

**1st/6th BATTALION, EAST SURREY REGIMENT**

***Intelligence Summary***

**Appendix**

**1944**

**May**

**PIEDIMONTE ALIFE**

- May 1st Bn training continued according to programme. Weather remained fine and warm. CO and IO continued planning for Operation 'HONKER'.
- May 2nd Preparation for Bde Exercise 'PLUM'. Orders issued at 1100 hrs. CO spoke to Bn at 1200 hrs, and gave a brief resume of the exercise. Exercise carried out according to plan.
- May 3rd Bn returned to camp by 0800 hrs, then rested until midday meal was ready. CO held Coy Comds conference on Exercise 'PLUM' at 1000 hrs. Bde Comd held conference at HQ 10 Inf Bde for Bn Comds at 1100 hrs. New Bn Training Programme issued. 44 Assault Boats Mk III delivered to the Bn. Jeeps fitted with wireless delivered to the Bn.
- May 4th Bn continued training according to new programme. 6 Surreys Op Instruction No 21 issued. Pioneer Officer attended demonstration of new devices for crossing minefields. Major Byrne and Major Plastow made recce of river bank.
- May 5th Corps Comd Lt Gen Kirkman visited Bn whilst engaged on River Crossing Training. First line amn made up to scale. Party of Officers visited 1<sup>st</sup> Bn.
- May 6th Company training continued. CO attended anti-malaria address at Tac HQ 8<sup>th</sup> Army by Comd 8<sup>th</sup> Army, and also a Div Com address at Div HQ. Both lectures were in fact directions for the breaching of the 'Gustav Line'.
- May 7th Coy training altered to mine detecting and clearing supervised by NCOs of the Pioneer Pl. 8 Officers 1<sup>st</sup> Bn visited the Bn. Bn Order No 1 for Exercise 'GREENGAGE' issued, indicating transport which would be used in an Assault River Crossing. CO and Major Byrne made recce of river bank.
- May 8th "B" Coy warned to move into the line at short notice. Bn training continued according to programme. CO, Adj, IO and Coy Comds attended the Bde briefing for Exercise 'HONKER'. "B" Coy moved into the line under command of Capt CLT Greening, other Coy Officers remaining with the Bn. One Officer per Coy and A/RSM made recce of lying-up area in the area of Mount Trocchio.
- May 9th Op Order No 1 and Admin Order No 2 issued to all concerned under MOST SECRET cover. Training continued AM, and preparations for move PM. All Officers attended the Bn briefing at HQ 4 Brit Inf Div at 1700 hrs. Bn embussed on TCVs at 2030 hrs, and moved off up Route 6 to the lying-up area. All tents, bivouacs, signs etc were left in situ to cover the move of the Bn. Bn debussed, and marched to their Coy hides, arriving by 2245 hrs. One 15 cwt admin truck per Coy

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accompanied them, and were subjected to shellfire en route. No casualties. All ranks warned to keep under cover during daylight owing to their areas being overlooked by Monastery Hill and Monte Cairo.

May 10th

A quiet morning with alternate mist and clear visibility. Amend No 1 to Ops Order No 1 issued at 1500 hrs. Three men of "B" Coy wounded by shelling. Recce parties visited the river at dusk to find best route forward from lying-up areas to the proposed crossing places. 1<sup>st</sup> priority vehicles moved from B Echelon to the Forward Concentration Area under comd 2 l/c Major WVH Robins. Three truckloads of boats headed the convoy led by Major Nash. Only two vehicles arrived very late, and considerable difficulty was encountered in getting the boats off-loaded and into hides before dawn. One truck still missing in spite of every effort to trace it.

May 11th

*0800: Coy Comds visited Bn HQ for first discussion.*

*0900: Bde Comd visited Bn HQ, and discussed details with Lt Col Thompson and Lt Col GD Musson, 2 DCLI. Amendments Nos 1 & 2 to Op Order No 1, and Time Table of Move to River issued. Movement still severely restricted as the HQ was clearly visible from both Monastery Hill and Mt Cairo.*

*1200: CO visited Bde for a final conference, and called at both "B" and "C" Coys in their hide behind Mt Trocchio. Complete rest ordered for everybody for the afternoon.*

*1400: IO briefed Bn HQ personnel for the operation.*

*1500: "B" & "C" Coys shelled by heavy guns 2 casualties.*

*1600: Adjt explained the system of advance to the FUP to Bn HQ and all attached.*

*1700: Pl of "C" Coy for local defence of "A" Coy crossing reported to "A" Coy.*

*1730: Pl of "C" Coy detailed to build flying ferries reported to "A" and "D" Coys.*

Final preparation for the assault. Lost truck eventually found having met with an accident the previous night. Arrangements made for it to be brought to the river as soon as possible after the assault had begun. Rest ordered for everyone after they had been given orders, their first notification that an attack was imminent. Amendment No 2 to Op Order No 1 issued. Special Orders of the Day received from General Sir Harold Alexander, C-in-C Allied Armies in Italy, and General Sir Oliver Lesse, Comd 8<sup>th</sup> Army, and read to all ranks. CO spoke to all ranks of Bn HQ and attached and wished them the best of luck.

*1900: All troops including supporting arms in position in their hides ready to move to the river in accordance with their March Table.*

*2030: Guides of the Pioneer Pl were placed out by the IO from Bn HQ to the Assembly Point and FUP. Boat-building parties of "A" and "D" Coys left for assembly point under command Major WCE Nash.*

*2100: "A" and "D" Coys left their Coy areas to march to Assembly Point.*

2115: "B" and "C" Coys left hide area and marched to Bn HQ.

2215: "B" and "C" Coys and Bn HQ, attached 'married up' and marched to the Assembly Point under command Major GG Maggs, MC.

2300: Artillery programme commenced. No counter fire by the enemy. "B", "C" Coys and Bn HQ remained on railway embankment while "A" and "D" Coys moved down the road to the barracks with their boats.

2315: "A" and "D" Coys moved down to the river from the FUP.

2330: "B" and "C" Coys followed "A" and "D" to the river. Bn HQ remained in the barrack area.

2339: Artillery barrage commenced, and enemy replied with mortars.

2345: "A" and "D" Coys launched boats.

2351: "A" Coy's first wave crossed river.

2355: Tac HQ left FUP for the river.

2358: First wave of "D" Coy across river.

2359: "A" Coy reported all across the river.

"A" Coy – The first two boats sunk on being hit by a mortar bomb, which upset the order of boatloads, and all boats were swept downstream by the rapid current. All the Coy however got across although very scattered, two boatloads being taken over on the flying ferry. All across by 2359 hrs approx, under mortar and MG fire.

"D" Coy – Enemy mortars and MGs harassed the river bank, but first 6 boats landed on far side of the river considerably downstream. Empty boats were swept ever further downstream, and only three were found and used, but failed to cross the river, the occupants returning on foot to the original crossing site. Major Spencer launched the two reserve boats which took the remainder of the Coy across. All across by 0001 though very scattered.

2350: Flying ferry in operation on "A" Coy river crossing site. Thick mist, thickened by drifting smoke from barrage, reduced visibility to 10 yds.

2351: "A" Coy's first wave crossed river.

2355: Tac HQ left FUP for the river.

2358: First wave of "D" Coy across the river.

2359: "A" Coy reported all across the river.

May 12th

0001: "D" Coy reported that they were all across the river.

0006: "A" Coy reported that they were losing the barrage, and were out of touch with their platoons.

0007: "D" Coy walked into a minefield, and suffered heavy casualties.

0008: "A" Coy reported Pt 36 to be still held by enemy.

0010: "A" Coy walked into a minefield between Pt 36 and the river.

0011: "B" Coy reported that all boats except one were lost, and that they were using the flying ferry.

0012: "A" Coy completely enveloped in fog and smoke, and Pt 36 still in enemy hands.

0013: "C" Coy waiting to cross river.

0015: CO ordered "D" Coy to assist "A" Coy in the capture of Pt 36.  
0016: "A" Coy attacking Pt 36, but meeting very heavy MG fire.  
0021: "A" Coy on edge of Pt 36.  
0022: Forward elements only of "B" Coy across the river.  
0023: MG post on Pt 36 still firing at "A" Coy.  
0027: "A" Coy have lost barrage.  
0028: "C" Coy HQ crossing river under MG fire.  
0030: "B" Coy across the river without casualties, and reorganised on far bank. "C" Coy commenced to cross. Heavy mist and smoke still hampering movement and control.  
0032: "A" Coy pinned down by MG fire, and asked for help to mop up Pt 36.  
0040: "B" Coy contacted No 7 Pl of "A" Coy which was separated from the remainder of "A" Coy. Heavy fog enveloped Tac HQ on near side of the river bank.  
0042: "B" Coy contacted 7 Pl who had lost touch with "A" Coy HQ.  
0046: Tac HQ prepared to move to the flying ferry in very thick fog.  
0050: Tac HQ ready to cross river by lower flying ferry. Lower flying ferry jammed on enemy side of river.  
0055: "A" Coy unable to stay where they are.  
0102: "B" Coy still only 200 yds from river.  
0103: "B" Coy contacted Pl of "C" Coy.  
0104: Aircraft heard overhead.  
0110: "C" Coy, less flying ferry Pl across, but out of touch with its Platoons. CO sent Sitrep to Bde – 'One Coy following barrage, other one held up. At the moment we have no reptiles'.  
0112: "C" Coy HQ out of touch with its platoons.  
0126: "A" Coy HQ reported out of touch with platoons.  
0127: Flying ferry still jammed on enemy side of river.  
0137: Cable of flying ferry moved 10 yds along back, and ferry boat freed.  
0150: Tac HQ crossed the river, but were unable to move forward off the bank because of the minefield. Intense MG fire.  
0151: "C" Coy on their way to join "A" Coy. "A" Coy moving up SW slope of Pt 36. "A" Coy HQ dug in.  
0152: "B" Coy pushing forward slowly.  
0155: "B" Coy pushing on slowly. Heavy MG fire coming from all sides, but location impossible owing to fog and mist. 2 Beds & Herts commenced to cross the river on the flying ferry.  
0158: "A" Coy fired on from left flank and in front by MG fire.  
0200: Tac HQ sprayed by MG fire. No casualties.  
0215: One walking wounded of "D" Coy (Pte Jordan) met Tac HQ and informed CO of "D" Coy's location. Sgt White RAP went forward and searched for "D" Coy's wounded.  
0220: "B" Coy attacked one MG post on Pt 36.  
0230: No definite contact made between Coys though isolated sections had met.  
0240: "A" Coy had not yet contacted "C" Coy.

0255: Major Byrne and two sections of "D" Coy attacked MG post on Pt 36.

0300: Situation still confused although Bn appeared to be concentrated in the area of Pt 36 after suffering many casualties. CO sent Sitrep to Bde. Main HQ moved to river bank but were ordered to wait for the order to cross. All telephone wires to Bde cut, and only link by relay of messages either through Gunner's sets or via 18 set to 18 set on carrier, and then by 22 set.

0308: CSM Goody "C" Coy reported that small numbers of "A", "B" and "C" Coys were lying up along the river bank 300 yds to the right of Tac HQ.

0320: CO sent Sitrep to Bde. 'Situation slightly improved, original objective not yet cleaned up. Several sub-units who lost themselves have been found, and are now being reorganised. I have given orders for the rapid mopping up of first objective, and to push on'.

0400: Tac HQ moved 50 yds along the river bank towards Cassino and dug in. Casualties now being evacuated by flying ferry.

0420: Situation now: "A" dug in on Pt 36. "B" still moving forward slowly to Pt 63. "C" Trying to contact "B". "D" in area of Pt 36.

0430: Main Bn HQ dug in on rear side of bank as dawn was breaking.

0435: "C" Coy ferrying party rejoined the Coy.

0440: "B" Coy about 400 yds short of Pt 36. CO ordered them to attack it.

0445: "B" Coy contacted 2 Beds & Herts about 200 yds from the bend in Queen Street.

0500: "B" Coy asked for Bofors fire as an aid to direction. Now light but very foggy. Visibility down to 10 yds.

0505: "C" and "D" Coys commenced to dig in on the river bank near Pt 36.

0515: Intermittent MG fire from Beds and Herts area.

0540: Major Byrne and Major Newton led a composite force against Pt 36.

0630: Pt 36 reported clear of enemy. 3 PW taken by Major Byrne's force, and evacuated over the flying ferry.

0700: "B" Coy fell back from Pt 63 to the forward edge of Pt 36, and captured 6 PWs of 115 Panzer Grenadier Regt. "B" Coy fell back from Pt 63 and dug in 150 yds NE of Pt 36.

0715: 3 PW sent back on flying ferry.

0730: Whole Bn area subject to heavy and constant shell and mortar fire, and harassed by MGs and snipers. Tac HQ heavily mortared. 13 PW sent back.

0750: "A" Coy heavily mortared.

0815: Tac HQ moved 200 yds further along river bank. Heavily mortared.

0830: Major Newton wounded and evacuated.

0835: IO sent to Bde to inform them of the situation.

0840: CO contacted HQ 2 DCLI who had now crossed the river.

0850: Tac HQ moved 50 yds along river bank.

0900: Mortar PI ready to fire from home side of river bank.  
0950: Carrier PI called forward (dismounted) to assist the rifle Coys.  
1000: Shelling, mortaring, sniping and MG fire continued.  
1035: *Sitrep sent to Bde: 'Little change in situation. Pt 36 still held by us. Subject to artillery and mortar fire. Enemy has turned to infiltration between ourselves and 2 Beds & Herts, so far without much success. Carrier personnel and others are coming up to lend a hand'.*  
1100: *Tac HQ area mortared.*  
1130: Carrier PI reported to Bn HQ, *sent forward to assist Rifle Coys, and placed in position in defence of Pt 36. Hostile fire continued. One sniper killed.*  
1150: *Heavy barrage commenced by our own artillery.*  
1157: *Enemy small arms fire sweeping the river bank.*  
1206: *Enemy small arms fire over positions at Tac HQ. Probably sniper.*  
1210: *Mortaring of area of Tac HQ.*  
1216: *Mortaring of area immediately behind Tac HQ.*  
1225: *More small arms fire over Tac HQ.*  
1230: *Our own barrage practically finished. Now only spasmodic.*  
1231: *Our own barrage renewed in intensity. Six enemy shells landed behind Tac HQ.*  
1245: *^ shells in same area as before. Our barrage ceased.*  
1312: *About 12 mortar bombs landed in area of Tac HQ.*  
1317: *Shells landed all round the area of the Barracks.*  
1500: Major Plastow "A" Coy sighted enemy SP guns (Tiger tank) about 600 yds to their front. Mortars brought down fire with unknown results.  
1550: *Mortaring of position of Tac HQ.*  
1625: *2 bursts of MG fire over Tac HQ from different positions.*  
1725: *Own high velocity gun registered hits on feature held by our own sub-unit. causing some casualties. Gunner officer informed.*  
1730: Bde informed CO that tanks had crossed the river lower down, and were on their way to help. *Heavy MG fire in front of Tac HQ and some mortaring. Message received from higher formation. 'Friendly tanks at 858176 moving NE. Our left hand friends may have contacted them. Ask them to clear up area 862175 and wood 868179.*  
1735: *Barrage brought down in front of Tac HQ.*  
1745: *MG fire in front of Tac HQ.*  
1755: *Barrage ceased.*  
1830: *12 PI reported diversion on their front. No 10 PI report intermittent MG fire.*  
1900: *Fire falling near river bank in front of barracks.*  
1910 – 1915: *Smoke and HE being dropped in front of Tac HQ.*  
1945: Tac HQ moved to caves on Pt 36, and found 3 Germans hiding there. They offered no resistance.  
2100: Mortar PI Sgt ( Sgt Donovan) reported to Tac HQ with 38 set to control fire of 3" mortar PI on other side of river. *No reported MG fire*

*across the ferry. Tac HQ completed consolidation of new location in caves.*

2110: Following message received from Bde:

'Own tanks are across river and advancing N. as far as possible.

Location not known. All tanks will cross as soon as construction completed. Hold hard present position. DF form a solid ring around you. Every available gun. All DF is SOS, and everything can come down at once. Supplies, water, amn will come somehow. Guides to RHINE. You have done magnificently. Corps Div and Bde Sunrays intensely proud of you. If you require any further information ask me'.

2200: Quiet night with all Coys standing-to expecting a counter-attack. Main Bn HQ still on home side of river bank as there was no cover or room on enemy side. B Echelon moved from Grecchi area to area of harbour East of Mignano on Route 6.

May 13th

*Quiet all night 12/13 May.*

0500: Very heavy mortar and MG fire over whole area. Visibility still very poor because of mist. *Tac HQ stood-to as MG fire and mortar fire was intense, and counter-attack looked imminent.* Heavy fire was put down by our gunners, and no counter-attack materialised.

*0515: CO called for artillery SOS task as he considered a counter-attack imminent.*

*0520: SOS answered, and steel ring was laid round us.*

0530: AMAZON (Class 30) bridge completed by the REs, and screened by smoke generators. *Guns had had required effect, and all was quiet once more. Visibility still bad. Heavy mist. Gunner reported that VOLGA had been given. This meant that CL 30 bridge had been completed.*

*0550: CO told "C" Coy that their carrier would be up shortly.*

*0600: Several mortar bombs landed in close proximity to Pt 36.*

*0610: Bursts of MG fire coming from left (Pt 31).*

0615: Tank LO and troops of tanks reported to Bn HQ, and were placed in defence of Pt 36.

*0625: Two tanks arrived Tac HQ.*

*0630: CO ordered TCP to be established on embankment.*

*0650: L/Cpl MacFarlane reported to Bn HQ that he and eleven men from various Coys were operating with 2 Beds & Herts. He wanted to know if he was to return. CO told him to return unless he was needed.*

*0700: Gunner Officer reported that 2 DCLI were over river.*

*0715: Bursts of MG fire from left. Our forward sub-unit replied with Bren.*

*0740: Adgt and IO visited Tac HQ.*

*0745: Major Maggs made sketch of positions. See attached.*

0800: CO called A/Tk PI Comd forward to make recce, and ordered his guns to follow.

*0815: Message from A/Tk Comd. 'My position 100 yds from ORINOCO. I have 5 grouse and 3 jeeps. The remaining jeeps*

*damaged. One more acquired. Two casualties. Tyres of jeeps are being repaired. I am going to contact Seagull'.*

*0820: CO called for A'Tk Comd to come up on recce, and for his guns to follow later. Intermittent sniping.*

*0900: Heavy mortaring and shelling of Bn area continued. Mortars reported ammunition replenished.*

*0905: Major Nash arrived at Tac HQ, and said 12 Inf Bde were over river.*

*0915: Mortaring very close to Tac HQ.*

*0920: Major Byrne brought in one PW. Heavy mortaring on far river bank.*

*0934: Report from Acorn. 12 Inf Bde attacking from QUEEN STREET at 10 o'clock supported by Lothians.*

*0940: Walking friends reported passing through "B" Coy positions. A/Tk Comd reported that he was held up by sniping and mortaring, and asked for instructions. CO told A/Tk Comd to make his way up when he could.*

*0953: "C" Coy asked for PIAT bombs.*

*1000: Own barrage started. Sitrep from "C" Coy: 'Infantry have passed through on left. Heavy shelling of this side of Pt 36. No casualties'. Sitrep to Acorn: 'No change in situation. Fighting patrol being sent out to deal with MG nest. 1 PW. (sent at 1100 hrs owing to interruptions).*

*1015: Shells in close proximity to Tac HQ, continuing at intervals until 1215 hrs. Whole feature being shelled by approx 24 guns.*

*1050: DCLI believed on their objective Pt 63.*

*1107: "C" Coy report that they are OK.*

*1110: "C" Coy report having spoken to tanks, and they say DCLI fighting on objective. PWs taken are paratroops.*

*1115: Div report that our forward elements are 500 yds West of Queen Street. (12 IB?).*

*1130: Major Byrne reported casualties in forward positions. (Capt Greening killed).*

*1140: CO gave orders to "C" Coy for Mr Matthew to take over Capt Greening's position during next lull. Also for Sb's to go and clear casualties.*

*1144: Message to 6 to pass back. '24 guns firing on Pt 36. Pass back. Urgent'.*

*1200: Enemy firing phosphorous shells on forward positions. Shell dressing requested with party coming up.*

*1205: Forward positions report own shells falling short. Passed back urgent. "C" Coy report our shells falling on own tanks. Passed back urgent.*

*1215: Shelling situation to 6: 'Bombard was asked fro deal with 24 guns firing on this position. Is still required. SOS task asked for brought shells on this position. SOS not now required. Urgent'.*

*1230: Mortaring and shelling continued. Sitrep to "C" Coy: 'There is no recent information from higher information. Arty bombardment*



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*has been asked for to deal with enemy shelling of this position. Mr Matthew taking over from Capt Greening. We are now in closer contact with higher formation as LO is now on 22 sets.*

*1235: "C" Coy reported more tanks going up, and also some infantry under cover of our smoke.*

*1240: Higher formation asked for one of our sub-units to assist DCLI. CO stressed our weakness in numbers, and higher formation eventually cancelled request.*

*1300: Position now: "A" Coy in rear and left flank of Pt 36. "B" Coy forward of Pt 36. "C" Coy right of Pt 36. "D" Coy in small parties with "B" and "A" Coys. Bn HQ on home side of river near bank. Mortars and MGs in DF position on home side of river. Major Nash left with PW.*

*1400: Tac HQ moved to "C" Coys location.*

*1430: Enemy MG fired on stretcher party carrying two flags as they neared RAP.*

*1500: Bn reorganised and consolidated in their present positions (area Pt 36). A quiet night.*

May 14th

Whole area shrouded in smoke mist. Smoke from gunners screening Monastery Hill and screening the river crossing.

0800: Rations arrived and were distributed by Bn HQ.

1000: A/Tk guns and 3" mortars now on enemy side of river in defence of Pt 36. COs jeep and carrier also arrived.

1200 – 1500: Shelling and mortaring continue and Bde asked for counter-fire. 3 concentrations fired with no effect on enemy shelling. Nebelwerfer firing at 10 minute intervals on main Bn HQ.

*1530: Heavy shelling of Pt 36.*

*1710: Shelling still continuing. Asked Bde for action to be taken. Three concentrations fired by own arty. No effect.*

1730: 1 x 15 cwt, 5 carriers, jeep and A/Tk gun burnt out by hostile shelling. *Large quantity of amm destroyed.*

*1735: Shelling continues. Further CB fire requested, and bombard laid on.*

*1800: Shelling easing up.*

*1815: Shelling ceased.*

*2030: Mortaring of "D" Coy feature from 260 °.*

*2130: Large fire seen on brg 310 °*

*2130: Five shells on our forward area from bearing 260 °.*

Shelling continued throughout the night. Main Bn HQ prepared alternative positions behind embankment owing to accuracy of enemy shelling, and moved into them by night. MG moved to enemy side of river under cover of darkness. Major Nash returned to B Echelon for return to UK. "D" Coy disbanded, one platoon going to each of "A", "BV" and "C" Coys. 11 Officers and 141 ORs reported to Bn HQ as reinforcements.

May 15th

*0215: Five mortar bombs on our forward area from bearing 260 °*

*0355: Five shells on our forward area from bearing 240 °*

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0430: 6 shells on our forward area.  
0445: Bde say possible enemy arty action area TANA first light.  
0515: Shelling of area of Tac HQ increased, from bearing 290°.  
0600: Heavy mortaring of our forward area.  
0810: Nebelwerfer fired on our area from bearing 300° to 320°.  
0930: Morning Sitrep: 'Locations unchanged. No contact with enemy'.  
1000: Capt Spencer assumed command "C" Coy and returned to B Echelon to reorganise. "A" Coy took over "D" Coy positions. Main Bn HQ rejoined Tac HQ, took over "A" Coy positions.  
1050: "B" Coy mortared bearing 270°.  
1240: "B" Coy still being mortared at 15 min intervals. Bearing 270°.  
1700: "B" Coy mortared. Bearing 270°. Shelling of area 100 yds West of ADS.  
1915: "B" Coy mortared.  
1916: "A" Coy mortared. 300°.  
Padre and Lt Hatt-Cook scoured the battlefield for bodies, and Pioneer Pl cleared paths through minefield to facilitate their evacuation,. "A" and "B" Coys salvaged equipment and ammunition.  
Intermittent mortaring and shelling throughout the day. Burials in the Bn Cemetery on Pt 36 were effected by the Padre. Carrier Pl and 50% of MMG Pl sent back to B Echelon to rest.  
2130: Last light Sitrep to Bde: 'A quiet day generally, apart from consistent mortaring of "B" Coy area at 15 min intervals throughout the morning. Bearing to enemy mortar 270°. Mortaring of our positions was resumed at 1700 hrs and 1915 hrs. No casualties. No damage.  
2215: AA East and South. Planes flying South. Flares dropped.  
2355: Bn area being mortared (near misses on MMG positions). Bde informed.

May. 16th

0005: "A" Coy report that 'mortaring' is 'shelling'. Same bearings.  
0015: Mortaring ceased.  
0530: "B" Coy report mortaring bearing 270°.  
0600: No smoke on the MONASTERY between 0500 and 0600.  
0945: Morning Sitrep to Bde: 'Area mortared at 2355 and 0530 hrs. No casualties. Nothing further to report.  
1210: "B" Coy report being shelled bearing 270°.  
Intermittent mortaring and shelling though on a far reduced scale to that of the past few days.  
1800: Our mortars opened fire (harassing in support of attack to be launched at 1230 hrs by 2 Beds & Herts.  
1820: 2 shells in area Pt 36. Bearing 270°.  
1825: Bn area being shelled. Bearing 270°. Bde informed.  
1843: 2 Beds & Herts report good progress on right.  
2 Beds & Herts attacked Pt 46 and 50 and, after a bitter battle, captured both positions.  
1848: Held up on left by MG fire (B & H). Getting friends to deal with

it.

1853: "A" Coy (B & H) going well. but being heavily mortared.

1855: The position on the right which was reported taken has now got Boche on it, and friends are dealing with it.

1857: "A" Coy (B & H) report steady progress against heavy opposition.

1900: "D" Coy (B & H) calling for help from tanks urgently.

1902: "D" Coy (B & H) receiving help from tanks.

1903: "A" Coy (B & H) Comd wounded, 2 l/o takes over. Own mortars reported finished firing.

1925: Tanks dealing with opposition on Pt 46.

1930: DCLI report one of Beds' subunits on their objective.

1934: "A" Coy (B & H) held up by MG fire from Pt 46.

1937: "A" Coy (B & H) held up by MG fire from Red House on left.

1945: Right hand sub-unit ask tanks to stop firing whilst they finish off house.

1946: Right hand sub-unit (B & H) have gone in, and are out with prisoners.

1955: "A" Coy (B & H) held down by MG fire, unable to contact tanks.

1956: "D" Coy (B & H) held down by MG fire, also lost touch with forward platoon.

2000: Our "A" Coy moved forward to take over the Reserve Coy position vacated by 2 Beds & Herts 859183

2005: Own "B" Coy area being mortared by heavy calibre mortars (bearing 280°). Bde informed.

2010: Own "B" Coy now confirm it to be shelling.

2012: Own "B" Coy shelled from 260°. Bde informed.

2028: "D" Coy (B & H) not in contact with forward platoons.

2032: "A" Coy (B & H) wireless operator killed, other signaller wounded.

2045: Some of "A" Coy (B & H) on Pt 80.

2046: "C" Coy (B & H) ordered to stand by.

2050: "A" Coy (B & H) CO out of touch with platoons.

2055: Area forward B & H sub-unit being mortared. Sitrep from B & H: Situation not stable. Right sub-unit on Pt 50. No new of left sub-unit. Rest of Sitrep sent by line'. Coy told to consolidate on Pt 50.

2130: Last light Sitrep: Bn area intermittently shelled and mortared during day from bearings 260° and 270° and 310°. Two casualties.

One A/Tk gun destroyed by direct hit. 188 to 1900 hrs mortars laid down harassing fire in support of attack by B & H. "A" Coy (B & H) 500 yds in front of SL. "B" Coy (B & H) 2 stretcher cases, but no stretchers. "A" ask for situation on left. Answer: Back on SL 600 yds back.

Digging in and waiting for orders.

2215: Our "A" Coy in B & H reserve position. 859183.

2220: "A" Coy B & H white Verrey light over Pt 50. Nothing known of its meaning.

2230: D5 (B & H) in position asking for information. No information at the moment.

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May 17th

2240: Own "B" Coy report 6 green Verrey lights one mile distant on bearing 250°.

0100: Bn area shelled from bearing 260°. "B" Coy report. Bde informed.

0300: "C" Coy reported back from 2 Echelon and took over positions vacated by "A" Coy. 864185. B & H have contacted friends on their left.

0400: "C" Coy now established. Bde informed.

0430: Tanks forming up 400 yds forward and right of forward sub-units. Likely to be enemy. (B & H). Sitrep sent to Bde: 'M1 took over positions at HRX034J015 at 0400 hrs. Otherwise NTR.

0625: "A" Coy established a PW Collecting Centre in their present position.

0830: White flag appeared on top of Monastery Hill but was disregarded.

0840: Poles on Pt 593.

0901: Poles on Pt 569 and Albanetta.

0930: Own 3" mortars supported attack by 2 DCLI on Pt 55. Pt 341 and Railway Bridge 200 rds 15 mins. Poles report Germans using white flag trick intending to surrender, and mowing down troops as they advance.

1030: Intercept from DCLI: 'All going well. Snipers on right.

Unconfirmed report P4 on objective.

1040: Two PW taken by DCLI report enemy withdrawal to the VWOPW. 721 Jaeger Regt have withdrawn from area. Paratroops still in area of Abbey.

1055: DCLI captured Pt 55, but withdrew as ground was too open to hold due to snipers from Baron's Ridge and mortar fire. Pt 55 clear of enemy. DCLI covering Pt 55 by fire

1140: 12 Inf Bde astride railway between Pt 56 and Pt 43.

1150: B & H have occupied Pt 49 and 58. No opposition. Preparing to patrol forward with tanks.

1155: Our "A" Coy report two PWs being questioned and then sent back. They report that 4 Para Div pulled out two days ago and left Jaegers to hold on. They have just returned from leave in Germany.

1200: Bn HQ, "A" & "B" Coys ordered to be at 15 minutes notice to move.

1230: 12 Inf Bde now astride Route 6. B & H pushing forward to conform with them. Heavy fighting by Poles between Pts 593 and 569. 78 Div on objective at corner of square 8120. Poles having sticky time on road due North of Pts 46 and 53.

1300: Bn "R" Group moved forward on recce of Pt 46.

1405: Bn HQ moving forward to new location.

1600: Bn established at 853186 in area of Pt 46. "A" Coy on Pt 46, "B" on 56, "C" Coy remained on Pt 36. Area under observation from Monastery Hill, Mt Cairo. Many dead of 2 Beds & Herts in vicinity. Bn prepared for an attack with tanks, but this was cancelled and orders

given to dig in.

1630: "A" Coy established at Pt 46. "B" Coy Pt 58.

2000: Area 300 yds East of Bn HQ shelled from bearing 305°. Bde informed.

2115: Last night Sitrep: ' Bn HQ moved to new location, and established with two sub-units as previously reported. One sub-unit remained in old location.

2300: Bombing attacks by several enemy planes on bridge over river. Two bombs in this area. Some misses being very close to Bn HQ. No casualties or damage..

### CASSINO

May 18th

0300: Bde OP Order received giving orders for the attack on Cassino.

0500: Monastery Hill in full view, no smoke being fired by the gunners. Sitrep: ' Monastery clear. Nothing further to report..Demand for smoke on Monastery to Bde.

0615: Sitrep: 'NTR'.

0630: "C" Coy called forward to Bn HQ.

0700: "O" Group called, including Res, RA and Sqn 19 NZ Armd Regt.

0715: Bde Comd visited Bn and issued orders for an attack with all speed.

0800: Div Comd visited Bn.

0847: Tac HQ moved forward.

0850: Bn moved forward to attack Cassino, "A" on left, "B" on right, "C" in reserve. Tanks and sappers in support. Start Line: Railway.

Time across 0900 hrs. Objectives Pt 146 and right of Pt 146.

0852: "B" and "A" Coys advancing.

0900: Vehicles held up by mines. Diversion made across open ground. "A" Coy passing over railway embankment. Attack going according to plan.

0902: From Higher formation ' REs to make houses safe or otherwise.

0905: Leading troops ("A" Coy) across Route 6.

0910: Attack going well. No opposition except mines and demolitions. Red Cross flag flying from Hotel de Roses and House 51.

0915: HOTEL DES ROSES and COLISEUM clear. "C" Coy ordered to COLISEUM. From Higher Formation 'Push on like mad'.

0916: "C" Coy ordered to go to Coliseum.

0917: "A" and "B" Coys ordered to push on.

0918: Own yellow smoke seen just above Coliseum.

0920: Bn HQ at COLISEUM. Tac HQ proceeding to Coliseum.

0923: "B" Coy report an see "A" Coy and are keeping up.

0925: "C" Coy reached railway embankment.

0928: "A" Coy 4 PWs. Have put up yellow smoke.

0930: Both forward Coys pushing on, little opposition.

0935: "C:" Coy report at Coliseum.

0936: "C" Coy ordered to lower road, and to push on.

0941: "A" Coy just above Hotel de Roses.

0945: "A" Coy reach objective. Objectives captured.

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0947: "B" Coy reached objective.  
0950: Lt G Sloan killed by mine, one OR injured.  
0956: Heard loudspeakers calling to germans to surrender.  
0957: CO contacted Main HQ and asked for Sappers and mine-sweeping gear to be sent forward. Also told Tank CO that lower road was OK for tanks.  
1000: "C" Coy ordered in the town to clear lower roads.  
1005: "A" Coy put up yellow smoke on objective.  
1010: Red Cross flag seen coming down from monastery.  
1030: Tac HQ established Hotel de Roses  
1230: Main and Tac HQ established at Coliseum. "A" Coy at 853208. "B" Coy at 855210. "C:" Coy at 855206. Bn HQ at 853199.  
Bde informed us that enemy would shell Monastery area at 1230. Shells landed at 1235 hrs.  
1250: Shells landed in Cassino.  
1300: Major Maggs, Lt Hawkins and 2 ORs killed by powerful booby trap.  
1400: Bn moved back to Pt 46.  
1600: Bn moved back by march route to rest area behind Mt Trocchio.  
1830: Bn established in rest area behind Mt Trocchio. Major Paskins assumed command "B:" Coy, and Capt Norsworthy the duties of Adjutant. Beer and cigarettes issues to the troops. Orders received that B Echelon and the Bn would proceed to concentration area at Alife. Move of the Bn later postponed to the following day.  
2130: Last light Sitrep: '0900 two forward sub-units crossed start line, and made rapid progress unopposed into cassino. 0935 reserve sub-unit reached Coliseum. 0945 first sub-unit reached objective Pt 146. 0947 second sub-unit reached their objective Hotel des Rose. 0950 Lt Sloan killed and one OR injured by mine. 1000 CO informed Tank CO that lower road safe for tank, and tanks advanced. 1005 Red Cross flag being carried down from Monastery. 1030 Tac HQ reached Hotel des Roses. 1035 Poles report that they are in Monastery. 1145 Main Bn HQ established at Coliseum. 1230 Tac HQ joined Main HQ at Coliseum. During the past two hours sub-units engaged in clearing the town, and 12 PWs taken. 1250 shells dropped in town. Lt Hawkins and party took cover in building, and Lt Hawkins was killed by a booby trap which set off a large charge outside the house 5 minutes later, killing Major Maggs and 2 ORs, and wounding several others. 1400 hrs Bn moved back to Pt 46. 1600 hrs Bn proceeded by march route, and arrived at 1845 hrs at present location 898189'.

May 19th Bn rested and cleaned up. Mobile bath unit available. CO, Adj and Coy Comds visited B Echelon to inspect the new draft personnel

May 20th Bn moved from forward area to Div Concentration Area Alife, joining up with B Echelon. Arrived at 1600 hrs and proceeded to settle in.

May 21st The Army Commander (General Sir Oliver Lesse) visited the Bn during

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the afternoon, and addressed the whole Bn. Message of congratulation to Comd 4 Div from the Comd 13 Corps (Lt Gen SC Kirkman) was reproduced and circulated to all Bns. See copy att.

- May 22nd Roll of Honour of Bn personnel killed, wounded and missing in the recent action was issued. A Regimental News Letter produced for the benefit of all members of the Bn who were in hospital was circulated to all hospitals in CMF and BNAF, together with copies of the Roll of Honour. Coys were resting, absorbing their reinforcements and refitting. A party from the Bn visited the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Sports during the afternoon, and saw a Concert Party produced by the Desert Air Force during the evening.
- May 23rd Major CGS McAlester, MC (KOSB) joined for duty as Bn 2 i/c. As much entertainment as possible was arranged daily. An ENSA Concert Party at 4 Div HQ, pictures at the Garrison Cinema, Piedimonte Alife, and mobile cinema shows in the Div Concentration Area were arranged. As many personnel as possible were sent off on leave to Rest camps at Bari, Isernia and Quatre Venti.
- May 24th *no diary page*
- May 25th *no diary page*
- May 26th 2 i/c and QM attended an Admin Conference at Div HQ. Training programme issued, giving detailed instructions for firing, weapon training etc.
- May 27th Warning Order for Bde Skeleton Exercise 'PRONTO' issued.
- May 28th Detailed programme of hospital visits by representatives of each Coy was issued, and transport arranged so that as many ex-members of the Bn at present in hospital could be visited. Exercise Instruction No 1 issued Ex 'PRONTO'.
- May 29th Exercise Instructions for Exercise 'PRONTO' issued verbally by Bn 2 i/c (Acting CO for the purpose of Exercise) at 0900 hrs.
- May 30th Bde Exercise 'PRONTO' carried out according to plan. Lt Col Thompson acted as critic for 2 DCLI, Lt Col Whittaker (2 Beds & herts) acted as critic for 1/6 Surreys. Exercise completed and the personnel taking part returned to camp by 1700 hrs.
- May 31st Coy training continued.