DSO, Commander 2nd Army visited Bde HQ.

16th July 1944

Place: France

Brig D. Mills-Roberts DSO MC attended a memorial service held by 6 Cdo. General Sir Bernard Montgomery, C in C 21 Army Group, held an investiture at HQ 6 Airborne Div which was attended by the Bde Comd. Several members of the Bde were decorated. General Montgomery visited BREVILLE during his tour of the area. Deputy Comd SS Gp held a conference which was attended by the Bde Comd and all Staff Officers.

18th July 1944

Place: France

A sharp bombing attack occurred on the area during the hours of darkness. An attempt no doubt to interfere with the flow of reinforcements and supplies which were passing through the village towards the front SE of CAEN where Operation GOODWOOD was in progress. Casualties and damage were slight.

20th July 1944

Place: France

A further bombing attack occurred during the night.

21st July 1944

Place: France

A Propaganda Broadcast was given from the area of LONGUEMARE.

23rd July 1944

Place: France

A deserter from 857 Regt came in through 4 Cdo positions and confirmed the suspicion that 346 Fus battalion had been relieved in the enemy line opposite about a week before.

24th July 1944

Place: France

Another deserter from same Regt came in through 4 Cdo.

25th July 1944

Place: France

BREVILLE was shelled and bombed during the night. 4 Cdo suffering 7 casualties (incl 1 killed). A Bde Comd's conference was held at HQ 6 Airborne Div which was attended by Brig D. Mills-Roberts DSO MC.

27th July 1944

Place: France

One of the buildings in LE PLEIN used as Bde PW Cage was hit during the nights air attack, but no casualties occurred.

29th July 1944

Place: France

General F.A.N. Browning DSO, Commander Airborne Forces visited Bde HQ.
Lt General Crocker, GOC 1st Corps visited Bde HQ.

30th July 1944

Place: France

Maj General R. Sturges, GOC SS Gp, visited Bde HQ.

31st July 1944

Place: France

4 & 6 Cdos were relieved by units of 6 Air landing Bde and moved SOUTH into positions WEST of LE BOIS DE BAVENT having been in the line without relief and without changing their positions for 56 days. Bde HQ moved into new position behind 4 Cdo. 3 & 45 RM Cdos remained in LE PLEIN under command 6 Airlanding Bde until they should be relieved the following day by 4 SS Bde and move SOUTH to rejoin the Bde.

Month and year : August 1944

Commanding Officer : Brig D. Mills-Roberts DSO MC

1st August 1944

Place: France

3 & 45 (RM) Cdos were relieved by units of 4 SS Bde and joined the rest of the Bde holding the part of the line facing LE MESNIL and the BOIS de BAVENT.

4th August 1944

Place: France

Major General R. Sturges, GOC SS Group visited the Bde and inspected the positions.

9th August 1944

Place: France

Heavier shelling of the Bde area was noted. Along the whole front there were signs that a withdrawal by the enemy was being prepared, if not imminent, and detailed plans were drawn up for immediate pursuit if a withdrawal should take place. Major General R.E. Laycock, DSO, Chief of Combined Operations visited the Bde.

17th August 1944

Place: France

The enemy started to withdraw and the pre-arranged pursuit was put into operation. On arrival at BAVENT the Bde took up new positions in accordance with the new line, the formations on the left and right having also advanced after the treating enemy. A tactical Bde HQ moved into BAVENT, leaving the main HQ WEST of the BOIS de BAVENT. Patrols were sent out to the EAST to keep touch with the enemy, who had halted on the line of the DIVES and were holding the high ground EAST of the river.

19th August 1944

Place: France

The Bde was ordered to attack the high ground EAST of the DIVES, and take a height overlooking the main TROARN - DOZULE road from the NORTH to cover a further advance on DOZULE by other formations of 6 Airborne Div. The enemy position was of quite exceptional natural strength, any approach having to be made across 2500 yards of open marshy country, deeply flooded and completely dominated by the high ground to the EAST of the river.

20th August 1944

Place: France

The attack started at 0045 hrs, the whole Brigade marching in single file following a route across the marshes marked with white tape by the point section. By 0615 hrs the whole column had succeeded in infiltrating right through the enemy defences and was disposed on the high ground near ANGOVILLE, the first indication of the attack being the assault of the enemy's Company HQ where complete surprise was obtained. In spite of determined efforts on the part of the enemy to dislodge the Bde, the positions were held all day, though the positions were completely surrounded and the question of supplies and the evacuation of casualties and prisoners became acute. After dark, however, a relief column got through with supplies and during the night the enemy withdrew to the EAST.

22nd August 1944

Place: France

The Bde moved off towards the River TOUCQUES, following 6 Airlanding Bde, who were in pursuit of the enemy near DEAUVILLE.

23rd August 1944

Place: France

Still in reserve, the Bde moved to DRUBEC, 4 miles WEST of PONT L'EVEQUE.

24th August 1944

Place: France

Recce showed that the enemy had withdrawn from the line of the TOUCQUES during the night and the Bde advanced over the river to positions in the vicinity of ST BENOIT D'HERBERTOT, where enemy rearguards were holding out. A further advance was made during darkness and by the morning the Bde was disposed on high ground south west of BEUZEVILLE, with the enemy still holding the town, but cleared from the area to the WEST.

26th August 1944

Place: France

A further advance of about 4 miles was made during the night, bringing the Bde into positions near ST MACLOU on the main HONFLEUR - PONT AUDEMER roads and encircling BEUZEVILLE, though the town was abandoned by the enemy before the escape route could be cut. The enemy withdrew over the SEINE and after 83 days without being rested the Bde received orders to dispose the troops without tactical considerations and with a view to maximum rest.

Month and year : September 1944

Commanding Officer : Brig D. Mills-Roberts DSO MC

6th September 1944

Place: France

The Brigade left the area of St Maclou and proceeded to Arromanches, where it entered Transit Camp 60 to await embarkation.

7th September 1944

Place: France

The Brigade embarked and sailed for U.K.

8th September 1944

Place: U.K.

The Brigade disembarked at Southampton and Gosport, and went into Camp at PETWORTH, Bde HQ at Cowdray House, Midhurst.

11th September 1944

Place: U.K.

Bde HQ proceeded on leave.