



**7th Battalion  
The Duke of Wellington's Regiment  
(West Riding)**



**Defence of Haalderen 4th December 1944**

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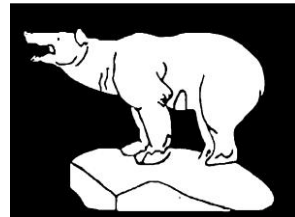
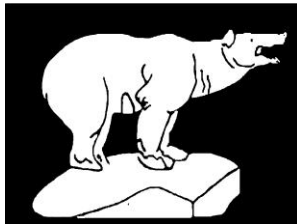
**Breakout from Haalderen 2nd April 1945**

**Scott Flaving & Richard Harvey**

**1/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion  
The Duke of Wellington's Regiment  
(West Riding)**

**147<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade**

**49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division  
(Polar Bears)**



**30<sup>th</sup> Corps**

**1939 - 1946**

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# Part 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **THE DEFENCE OF HAALDEREN, 4 DECEMBER 1944 by 1/7<sup>th</sup> BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT**

By November, 1944, the 49<sup>th</sup> (Polar Bear) Division was operating on the left flank of Montgomery's 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group. Earlier, in late September 1944, a major airborne operation, in conjunction with 30<sup>th</sup> British Corps on the ground, was to have opened up a corridor over the Maas, Waal and Rhine bridges to outflank the Ruhr defences, but had failed to secure the Rhine bridge at Arnhem. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 7 DWR was deployed to Haalderen on the 'Island' the highest part of the low-lying area of ground between the Waal and Rhine, in the bridgehead north of the strategically important Nijmegen road and rail bridges.

#### **The View from Berlin.**

Since the D-Day landings in June, the Germans had been giving ground in the West and the East, with the Russians pushing up to the Vistula and even attacking East Prussia by October, 1944. In September, the Allies threatened the Ruhr by striking north to outflank the strong Siegfried Wall defences. The V1 attacks against London, which had started on 19<sup>th</sup> June, had ceased as their fixed launching sites had either been destroyed from the air or overrun, but the primitive cruise missiles were still capable of hitting Antwerp from sites further back. The V2 rocket attacks on London had begun on 8<sup>th</sup> September, but they had been forced to withdraw from their initial launching areas around The Hague by the totally unexpected airborne assault which was to pave the way for a strong armoured thrust through Arnhem. The V2 launch vehicles were, however, mobile and London was still within range when the assault was resumed. Hitler expected that Britain would not be able to withstand the weight and intensity of the extraordinary bombardment and would have to capitulate.

#### **The Nijmegen Bridges.**

The bridges at Nijmegen had been taken intact on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1944, by a daring opposed river crossing by the US 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, one of seven bridges which had been taken by 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions, as part of Operation Market Garden. Unfortunately, the final bridge at Arnhem was too strongly defended by elements of two Panzer Divisions to be secured. German forces remained between the Waal and the Neder Rijn and large parts of that area were inundated by water from the Neder Rijn in December.

Nijmegen was described as 'the gateway to the Reich' and Hitler ordered the bridges to be destroyed, deploying a panzer brigade, a battalion of Tiger tanks and an anti tank battalion to reinforce the various under-strength units to the east of the 65 mile long corridor, ending at 'the Island' bridgehead across the river to the north of Nijmegen.

On 26<sup>th</sup> September, the first of three major air attacks against the road and rail bridges was carried out, however, the Allies had rapidly got Dutch airfields back into commission and



by 28<sup>th</sup> September 400 sorties had been flown against the German bombers, 46 of which had been shot down during the attacks.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October, the Germans destroyed the Nijmegen rail bridge and damaged the road bridge, using explosive charges being guided downstream by frogmen. The full charge on the road bridge pier failed to detonate properly and the damage to the roadway was soon repaired. Two of the 12 frogmen were killed and the rest captured, while trying to escape back to their own lines, by a Dutch Resistance reconnaissance patrol which was operating in front of the British lines.

Mines were floated down the river; most being stopped by newly erected booms, but some got through and damaged a Royal Engineers' pontoon bridge which had been constructed after the frogmen attack. In January, 1945, seventeen 'Biber' one-man midget submarines were launched, only three got near the bridge, one of which was sunk by gunfire. The rest sank and only nine of the crews survived.

On the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1944, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 6<sup>th</sup> German Parachute Division launched an attack to take Haalderen in preparation for another major attack on the Nijmegen road bridge, which was then to be destroyed by Engineers.



**Biber Midget submarine with 'Dukes' crew,  
Dunkirk, 1945**

The attackers were cut off by the dogged resistance of each 'Dukes' platoon position in A and D Companies on the perimeter, and the German supporting units were heavily shelled in their forming up positions by the Divisional artillery. A steady stream of ambulances was observed moving to and fro throughout the next day.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary extract, below, along with a report by Major C D Hamilton, (who was acting as Commanding Officer, vice Lt Col J H O Wilsey at the time) and supporting documents describe this action in detail. The letters of congratulation and the documents from 147 Brigade show just how important the action was.

The 'Notes on Defence' instruction, compiled by Lt Col Wilsey, as a result of his investigation into the conduct of the action on his return from temporary command of 147 Bde, was included in the Battalion War Diary in January, 1945.

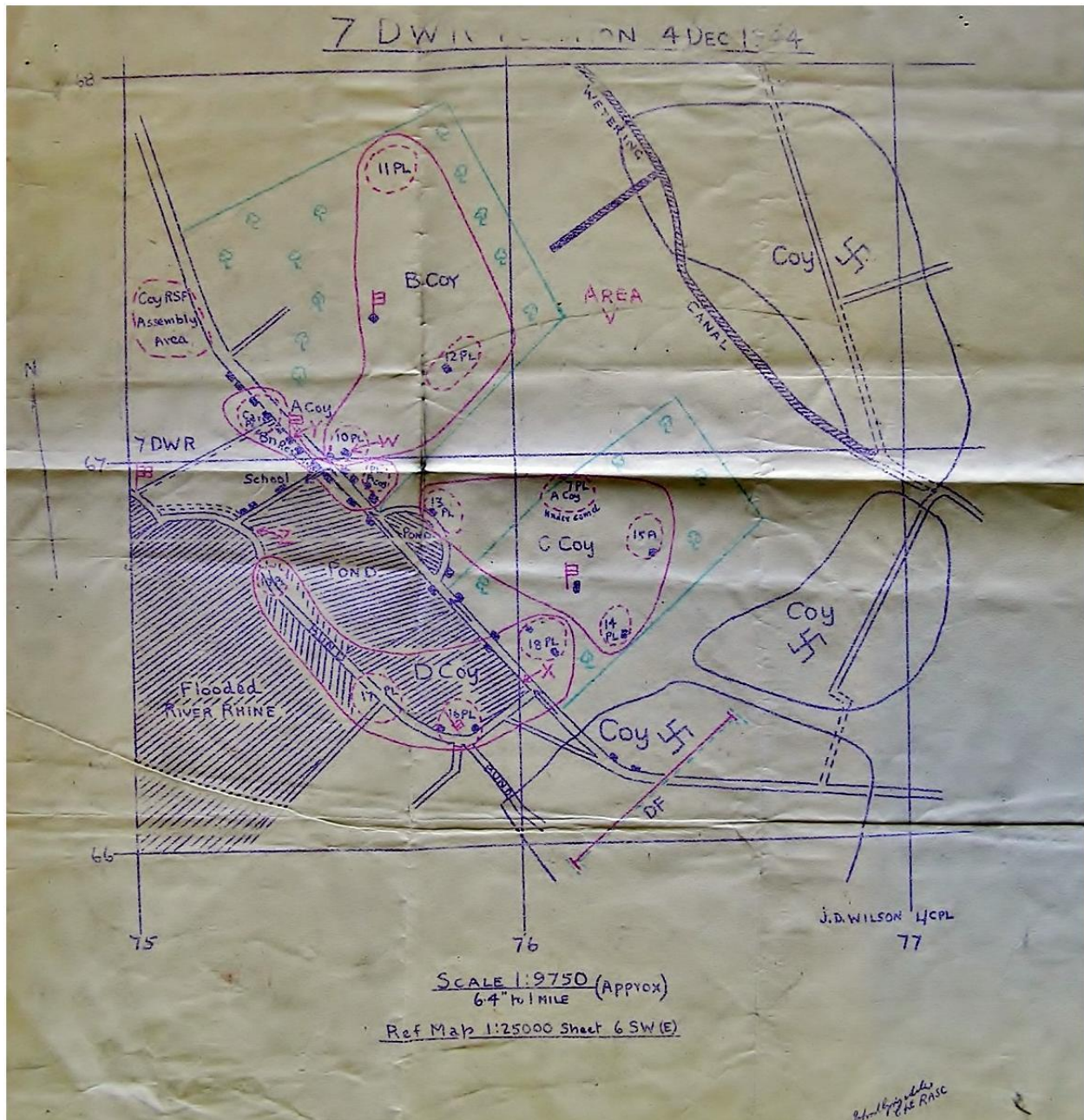
A DSO, three Military Crosses, two Distinguished Conduct Medals and four Military Medals were awarded for gallantry during the action. The citations, published in the London Gazette of 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1945, are transcribed below.

Nine 'Dukes' and a Sergeant, attached from the Army Catering Corps, were killed in the action.

A group photograph of the officers, taken in January, 1945, shows many of the officers who fought at Haalderen.

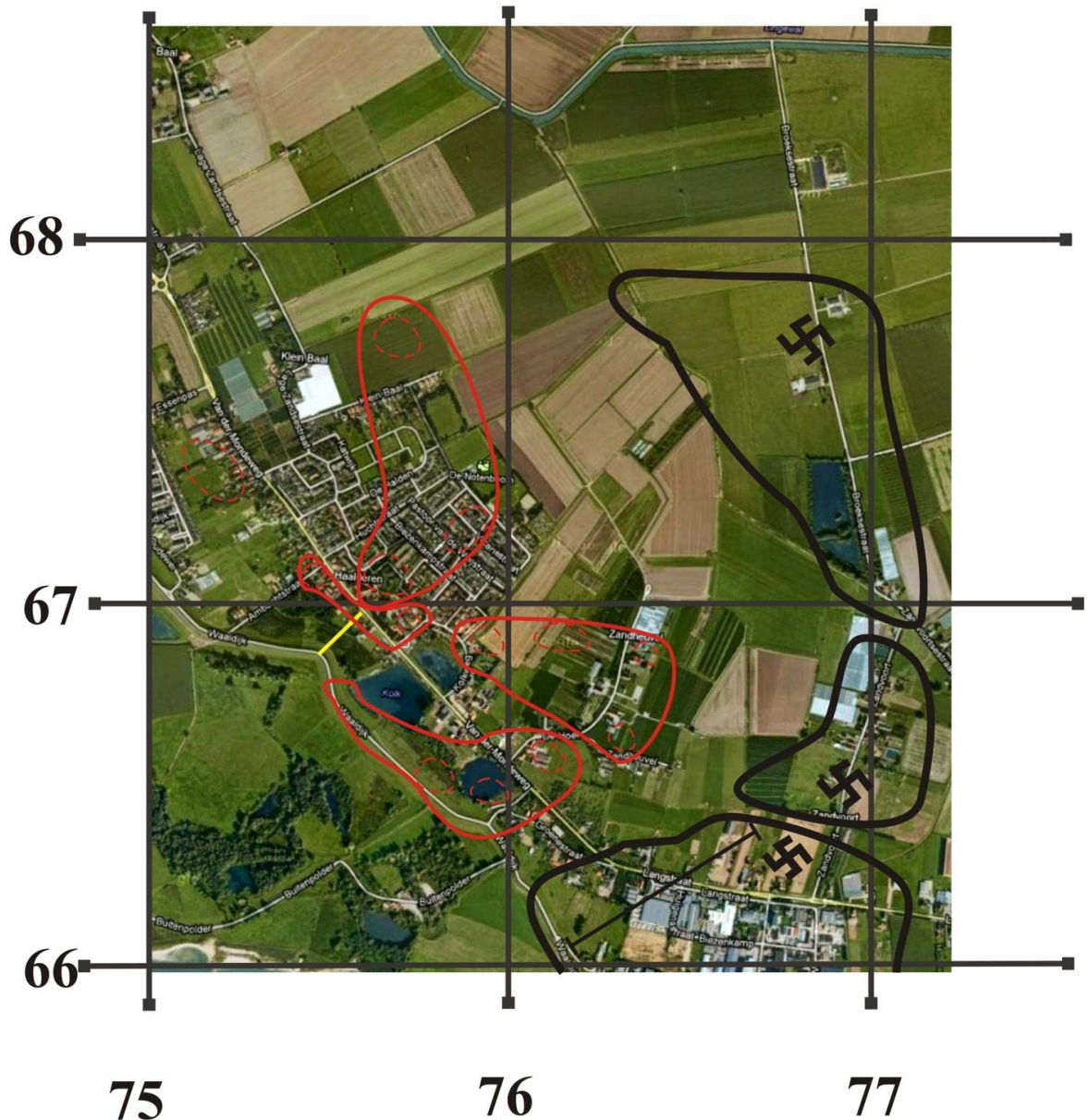
How this classic tactical action, with such a strategic effect, was not selected as a Regimental Battle Honour will forever remain a mystery.

The various extracts below have been compiled from the War Diary, the Battalion newspaper (the Yorkshire Pud), General Wilsey's unpublished papers and various lists, maps and photographs, donated by former 'Dukes' and compiled by volunteers of the DWR Archives. Other sources are acknowledged.



**Haalderen Defence – December 1944 (Sketch Map)**





**Haalderen - Battle Area - December 1944 (Overlay)  
[Not to Scale]**

RLH-H04(Overlay 03)

ORIGINAL  
DATE  
TABLETS

Dec. 95.

H5/WD/NWE

906/1-2

Army Form C21

**SECR**

Instructions for compiling the war diary are printed inside this cover.

They will be strictly observed by all responsible for compiling war diaries.

# WAR DIARY

OF

d Year)

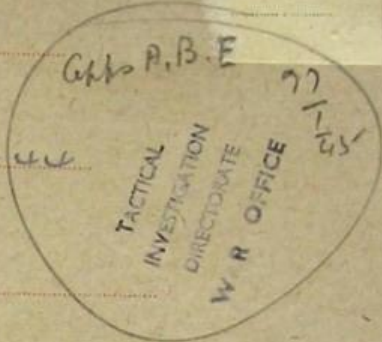
7th Div

(UNIT OR FORMATION)

From 1 Dec 44 to 31 Dec 44

(VOLUME )

Signature of O.C. unit or senior staff officer



## INDEX

Narrative (AF C 2118).

Appendices :-

- A Situation at Nightfall (AF C2118A or C2118B) ..... \*Fos. ....
- B Signal Log ..... \*Fos. ....
- C Messages connected with Log (in chronological order) ...
- D Operation Orders or Instructions issued ..... Nos. ....
- E Operation Orders and Instructions received from Higher Formations ..... \*Fos. ....
- F Intelligence Summaries issued ..... Nos. ....
- G Administrative Orders or Instructions issued ..... Nos. ....
- H Administrative Orders or Instructions received... \*Fos. ....
- I Strength States, Field Returns, etc. .... \*Fos. ....
- J Other Papers, e.g., Maps and Diagrams, Orders of Battle, Graphs (port clearance, railway working, etc.), Commanders' demi-official messages and correspondence, etc. .... \*Fos. ....
- Z Top Secret Supplementary War Diary ..... { Nil †  
Retained †  
Despatched to †

Date.....

\*Each document to be numbered and details entered here.  
†Cross out whichever is not applicable.

Instructions for compiling the war diary are given inside this cover.



Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. I and the Staff Manual respectively. Monthly War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.2119. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

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

Unit 7 DIV. Army Form C. 2118.  
Commanding Officer Lt Col JMO WIST

Month and Year December 1944.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HAALDAREN	1	0200	Hy arty stonk in bn area. Enemy patrol, strength 10 approached 'D' Coy.	Owing to restrictions in
7566			posns and were engaged by small arms, mms and arty. Three men were seen to am, arty could only be	
Sheet 6 SWE			fall though later investigations found no trace.	used on a very limited
1/25000		0630	Hy arty stonk in bn area.	scale.
		1345	Sniper seen entering house 764662.	
		1545	Hy arty and mor stonk in bn area mainly in 'D' Coy area causing 2 killed	Killed Sgt Sawyer
			3 wounded.	" Sgt <u>CLANISTER</u>
		1630	Bn 'O' Cp. CO ordered no movement be daylight in fwd areas. Work on defs	<b>WAR DIARIES SECTION</b>
			to be increased to incl wiring, sandbagging, trip wires and flares.	No. <u>18 JAN 1945</u>
		2000	2 Boche observed at 755672.	<b>G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon</b>
	2	0900	CO leaves to comd 56 Bde temporarily. Major CD Hamilton (ZIC) assumes comd.	Water rising about 3"-6"
		1520	1 Boche seen by 'D' Coy in area house 768666 with no arms or eqpt.	per day. Daylight supply
		1700	Intermittent shelling and mortaring in bn area, at times very hy. No cas.	of bn forbidden.
		2100	'B' Coy report 1 prisoner captured by their trip flare laying party at	Identified: 2/Lt Heinrich
		755760.		5 Coy 16 Para Regt 6 Para Div.

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or  
**INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY**  
(Erase heading not required).

Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Army Form C. 2118.  
Commanding Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Month and Year \_\_\_\_\_

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HAALDAREN	2	2150	'D' Coy report water rising rapidly in coy area.	
	3	0710	Trip flare set off fwd of 'D' Coy posns.	During night 03 Bde
		0800	Number of enemy seen running in area houses 763662. Exbsion, followed	warned: "Dykes may have
			by groans.	been breached by weight
		0930	1 Boche seen to run out of house S of rd at 763662, chased chicken. Man	of water or enemy action.
			shot chicken and went back into house.	HAALDAREN, the highest
		1135	New Div Comd, Maj Gen CHA McMillan CBE DSO MC arrived Bn HQ to meet CO and	part of the "Island" may
			offrs.	be attacked by the enemy.
		1500	8 Boche seen in orchard 765658. Later 6 Boche seen on rd at 763662	NLDREGEN br being hy
			followed by 3 more 2 mins later. All carrying arms.	shelled at an increasing
		1925	Flare set off fwd of 'C' Coy 764665.	rate, Be on the alert for
		1940	Red flare seen 757677.	counter attacks."
		2010	'D' Coy patrol (Lt Evans) located at least 6 enemy in house 764662. On	
			returning leading men of patrol struck a mine at 763664. Cas 1 killed 1	
			wounded which was carried into 'D' Coy lines by patrol comd.	

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Army Form C. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
HAALDAREN	3	2235	Spandau and mor fire from 761661. 'D' Coy call for DF fire.	
		2250	Sunray orders "great vigilance to be kept tonight".	
		2255	Spandau firing from 760675.	
	4	0315	Spandau firing from area 760675.	
		0315	'O' Coy report attack on 'D' Coy Pl 760665. 'D' Coy report 17 enemy passed through 18 Pl posn 761665 still more enemy approaching.	Appx 'A' Appx 'B'
		0330	18 Pl report about a coy of Boche now passed through pl posns which is still holding out though completely surrounded.	Telephone from 18 Pl to 'D' Coy still working.
		0400	Situation very confused. Boche reached 'A' Coy HQ 755670 also school 754669. Fighting going on in nearly every house in village.	By stonking of bn area and BEMBEL 7367. DF tasks being fired continuously
		0500	2 white flares from school 754669 believed to be Boche success sig.	
		0515	CO orders Carrier Pl to counter attack and re-occupy school. Also 'O' Coy must counter attack 18 Pl posns to close the gap made by the enemy entering HAALDAREN. Now est 1 coy of enemy in bn area. CO asks for counter attack coy 11 RSP to move to area Dn HQ.	from 0330 - 0700 hrs. Div fired approx 45 rds per gun on these tasks.

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Army Form C. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices	
HAALDAREN	4	0615	Carriers re-occupy school 754669. 'B' Coy also take houses lost at 755670. Enemy attack now appears to be held though confused fighting in 'A' Coy HQ area 755670 with S.A. and grenades.		
		0620	'D' Coy 11 RSP arrive in bn area. CO orders it to attack E from 753670 driving enemy up against fwd posns.		
		0700	'D' Coy RSP cross start line. Enemy now withdrawing along rd whence they came. 18 Pl posn retaken. Pl had no amm left but was still in its posns.		
		0800	3 P.W. brought in. Identified 10 Coy 16 Para Regt 6 Para Div.		
		0815	5 enemy seen entering houses 766663.		
		0900	Enemy still holding out in houses 753668 causing considerable trouble and some cas.		
		1000	62 P.W. brought in. Surrendered in area 757667 being unable to withdraw through our lines which by now had been completely restored.		
		1100	Mopping up continues. Many enemy dead in area, particularly in front of 13 Pl 757668.		

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

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Table with columns: Place, Date, Hour, Summary of Events and Information, References to Appendices. Includes entries for HALDAREN on 4th and 5th.

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Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Table with columns: Place, Date, Hour, Summary of Events and Information, References to Appendices. Includes entries for HALDAREN on 5th and 6th.

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WAR DIARY  
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Army Form

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

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Month and Year.....

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BEEMEL	6	2130	Relief complete. Bn in Bde res at BEEMEL. Bn HQ 730687.	
	7	0800	Shelling in bn area.	
		1100	Div Comd visited bn. Heard first hand account of HALDAREN battle from Lt Evans, 2/Lt LeCormu and coy comds.	
		1210	3 shells fell at Bn HQ. No damage of cas.	
		1430	9 shells fell in bn area.	
		1800	Bn patrol against expected water-borne landing against NIJBEHEN br along HUND 734670 - 722646 going out every 3 hrs.	
	8		Bn enjoying baths and entertainments. Work on defs continues. Recce of posns in area NIJBEHEN carried out by C.O. and coy comds in case of withdrawal owing to floods.	
	9		Lt Col JHO Wilsey re-assumes comd visits all coys during day. Orders that defs are improved. Work on defs continues.	
	10	0623	Hy shelling of BEEMEL. Direct hits on all houses occupied by 'B' Coy. No cas. Work on def continues.	

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Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
BEEMEL	11	0210	Very hy shelling of BEEMEL. Direct hits on all houses occupied by 'B' Coy. No cas.	
	12		Work on defs continues.	
DE PLAK	13	0345	Shells in bn area. Direct hits on 'B' Coy billets.	
		1700	Bn commences relieving 1 Leios in area BAAL 7568.	Appx 'C'
		2055	Relieve of 1 Leios complete. Only 'C' and 'D' Coys in line. Bn HQ 735683, 'B' Coy area 720658, 'A' Coy NIJBEHEN 7161.	
	14	1700	Spandau firing from 739692 engaged by arty.	
	15	1230	2 American War correspondents visited bn, took photographs of most fwd secs in 'D' Coy posns 751684.	2/Lt W Horne awarded MC 5019828 Sjt Higgs, L. " MM CinC Certificates
	16	0100	Green verey light from area 756685.	
		0955	Spandau firing from 740692 engaged by own arty.	Maj CH Hill - KA
		1215	Mortaring in 'D' Coy area.	Lt RT Smith - KA
		1930	Spandau firing from 742692 engaged by own arty.	CST Robinson, J - KA 1547293
		2225	Flares and verey lights 740692 engaged by own arty.	Pte Meehan, F All awarded on 15 Jan 45

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Army Form C, 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
DE PLAK	17	0140	6 shells fell in bn area. Patrol to houses 737694, found no sign of enemy.	6 in C Certificate (Good Service) 453794 CS: Stone, W (M) 15 Jan 45
		1750	Spandau firing from area 744692. Relief of 'D' Coy by 'A' Coy complete.	
		1810	3 white flares from area HBUVEL 738694.	
		2200	Enemy movement heard at 743689 engaged by own arty.	
		2335	Several flares set off all along front in enemy lines.	
	18	0328	3 white very lights from area 747697.	Approx 'D'
		0950	Intermittent shelling in 'A' Coy area.	
		1600	Sniper fired 5 shots from 760698, engaged by own arty.	
		1720	2 shells containing leaflets fired into 'A' Coy area.	
		1815	Spandau firing from 747697.	
19	1000	1840	White very lights from area 747697 fired towards our lines.	
		1850	Relief of 'C' Coy by 'B' Coy complete.	
		Houses at 743689 receded by patrol and found impossible to occupy owing to deep water.		
20	0030	Enemy heard talking at 754686. Arty and mors fired DF on this posn.		

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**WAR DIARY**  
or  
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Army Form C, 2118.

Unit.....

Commanding Officer.....

Month and Year.....

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices	
DE PLAK	20	0145	By shelling of BEUVEL 7367 area.		
		to 0535			
		1645	Enemy seen working on def's in area 757687 engaged by own arty.		
		2230	White flare in area 755687. 'A' Coy mortared.		
		2345	Noise "like dynamo" heard from area 751689.		
	21	0040	Lights seen in area 758697.		
			1720		Lights and flares from enemy posns all along bn front at varying intervals.
			to 1903		
	22	0300	1710	2 unknown missiles - possibly fired by mor - exploded in air about 20 ft from ground emitting a flare and leaflet, fell well fwd of coy area and not possible to salvage.	
			1935	Bde warned that possibility of a Boche parachute landing in area was very possible - all tps to be on the alert.	
			Sound of train heard in far distance - impossible to locate. Dearing 65° Mag - sent to Bde.		

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# Haalderen



This is the view today of the most southerly of three ponds in Haalderen. Two lay between the bund (embankment) separating the town from the river Waal. The bund itself forms the highest ground in the area along which a road passes, following the line of the river direct to the road bridge in Nijmegen, leading to Arnhem.

The bank on the far side of the pond above forms the main road through Haalderen. Another larger pond is behind the tree line to the left of the photo, approximately 50 yards away, with a third smaller pond on the opposite side of the road adjacent to it. During 1944 intentional flooding, from the Lower Rhine, joined these ponds together. Flooding on the south side of the bund extended down to the Waal. Effectively making these roads the only two the German forces could advance along.

This was the area occupied by 'D' Company (16,17 and 18 Platoons)' 7 DWR, on 4th December. 17 Platoon was sited along the bund to the left of the photo, with 16 Platoon dug in, in the area to the left of the red and white road junction marker. 18 Platoon were sited down that side road, where the yellow car is seen driving along the main town road. The street lamp marks the Allied front, with the German forces in a defensive line, approximately 100 yards further down the road.

The Battalion HQ 'A' Company and Battalion reserves were located in an area of buildings to the left of the pond behind the tree line. 'B' Company were behind those extending northward to the Wetering Canal. Whilst 'C' Company and 7 Platoon of 'A' Company covered the area between the far side of the pond from Battalion HQ to 'D' Company.

The photos' on the following pages show positions more clearly for 16 Platoon, 18 Platoon and the German front line.





18 Platoon, D Coy front line area, straddling both sides of the road junction



18 Platoon, D Coy front line, & C Coy by the red brick buildings extending left to the town centre





16 Platoon, D Coy front line area, with 18 Platoon at the bottom of the road



16 Platoon, D Coy front line area, with 17 Platoon further along the bund.





View south from 16 Platoon, D Coy front line towards German front line, approximately 100 yds away



View towards German front line (approximately), marked by the yellow car and white building gable end





Turrets of two Sherman tanks, encased in concrete and covered by an earth embankment. These were used as defences against an attack by the Germans from the bund along the river Waal, which lies just behind the trees going from the centre to the right of the photo.

Annex B.

REPORT ON ATTACK BY ENEMY ON  
7 DWR POSITION 4 DEC 44

General Situation.

1. 7 DWR were holding a bn position on the right flank of the NIJMEGEN bridgehead having relieved an outgoing unit three days previously. This time had been spent in intensive reconnaissance by the Bn, locating enemy positions. Knowledge of locations of our own minefields was most inexact and in fact it had been decided to start afresh in constructing trip flares and anti-personnel mine obstacles. The positions had been originally sited two months before when the ground was firmer, but very heavy rainfall and lack of maintenance on the dykes had filled all the posts with water. Adjustments had been and were being made to make the few houses into strongpoints.

2. The Bn was holding a wide perimeter of an almost complete salient with the Boche in close contact. A and C Coys were in thick woods. Manoeuvre between Coys was difficult because of deep flooding of the fields in the area and daylight movement was impossible in three Coy areas. As there was thus little depth in the posn, the main counter-attack Coy was to be mounted by D Coy 11 RSF in the res Bn area 1000 yds away, and the Coy comd concerned had previously recced the area.

The Enemy Attacks.

3. Early patrolling on the night 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Dec had found the enemy in usual posns and active. Lt Evans of 18 Pl, the left hand Pl of D Coy, who was to play such a notable part in the defeat of the Hun, led one patrol to a house about 400 yds in front of his posn and saw six Boche. Two of his men were blown up on a minefield and he, with the other surviving members of his patrol, carried the wounded men the whole way back to our FDL [*Forward Defence Lines*].

4. At 0315 hrs, heavy Spandau firing and mortaring was directed against the forward platoons of D Coy and B Coy and the OC ordered immediate RA and Mortar DFs to be used as a precaution. Comd 18 Pl of D Coy reported by phone that two sections of his platoon were being overwhelmed by at least a platoon, and probably more, Germans and that, for the moment, he himself had been bypassed. A few minutes later he said at least a Coy had got through and thought more were following. Considerable casualties were being caused by the Pl HQ and section still fighting on. A minute later all communication with him was lost and it was thought that he too had been overrun by the sheer weight of numbers of the enemy on a narrow front.

5. From Bn HQ confused fighting was heard in the village and runners reported that the Boche had got into the village centre and were moving left towards Bn HQ, having captured the school, 200 yds from Bn HQ and that Verey lights were being fired. OC A Coy (Capt J C Fox) whom commanded the central immediate reserve of three Carrier sections (Lt W A Hodge) and one pl A Coy, reported that Germans were between him and his pl. In actual fact, the Boche were in the next house and trying to push on.



6. Later it was found that the Boche had swept past 18 Pl, down the road on to the front of the res pl of C Coy, 13 Pl (Lt J Le Cornu). The Pl comd first thought that a large body of men were troops withdrawing because of the flooding which had been serious on other fronts but, having had no information and suspicious of the previous firing, he ordered fire to be opened. A voice then shouted in perfect English – “Stop that bloody Bren! We’ve got a wounded man here.” Some SB could be seen together with men carrying equipment not properly identified in the dark. The Pl comd stopped his firing – but on hearing a German voice – reopened his fire and Boche toppled like ninepins, many diving into the two ponds where they were drowning. The Pl comd kept this fire up all night until his ammunition was gone, resisting all attempts at capture. The Boche fired bazookas and Spandaus at his post, killing and wounding a few men.

7. OC D Coy (Major A B Kavanagh) reported that a strong attack was in progress against his right hand platoon but so far had been held with small arms and grenades, causing heavy losses to the assaulting troops. So far no attacks had been launched against B and C Coys.

#### Planning the Counter Attack.

8. The Commanding Officer decided that while the confused fighting was sorting itself out, the first steps must be to:

- (a). Smash up any reinforcements for the attack.
- (b). Prevent any attacks forming up against other Coys.
- (c). Neutralise the enemy posn facing B Coy.
- (d). Make a firm stop in the village with the only forces in the village uncommitted – three sections of Carriers.

At this stage it was vital that all troops should hold firm in their posns preparatory to the penetration being sealed off and the enemy mopped up. The Commanding Officer spoke to all Coy Comds over the phone and R/T to this effect. As the enemy force seemed to be 150 – 200 strong, Bde was asked to stand by the Coy of RSF to move and, 15 mins later, the CO requested that they should be moved to an assembly area nearer to Bn HQ 7 DWR.

9. All RA, 4.2 inch Mortar and MMG [*Medium Machine Gun*] tasks were then called for on the front of C and D Coys and RA tasks on B Coy. Later the Bde Comd gave targets to the Mediums on deeper assembly areas. All fire was quickly brought down and must have caused immense damage to the res Coys who, it was found from prisoners, were waiting for success sigs in the target areas.

10. During this time OC Sp Coy (Major B V Thomlinson) had been contacted in the village by phone and he took command of the forces in the village street, giving the CO in the Command Post valuable information about the battle in between throwing grenades at the Boche across the street. There was understandable confusion in the village – Spandaus, Brens, rifles, Stens and grenades being used freely in between houses and across the street. Boche cries in good English of, “Stop that firing.” Were frequently heard and ignored.

#### The Counter Attack.

11. Though the line had failed to C Coy the 18 set worked perfectly, OC C Coy (Major G V Fancourt) was ordered to use one pl and his sec of Carriers to counter-attack and regain 18 Pl posn and close the gap, but not prejudice his own Coy posn in doing so. This was

speedily carried out by 15 Pl (Lt D R Siddall) and, at 0630 hrs, OC C Coy said Lt Siddall was on part of his objective and was doing some confused mopping up and little more was known. C Coy was told that the enemy force could be trapped if the road out be cut and this he undertook to do if 15 Pl had not managed it already.

12. OC Sp Coy in the meantime had managed to make a stop in the village and all available men were gathered together. The CO ordered one sec of Carriers to work round the orchard next to Bn HQ and seal off further penetration West of the school and B Coy were told to send a patrol from their right pl to draw German attention Northwards and to regain a house if possible.

13. No further attacks developed and, by dawn (Major R Lowell) was concentrating in the orchard behind the 'stop line' in the village and the Coy Comd was told to stand by to clear the houses down the street and to link up with the sealing off forces. OC B Coy (Major G M M Smallwood) was told to protect the Left flank of the attack which was extremely exposed to the enemy view and small arms fire. Arty smoke was to be used if necessary.

14. Just before daybreak the enemy started withdrawing harassed by riflemen and light machine gunners in the house either bypassed or uncleared by the Boche. Cooks in the upstairs window of one Coy cookhouse (because of the difficult daylight maintenance conditions, all cooking was done forward) were throwing grenades out to speed the Huns.

15. By daybreak, all seemed clear as far as the ponds behind D Coy posns and the Coy of RSF was moved up the village to reinforce the defence. The Carrier pl was ordered to occupy the school and protect the Right flank of the RSF. Heavy Spandau fire, however, was coming from the houses the other side of the pond. D Coy were engaging the Boche from the Right flank and one party of ten was wiped out completely. All the MMG and RA DFs were ordered to be ready at call in case the enemy attempted to break out.

16. The CO then met OC D Coy RSF at the school behind the pond and they discussed the final assault. There was no cover for the attack on the Huns – any movement round the Left was open to the position on the WETERING and covering fire was difficult in view of our troops on the other side. A left flank approach was agreed upon. It was here that the CO met comd 13 Pl, C Coy, who had no ammunition left, and the crew of an RA Anti-tank gun who had used all their small arms ammunition during the night.

17. Suddenly fire from at least three Spandaus was opened on the tps in the area from the right rear near Bn HQ. It was uncertain whether this was a new waterborne approach from the river, so the CO returned to the centre of the village for more information. OC Carrier Pl (Lt W A Hodge) here told how 10 Boche with several Spandaus were holding out in a house next to Bn HQ and several men had been killed trying to break in. Plans for bringing up and Anti-tank gun and the wasp flame throwing section were considered and preliminary instructions issued. PIAT [*Projector Infantry Anti Tank*] had been used without success against the solid concrete gable end.

18. At this moment came a report that the main force of the Boche had surrendered and 60 prisoners were being marched down the village. Seeing this party, and with the roof of the house set on fire by a PIAT fired from BHQ, the defenders in the house showed a white flag and came out. Six Spandaus were found in the house.

19. D Coy 11 RSF completed their mopping up in 18 Pl area, releasing the sections of 18 Pl and Anti-tank crew taken prisoner, and joining with 14 Pl of C Coy. More prisoners

were taken. Lt K M Evans, who had continuously denied his Pl HQ to the enemy and never surrendered, was found still in great form with no ammunition left. The area was quickly consolidated and the CO then reorganised, A and C Coys to release D Coy 11 RSF. At 1100 hrs Bde was told everything was back to normal.

#### The Boche Intention.

20. A trace on the body of the Boche Coy Comd showed the attack was intended to reach BEMEL and PW said the object was to capture the high ground occupied by 147 Inf Bde as the German posns were waterlogged. Three Coys of 16 Para Regt were employed in the attack. 10 Coy was reinforced for the assault bringing it to a total of about 160. 5 and 7 Coys were in reserve to pass through HAALDEREN to capture BEMEL. Comd II Bn, 16 Para Regt was in comd. The complete assaulting force was wiped out. One hundred and ten men, including one CSM, were taken prisoner and 50 Boche and the Coy Comd, 2 officers and another CSM killed inside the Bn area. Some of those were drowned in the pond attempting to get out of our Bren fire.

21. Great slaughter must have been inflicted on 5 and 7 Coys, forming up 600 – 1,000 yds in front of D Coy, by the firing of DFs. Air Op reported a continual flow of ambulances to the area throughout the day. Among the booty was 25 Spandaus, nine bazookas together with a tremendous amount of small arms ammunition dumped in 18 Pl area. Carrying parties and small prams seemed to have been used to bring in this ammunition. Two German dogs were later found.

22. The attack, although carried out with great determination, was always doomed to failure as no attempt was made to neutralise B and C Coys and the Pl of A Coy under comd. It seemed that the Boche had little idea as to the strength of HAALDEREN, although the posns had been held for 10 weeks. Presumably he thought that the readjustment being carried out on the left of the British line due to the deliberate Boche flooding applied to the right too.

#### Own Casualties.

23. 7 DWR casualties were: 10 killed, 19 wounded and 2 missing (presumed drowned).  
11 RSF (D Coy) casualties were: 1 killed, 2 wounded.

#### Lessons from the Attack.

24. The obvious lesson is the principle of defence – if every man stays in his posn the attack can be defeated.

25. Communications were perfect. The CO was never out of touch with any Coy Comd – the 18 set working perfectly when lines were cut. He was thus never out of control throughout the morning. Lines had been laid to platoons and lateral lines between Coys (great use being made of captured phones – each Coy had 5) so that infm was exchanged between neighbouring pl comds. 38 sets were also used when pl lines were out of action. D Coy Comd, fwd, gave a running commentary of the battle in his cookhouse near Bn HQ because of this system of phones.

26. Platoon posns should be well stocked with small arms ammunition above the G1098 scale.

27. Beware of ruses.

28. Trip flares are not infallible and 2 inch mortars should be ready to fire illuminating flares to light up the battlefield.

29. On dark nights illumination can be provided on the front of the FDLs by searchlights if a flank posn can be found.

(sgd) C D Hamilton Major  
8 Dec 44

Comd 7 DWR

Annex C. Sketch map (see page 4).

Annex D.

Extract from 49 (WR) Inf Div Int Summary No 90.

#### NEW LIGHT ON THE HAALDEREN ATTACK 4 DEC 44

A captured trace which was not available at the Corps cage has assisted the Army interrogators in gaining further information on the enemy's abortive attack at HAALDEREN last week. The following extract from an Army interrogation report supplements infm already published in this summary:

From the statements of two young members of 16 Para Regt it is clear that the op was intended to pave the way for an attack in the NIJMEGEN br by a special engr demolition sec. For this reason it is worth while examining the intention and method of the op and the extent to which its execution was successful.

A twenty minute arty barrage from 0300 – 0320 hrs was scheduled to open the show and, simultaneously with the commencement of the barrage, 10 Coy, 16 Para Regt, was to move fwd into the village by HAALDEREN E7666 and dislodge the Allied occupants. The 7 Coy was to follow and assist in securing the village, together with the help of an A Tk Pl. The plan then called for 5 Coy to pass through HAALDEREN, take BEMEL E7367 and swing South along the road to the NIJMEGEN br. There, 2 pls of 5 Coy would attack any tps guarding the br and await the arrival of an engr sec which would follow up and prepare the br for demolition.

At 0300 hrs, H Hr, the plans began to go wrong. The expected arty barrage failed to materialise at the appointed time. However, 10 Coy and, in a short time, 7 Coy moved off towards HAALDEREN, in spite of the absence of arty sp, and soon found itself up against unexpectedly strong opposition. The barrage started 10 minutes late at 0310 hrs and was lifted at 0320 without having produced any noticeable effects. Meanwhile the two leading pls of 5 Coy approached HAALDEREN as per plan, but 7 Coy turned off the road at the edge of the village and was not seen again. The 2 pls kept coming and practically every man was killed or captured.

At this stage, the enemy force was so disorganised that the attack could not be pressed any further. The engr sec never got off the mark and no ground was made. Opposition was much heavier than anticipated and one PW lamented the fact that Allied resistance came largely from quite unexpected posns.

Annex E.

7<sup>th</sup> Bn The Duke of Wellington's Regiment

### SPECIAL MESSAGE TO ALL TROOPS

Everyone from the Army Commander downwards have congratulated the Bn on its smashing defeat of the German attack on HAALDEREN on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. Today the Div Comd has been to offer his personal appreciation. I want now to tell you how you have won fresh laurels for the Regiment.

This was a soldiers' battle. There were three hours of close hand to hand fighting. The day was finally won because every man did his duty and stuck to his post even when his ammunition was expended. Thanks to the signallers communication was perfect. I was never out of touch with any Company throughout the morning and we were thus able to launch the counter-attack by C Coy to join up with the gallant 18 Pl of D Coy, seal off the Germans and then to mop them up. There was some great work by the Carrier Pl and by 13 Pl of C Coy and many more great acts of gallantry which punished the Germans so heavily. We must thank, too, D Coy 11 RSF who put into effect their counter-attack role so efficiently.

A complete German Bn was concerned in the attack which was to take HAALDEREN and BEMEL. I don't think a man escaped in the reinforced Coy which did the assault. One hundred and ten prisoners were taken and at least 50 Boche were killed within our lines. Among the dead was the Coy Comd and his two officers and the CSM was wounded. The guns, mortars and MMGs did great slaughter amongst the rest of the Bn forming up to pass through the first Coy. Air recce showed a constant flow of German ambulances throughout the day to the woods where these Coys were formed up. In the village we found 25 Spandaus and 9 bazookas among the booty.

You have taught the Germans a lesson. Let them try it again!

C D Hamilton  
Major

The following messages have been received:

From Lt Col J H O Wilsey.

"Well done the 'Dukes' sorry I was not with you. I am much prouder of you than the Army, Divisional or Brigade Commander. My very sincere congratulations to Major Hamilton and to you all."

From Lt Gen E H Barker CB CBE DSO MC Comd 8 Corps.

"My congratulations to your Bn on their splendid party with the Boche. That will touch them. Good old POLAR BEAR."

Subject – ammunition Scales  
16/4/G  
2 Jan 45

BLA

List A.

The following is an extract from a letter received from the Div Comd concerning the numbers of Boche accounted for by the Bns in the Div during the month of Dec 44.

The contents thereof should be passed on to as many offrs and men as possible.

WJM/RAA

BM 147 Inf Bde

-----  
C O P Y

Dear -----

I have had a consolidated statement prepared showing the numbers of Boche that various battalions are known to have accounted for during the past month. It does not of course include those that have been killed or wounded by our arty and mortar fire. The result is at Appx A.

This is in no way intended to be a comparison of battalions, as I know that some have had greater opportunities, whilst others have not had the chance of killing Boche at all.

I am sending you these figures as I consider that they are very satisfactory and reflect great credit on the fighting efficiency of the tps. In particular I should like to call attention once more to the following points which have contributed largely to our successes:

- a. The holding of fire until the Boche have approached sufficiently close to enable us to wipe out their patrols.
- b. The holding of our fwd posns firmly even after considerable infiltration by the Boche.
- c. Determination in recovering wounded Boche under cover of smoke, in order to secure additional identifications.
- d. Good communications, resulting in satisfactory control of ops by comds.

I should be very grateful if you would pass on these figures to as many of your offrs and men as possible. I feel that the knowledge of what has already been achieved will help them to maintain the high standard that the Div has clearly attained and will encourage them in continuing to dispose of Boche at the present satisfactory rate.

Yours, etc

Appx A

Date	Battalion	Reported Killed	PW	Evacuated through enemy medical channels	Deserters
3 Dec	7 DWR	60 +	108		
5 Dec	7 DWR		3		
9 Dec	2 Glosters	2		4	
10 Dec	2 Glosters	6	20	2	
10 Dec	1 Leicesters				1
14 Dec	11 RSF		1		
15 Dec	7 BW		5		
15 Dec	2 SWB		1		
22 Dec	2 SWB				1
24 Dec	2 SWB		1		
25 Dec	Hallams	4			1
25 Dec	1/4 KOYLI				1
26 Dec	Hallams		11		
26 Dec	7 DWR		1		
27 Dec	4 Lincolns	4			
28 Dec	2 SWB	5			
28 Dec	1/4 KOYLI	2			
28 Dec	C Sqn 49 Recce Regt		8		
29 Dec	4 Lincolns	2		1	
		85	159	7	4



## 7 DWR NOTES ON DEFENCE

1. GENERAL. Successful defence depends on:

- a. Infm.
- b. Comn.
- c. Offensive – defensive.
- d. Will to fight it out.

2. INFM. Nothing that concerns enemy of own tps on front, flanks or rear is too small to report back. The smallest indication is invaluable. EACH Pl and HQ must have observers covering their responsible front. This must be properly org. Pl Comds' field glasses invaluable. Camouflage and concealment and keeping still essential. Shell and mortar reps always helpful to someone. All the infm gained by any way and every means must be PASSED BACK IMMEDIATELY.

3. COMNS. The passing of infm and subsequent action depends on good comms. Every possible means must be employed in keeping comms open. This is essential. R/T, W/T, Line, Visual, DR and runner must all be ready at hand to use if required. Code words increase speed if wisely used. A passive attitude because one or more means of comn has broken down is fatal. Infm and orders must reach their destination. Coys should experiment with 38 set earphones and line laid from Pl to Coy HQ.

4. OFFENSIVE – DEFENSIVE. Achieved by eagerness to surprise and then hit the Boche on every possible occasion.

a. Patrols. Main opportunity Inf has of locating and then hitting enemy. We always feel as if the Boche has pin-pointed us. This is because we know that his patrolling, camouflage and concealment is very good. We must do the same. By day and night we must locate and pin down main Boche posns. We must be offensive and widespread in our patrolling. We must strive to dominate No Man's Land by every possible means.

b. Counter-Attack. Should be by fire and/or fire and movement. In both cases must be immediate. This depends on infm getting from Pl to Coy or Coy to Sp Weapons and Bn HQ. Each Pl must have res sec, if possible, detailed for immediate C/A. Coy must a Pl, Bn a Coy. No counter-attack by inf will succeed if not supported by maximum weight of fire at each level. To be immediate it must be well briefed and reconnoitred. It should, if possible, come in from a flank.

c. We make too little use of 'Screens' on our front to mislead enemy as to our main posns. Boche always have an outpost line held by small parties with automatics and MFC. We must attempt to put out ahead and to flanks, small standing patrols of sec strength who will be able to prevent close observation of our main posns, give warning and yet be near enough to be supported by our fire. To establish these necessitates offensive action to dominate No Man's Land. Comns again important.

5. LAST MAN, LAST ROUND. Well understood. Steady tps in well prepared positions have every advantage over enemy attacking. Enemy can only break in or through provide they have a preponderance of fire power and armour. Otherwise it is expensive. Give the defenders every advantage by ensuring that posns are really well prepared, cannot be rushed, are mutually supporting, concealed and have adequate fields of fire from the firing posn. Defence is tiring because supervision and alertness are essential. Routine in defence

MUST be organised and battle discipline kept at highest level. We can learn many tips of cunning from the Boche, particularly his concealment, firing from unexpected directions, holding fire and impertinence of Spandau teams. NO defensive posn is ever finished. We must ensure that everything we can do is done to destroy the Boche. Cumbersome equipment, wire and concrete are not the solutions to successful defence. Energy, initiative and will to be offensive in all ranks is the real solution.

Lt Col  
Comd 7 DWR  
JHOW/BH

**Medals and Awards made to members of  
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT -  
*Compiled by C Boothman and Scott Flaving, RHQ DWR***

**Awards for the Defence for Haalderen - 4 Dec 1945**

<b>Name</b>		<b>Rank</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Bn</b>	<b>Medal</b>	<b>Date of Award</b>
Baker	C T	Pte	14661145	WW2	7th	DCM	05-Apr-45
Bell	M	Cpl	1506652	WW2	7th	MM	05-Apr-45
Evans	K M	Lt	261636	WW2	7th	MC	05-Apr-45
Hamilton	C D	Lt Col	90293	WW2	7th	DSO	05-Apr-45
Hawkins	W L	LCpl	1078129	WW2	7th	MM	05-Apr-45
Hodge	W A	Lt	285989	WW2	7th	MC	05-Apr-45
Le Cornu	J	Lt	333688	WW2	7th	MC	05-Apr-45
Quest	J	LCpl	4614266	WW2	7th	MM	05-Apr-45
Simpson	H	Sgt	4611795	WW2	7th	DCM	05-Apr-45
Stimson	P G	Pte	4751116	WW2	7th	MM	05-Apr-45

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Baker</b>		<b>C T</b>		town of origin (If known)	<b>York</b>
<b>14661145</b>					
Medal type:		<b>DCM</b>			
Rank held:		<b>Pte</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date	<b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1810</b>	Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

LG - The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished service in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke 1945, page 98): At Haalderen 7566 at 0315 hrs 4th December, 1944, the enemy launched a full scale attack on the positions of 7 DWR in an attempt to secure the Nijmegen bridge. The enemy companies were first sighted and engaged by a Bren gun team of three men. Their fire drew the fire of at least four Spandaus and one man was killed immediately. The enemy then attacked the post with grenades and cup dischargers and isolated it from the rest of the platoon. Pte Baker was one of the two remaining soldiers. Incensed by the death of his comrade, Pte Baker took charge, held his fire so his exact location would not be pin-pointed in the darkness. When the enemy section was within five to ten yards of the position, he opened fire and completely wiped out the enemy force, killing six Germans. He then engaged the remainder of the enemy battalion which had overrun other posts and was advancing along the road and caused further considerable casualties, only ceasing fire when his ammunition was completely exhausted. The enemy then attempted to search for the post, but the men went to ground in the ruins of a house until a counter-attack cut off the enemy who had penetrated deeply into the Battalion position. From then onwards they blocked the road and by noises and shouts prevented the enemy withdrawing. When the enemy force was finally rounded up, Pte Baker and his comrade crawled from their weapon pit still carrying the gun and an armful of empty magazines. Pte Baker's great heroism and initiative when cut off and great determination to deny his post until the last not only resulted in the death of many Germans, but was one of the outstanding factors in the destruction of the enemy attempt on the Nijmegen bridge. The fact that Pte Baker is only 19 years old makes his feat more remarkable.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Bell</b>	<b>M</b>				town of origin (If known)
<b>1506652</b>					
Medal type:	<b>MM</b>				
Rank held:	<b>Cpl</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign	<b>WW2</b>
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1810</b>	Medal location:	(If known)
date bar awarded:					

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, October 1944 p 99): At Haalderen 7566 on the night of 3rd-4th December this NCO was a member of a reconnaissance patrol which was bringing back valuable information about a German position. One man was killed and another wounded on a mine near the enemy position and the Germans opened fire. After making sure no identity had been left on the dead man, LCpl Bell and his patrol commander crawled back through the minefield, under fire, to deliver their information. Later, on 4th December, LCL Bells' courage was further in evidence when a strong enemy attack, designed to destroy the Nijmegen bridge, developed on his platoon position to which he had returned. Part of LCpl Bell's section was overwhelmed by weight of numbers and LCpl Bell was ordered to withdraw to a new position on the flank where more damage could be inflicted on the enemy. This change of position was hotly contested by the enemy but LCpl Bell alone covered the withdrawal. When the men reached their position, LCpl Bell's own withdrawal was followed by the Germans. As he reached his next position, LCpl Bell turned and shot the leading German dead at point blank range. LCpl Bell and his men then kept up a determined fire all night against the Germans who finally gave up all attempts to silence the post. This NCO's determination to defend his post to the last was a great factor in the demoralisation of the enemy, who were crushingly defeated, and his personal courage was all the more remarkable as it was his first time in action.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Evans</b>	<b>K M</b>	town of origin (If known)	<b>Liverpool</b>
<b>261636</b>			
Medal type:	<b>MC</b>		
Rank held:	<b>Lt</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b> Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1809</b> Medal location: (If known)

**Citation:**

Lt Evans was in command of 18 Platoon, the left forward platoon of D Company, at Haalderen, 7566, on the night of 3rd - 4th December. At 2000 hrs he led a night patrol which discovered a new enemy position. During his return one man was killed and another wounded on an enemy minefield but, with extreme courage and coolness under enemy fire, he found a route back for the rest of his patrol and reached his Company HQ with valuable information and without further casualties. At 0300 hrs next morning a strong enemy Company Group assaulted Lt Evans' platoon as part of an attack to seize Haalderen and, eventually, the Nijmegen Bridge, and two sections were finally overwhelmed. Lt Evan's platoon HQ and one section post continued to deny their positions to the enemy throughout the night and, finally, the Germans gave up all attempts to silence the posts. At 0700 hrs Lt Evans was joined by a relieving platoon which sealed off the penetration with the result that 110 prisoners were taken inside the Battalion area. When the position was finally cleared Lt Evans was found, still in a most aggressive spirit, with six enemy dead strewn outside his post, but with all his ammunition expended. Lt Evans' great acts of courage on this night were an inspiring example to his men (the majority of whom had just arrived on draft from the United Kingdom) and who fought off superior numbers long enough to give the Battalion warning of the attack. This officer's successful determination to hold his post at all costs was the principal act in the battalion's defeat of the enemy attack on Haalderen, the loss of which would most seriously have endangered the Nijmegen Bridge

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Hamilton</b>	<b>Charles Denis</b>	town of origin (If known)
<b>90293</b>		
Medal type:	<b>DSO</b>	
Rank held:	<b>Lt Col</b>	Battalion/unit <b>7th</b> Campaign <b>WW2</b>
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page <b>1809</b> Medal location: (If known)

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The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, June 1945, p 95): At about 0300 hrs on 4th December, 1944, approximately one battalion of German parachute infantry suddenly attacked the 7th DWR at Haalderen on a narrow front. Owing to the weight of the attack the forward defences were penetrated and approximately a company of infantry reached the centre of the Battalion position, while some reached within 200 yards of battalion HQ. Major Hamilton, who was acting CO of the Battalion, quickly regained control of the situation. He personally organised two stops near Battalion HQ with his only reserves, the Carrier Platoon and personnel of Battalion HQ. It was extremely difficult to find out the exact situation and confused fighting was going on all over the Battalion area and round Battalion HQ between small parties of the DWR and the enemy. Major Hamilton then ordered the perimeter Companies to hold firm, arranged for a counter-attack by the dismounted Carrier personnel to eject the enemy from houses round the central cross roads of the position and another from a flank Company to close the gap through which the enemy had penetrated. These arrangements were all successful. The position was that the enemy were bottled up inside the Battalion area, while any reserves the enemy had were pinned down by heavy and accurate DF brought down by artillery, heavy mortars and MGs. As soon as dawn broke, Major Hamilton carried out a further recce with the commander of a Company of another unit [11 RSF] which had been sent to his assistance, he gave instructions to the Company to counter-attack the bulk of the enemy. As soon as this got underway, Spandau fire broke out from a house near Battalion HQ. Major Hamilton immediately returned to organise the destruction of this party, which was soon carried out. This post contained six Spandaus. Within eight hours of the first attack the enemy's very determined attempt to capture the village of Haalderen, as a first step to the destruction of the Nijmegen bridge had been defeated with the loss to him of 50 killed, 110 PW and an unknown number of killed and wounded by DF outside the Battalion area. This success, at the cost of very light casualties to his own men was very largely due to Major Hamilton's leadership; throughout a very confused action he had maintained control of the situation and calmly made his arrangements for the destruction of the enemy. His reces during the night and after first light were carried out in considerable personal danger and his coolness at all times was an inspiration to his Battalion. It was under his direction that the action was soon brought to a highly successful conclusion.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Hawkins</b>	<b>W L</b>			town of origin (If known)
<b>1078129</b>				
Medal type:	<b>MM</b>			
Rank held:	<b>LCpl</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1810</b>	Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, June 1945, p 98). At Haalderen 7566 at 0300 hrs on 4th December, 1944, the Germans launched an attack on the 7th DWR positions with the intention of demolishing the Nijmegen bridge. Two enemy companies penetrated the outer defences and were advancing across the flank of 13 Platoon, C Company, which opened fire and caused considerable casualties. The Germans then detached a force to silence the Platoon which was attacked by the fire of bazookas, Spandaus, grenades and light mortars. After a number of men had been killed and wounded, LCpl Hawkins volunteered to crawl out of the back of the house which the Platoon was occupying and counter-attack with his 2 in mortar. Although the ground around was completely open and mostly under flood, LCpl Hawkins worked his way around the house until he could see the Germans who were firing at the house from a distance of 50 yards. LCpl Hawkins fired his mortar at low angle at point blank range and, with his first shot, silenced one Spandau. When he had fired all the ammunition he could carry, 12 rounds, LCpl Hawkins withdrew and the enemy ceased their fire. The brilliant stand of his Platoon completely demoralised the enemy, 110 of whom were taken prisoner within 100 yards of the Platoon. It was only through this newly appointed junior NCO's initiative and supreme courage in taking on what seemed a suicide task that the Platoon was able to continue its amazing resistance in face of greatly superior numbers.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Hodge</b>	<b>W A</b>	town of origin (If known)	<b>Babington</b>
<b>285989</b>			
Medal type:	<b>MC</b>		
Rank held:	<b>Lt</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b> Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1809</b> Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, June 1945, p 97): At Haalderen 7566 at 0300 hrs on 4th December, 1944, the Germans launched an attack on the 7th DWR positions with the intention of demolishing the Nijmegen bridge. One enemy company penetrated as far as the centre of the Battalion position and the situation seemed critical. The Commanding Officer ordered Lt Hodge, who was in temporary command of the Carrier Platoon, to place a stop of two Carrier sections in the centre of the village and, with the remainder of the Platoon, to counter-attack another enemy force, about 40 strong, which was advancing on Battalion HQ. The situation at this time was most confused with Battalion HQ cut off from the rest of the Battalion. However, all communications were working and if Battalion HQ could be safeguarded it seemed possible to launch a counter-attack at dawn. Lt Hodge set off through the flooded orchard in the darkness to counter-attack a school 150 yards from Battalion HQ. Little information was available and at least 3 Spandaus were firing from the school. Under the cover of the fire of 3 Bren guns, Lt Hodge led his small force of 12 men against the school, planning to throw two 77 grenades to stop the covering fire as he went in with the assault. Both grenades failed to explode, so Lt Hodge dashed into the school throwing 36 grenades into the first room. His bold decision resulted in the enemy force being partly wiped out, not without loss to the assault group. The remaining Germans withdrew to another house and defied further attempts at elimination. Lt Hodge, realising that the information about the school's capture was vital and also wishing to bring up a flame thrower or an A Tk gun against the enemy, then crawled 100 yards through the German positions to his Company Commander, who phoned Battalion HQ, enabling the counter-attack to be launched at dawn against the main enemy force. Lt Hodge's personal leadership, outstanding courage and remarkable speed in counter-attacking without any information undoubtedly stopped the German penetration and thus allowed the Commanding Officer to plan two counter-attacks which completely wiped out the enemy forces and ensured the security of the Nijmegen bridge.



**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Le Cornu</b>	<b>J</b>				town of origin (If known)
<b>333688</b>					
Medal type:	<b>MC</b>				
Rank held:	<b>Lt</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign	<b>WW2</b>
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1809</b>	Medal location:	(If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

2Lt Le Cornu was in command of 13 Pl, the reserve of 'C' company at Haalderen when, at 0300 hrs on 4 Dec, an enemy company broke into the defences and was advancing towards the centre of the Bn area. Lt Le Cornu's post immediately engaged the enemy at 80 yards range with small arms fire and the attackers scattered. 18 enemy, including the Company Commander and two officers, being found dead here next morning. The enemy then used bazookas and Spandaus which scored direct hits, killing three of the garrison, in a vain attempt to silence the position. Though by this time 2Lt Le Cornu was cut off he resisted throughout and when, two hours later, the enemy was driven back from the village, 2Lt Le Cornu and his post caused further great casualties. When he was finally relieved, his first thought was to replenish his empty magazines and follow up the enemy, who were finally trapped and 110 taken prisoner. 2Lt Le Cornu's alertness, personal courage and determination to hold his post to the last was an outstanding factor in the smashing of the strong German attempt to penetrate the Nijmegen Bridge defences.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Quest</b>	<b>Joseph</b>	town of origin (If known)	<b>Stalybridge</b>
<b>4614266</b>			
Medal type:	<b>MM</b>		
Rank held:	<b>LCpl</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b> Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1810</b> Medal location: (If known)

**Citation:**

At Haalderen 7566 on 4th December this NCO was in command of three men in a house strong point cut off during a strong enemy attack on the Battalion position. The enemy force, approximately 25 strong, engaged him with small arms and Spandaus and continually called on him to surrender for 2 1/2 hours, but his only answer was more fire. This brave garrison held out until counter-attack relieved them. Without orders, he then led his party in search of Germans and located them three houses away. The men strongly attacked these Huns, one of whom surrendered. As several men had been killed on the other side of the house attempting to force an entry. LCpl Quest determined to make the enemy give up. He stood up in full view of the post and called for them to surrender. They refused. Thinking they expected to be shot on surrender, LCpl Quest lay down his arms and walked unarmed towards the house demanding their surrender, which was accepted and ten men were taken prisoner. LCpl Quest's devotion to duty kept open a vital line to Battalion HQ by which a counter-attack was ordered, completely overthrowing the enemy, and his coolness in encouraging a surrender probably saved further bloodshed of his comrades.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Simpson</b>	<b>H</b>	town of origin (If known)	<b>Oldham</b>
<b>4611795</b>			
Medal type:	<b>DCM</b>		
Rank held:	<b>Sgt</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b> Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date <b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1809</b> Medal location: (If known)

**Citation:**

During a strong enemy attack at Haalderen (7566), a key point in the defence of the Nijmegen Bridge, on the 4th December, 1944, Sgt Simpson was in command of a section of Carriers which was ordered to place a stop across a line of buildings to halt the enemy house clearing operations. That this difficult mission was soon completed in the darkness was due to Sgt Simpson's great leadership. Shortly afterwards, Sgt Simpson was told to clear the enemy from a school from which Battalion HQ was threatened. Under the cover of Bren fire, this NCO led three riflemen immediately towards the door of the school in face of concentrated fire of six Spandaus. Sgt Simpson was seriously wounded in the leg and fell out. In spite of great pain, he remained on the ground directing the assault, shouting encouragement and refused to be taken to safety until his men, fired by his great example, rushed the door and forced the Boche garrison of 14 men to surrender. This NCO's decision to assault a greatly superior force and inspiration he gave his men when wounded saved Battalion HQ from encirclement, with the eventual result that a counter attack was planned which entirely eliminated the enemy force.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Stimson</b>		<b>P G</b>		town of origin (If known)	<b>Derby</b>
<b>4751116</b>					
Medal type:		<b>MM</b>			
Rank held:		<b>Pte</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date	<b>05-Apr-45</b>	Page	<b>1810</b>	Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

This soldier was a member of 13 Platoon, the reserve platoon of C Company, when an enemy Company broke into the Battalion defences at 0300 hrs on 4th Dec. The first waves were scattered and almost wiped out by Stimson's post, due to his skilful handling of his LMG. From then onwards, until 0900 hrs, his house was under constant enemy Spandau and bazooka fire and half the garrison of nine were killed or wounded. At about 0500 hrs, Pte Stimson was wounded in the leg but, although in great pain, continued to fire his gun, causing further great enemy casualties. Not until the action was over and 18 enemy dead counted within 80 yards of Stimson's gun did this soldier inform his platoon commander of his wound. He was later evacuated. Pte Stimson was determined to fire his gun until the last and his great fortitude and skill was a symbol of the defiance of this small garrison which ultimately led to the complete overthrow of the enemy attack

**The Battle of Haalderen  
1/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment  
147<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 49<sup>th</sup> Division  
4 December 1944**

**Compilation of accounts concerning the Battle of Haalderen, 4 Dec 44,  
Extracts taken from the 'Yorkshire Pud' Battalion newspaper.**

**1. Victory Edition.**

**CO's Account:**

The apple and cherry picking of the autumn had given way to the smashed ruins, 1914-18 mud and the slashing rain of the sinter when our recce parties arrived on the 31<sup>st</sup> November. Slit trenches were flooded and there was hardly one brick standing on another anywhere. There was talk of spending the winter here. The CO of the Dorsets talked of sinking obsolete tanks into the mud to make strong points.

We trudged up a filthy track that night in the darkness towards the right of the line at Haalderen, once a pretty village on the Rhine; all of us, I think, with an impending feeling of some future destiny around the scarred orchards, the unbelievable ruins of the streets and church.

For two days we watched the waters rise – in the Rhine over the towering water bund, or dyke, on our right, over the sides of our slit trenches. We formed strong-points amid the ruins and in the cellars – man-management became supreme. The German was aggressive with his artillery only, and the Mortar Platoon suffered heavily. On the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> December I dragged my Jeep through the mud and darkness to Brigade for a conference on the evacuation of the 'Island' in case of flooding. The Boche had blown several gaps in the bund that day and the rushing Rhine water had overwhelmed several posts in the north-west of the 'Island' without warning. We expected every distant rumble to be followed by a tidal wave.

Appropriately enough the evacuation scheme was known as 'Noah'. We tied up questions of routes and rear guards before I drove back through the worst storm I've known for many years. Back in the Command Post the cellar had flooded and the floating tables already lent the 'Ark' atmosphere to the night. I called a short midnight 'O' Group and decided to spend the night beside the phone in the cellar in case of swift flooding needing rapid action; or was it intuition? I would otherwise have been too far away in my sleeping cellar when the alarm was raised. In actual fact my driver and batman were wounded three hours later where I would have been sleeping!

I was dozing at 3 o'clock – two hours after my 'O' Group when the duty officer said D Company, which was on the bund on the extreme right, were being Spandau'd. I spoke to Major Barry Kavanagh straight away and found him already standing to. Two minutes later the Command Post was shelled and Barry reported a strong attack was developing on his Company. One thrust had got down the road.

The battle which followed has been described in the Press and the ABCA pamphlet War dated 17 February in an article 'Action on the Island'.

The repulse of this attack by a Parachute Battalion which intended to secure the great Nijmegen bridge, which was afterwards to be demolished by a follow-up Sapper Company, was a great triumph for the Battalion. It was a soldiers' battle- even the cooks joining in. The fact that the Signals kept communications open to each Company throughout made the issue never in doubt.

The next few days were spent in reorganising our defences against further flood. Barry Kavanagh flew his pennant on three Mk III assault boats in which stores and food were rowed up and down to his Company from Battalion HQ. Hordes of Pressmen came to talk to the men.

We spent a further 14 days in the sector before moving back into billets in Nijmegen two days before Christmas.

### **A Company (J C Fox):**

I remember a night in Haalderen. There was something wrong with my stomach, so I took two aspirin and a tot of whisky and went to bed. I was roused at midnight to go and see the Commanding Officer, who told me that there was a great possibility of the floods on the 'Island' rising rapidly and outlined Operation 'Canute' which involved the evacuation of Haalderen in the event of the floods making the ground we held untenable. As I splashed back to Company HQ my stomach felt very queer. I took two more aspirin and another tot of whisky and went to bed again.

At about 0300 hrs, Vic Stephens, who was with me in Company HQ, woke me and told me he thought there was trouble in the village. I went out into the street where a scene of considerable confusion very soon emerged out of the darkness. All the shouting was in German. My stomach felt very queer. Company HQ, including Pte Shields, ACC, and his crew of cooks stood to. Our two little villas bristled with guns and bayonets. Pte Naylor, who cannot see in the dark, was i/c ammunition resupply. Every window was stocked with grenades. Major Thomlinson, with some of the Carrier Platoon, appeared over the garden wall. We were very pleased to see him, but my stomach still felt unsettled. The Germans came on up the street, some got into the house opposite, some came along our side. Vic Stephens, from upstairs, saw them first. He shot at them with his pistol and, as this did not appear to worry them, he dropped a grenade on them. This made one of them dodge round the front of the house and crouch down at the corner of the wall with his back to me. I fired six shots from my pistol at him and, to my horror, after the sixth shot, he got up and ran like a stag across the road where he fell flat on his face in a ditch full of water. Pte Naylor quickly gave me two grenades which I flung in the ditch after him. Major Thomlinson threw two more. I remember going out later that morning with the Commanding Officer to show him the mangled remains of my kill. There was nothing there except a Barreta and an egg grenade. There was, however, a dead German a little way down the street in a wheelbarrow. I believe, and I hope, he was mine. The ailment in my stomach never recurred.

### **B Company:**

On December 4<sup>th</sup> the 2<sup>nd</sup> German Parachute Division sent a Battalion to wipe out the 7<sup>th</sup> 'Dukes' and anyone else who got in the way and, after a minor initial success, were wiped

out to some tune. From the Company's point of view we did not bear the brunt of the attack but our cookhouse was occupied and to this day it is quite impossible to get a coherent story from the cooks who were bottled up in the cellar with the Boche above, quite ignorant of their existence. The relief of the cookhouse by the Second-in-Command and party was nothing if not dramatic. To the cry, "Any 'Dukes' here?" there was dead silence for a moment, then Cpl Fletcher and his 'boys' gave a whoop which would have put American football cheerleaders to shame.

### **C Company (Capt E W Mattock):**

The Colonel told us the 'Island' was a God-forsaken spot, not a house standing, water everywhere, so we were well prepared and, as it happens, things did not seem too bad. We had not been there four days before the Boche attacked and, as everybody knows this story, it will not be repeated. Pte Roy Dearing was killed, having delivered a message to Lt Le Cornu, and Sgt Webb (also with Lt Le Cornu) was wounded. Our cooks had to do a quick getaway through the pigsty and the only man missing was Pte Steeper (Carrier driver). Pte 'Hawkeye' Booth (Company clerk) got two Boche who were crawling up the ditch towards the Company Command Post.

### **D Company (Lt K M Evans):**

A brief move to Maarheeze, where we trained and played football (Headquarters winning from my Platoon). And then briefed for the attack on Blerick, which was promptly cancelled, and we moved up to take over from 50 Division. Just before we left, my Platoon was made up fully with new arrivals from the AA who were soon to prove they were as fine fighters as one could wish. So we arrived on the 'Island' between Arnhem and Nijmegen where we were to spend five and a half months.

Life on the 'Island' was very trying. Little happened by day because there were so many open spaces. At night we had to be at the peak of alertness especially as we were on the Haalderen sector, the most important on the 'Island'.

Against us we had the experienced 6<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division. On December 3<sup>rd</sup> I was sent out on a recce patrol with Tonks, Flannery and Corporal Bell MM. We found out what we wanted to know and were on our way back when Flannery was killed and Tonks lost a foot on mines. It seemed as though something was going to happen that night. The Officer Commanding laid on the guns to our front and we waited. I shall never forget the time 0320 hrs. The Boche came at us and first thing I knew about it all was when I heard Spandaus being answered by our Brens. They came at us thick and fast, screaming at the top of their voices. Brens blazed away at them but still they came. Down came the DF within a few seconds of it being called for and the guns went on for the next five hours, keeping the rest of the Huns from reinforcing their initial attack.

I was fortunately in touch with Company Headquarters and was able to get a fairly clear picture of what was happening against 16 Platoon – here the Huns ran up against a 'brick wall'. Pratt of 17 Platoon, Mathewman, Jowett and Meeham did very good work on that side with their Brens. At the cookhouse, Simpson and Pepper, after expending all their ammunition and after asking the Officer Commanding to leave the telephone as the Germans were in the next room, climbed into a big box and avoided contact. In my Platoon, Bell received the MM, Pte Baker the next highest award to the VC, the DCM and Pte Jones, who was with Baker in his magnificent exploit, the C-in-C's award for gallantry. (Ed Note – Lt Evans also received a well-earned MC).

This battle to us was proof of the courage and tenacity of the Company in defence as well as the attack. Cooks and drivers spent their spare time rolling grenades downstairs in their house or firing a Bren from one window and quickly nipping to fire again. Cpl Quest won a deserved MM when, after putting down his weapon, he walked up to a house which was strongly held by the enemy and demanded their surrender, which was luckily given. Seventy three prisoners were taken from my Platoon's area when we were relieved by C Company 7 DWR and D Company 11 RSF. The lads were in great spirits at the victory. After this battle we carried out an organised tour of the 'Island' – Elst, Bommel, Haalderen, Ressen and Lent were all visited by us in the course of months. We sat back and watched the war move around us. From being in a salient we became a back-water. Finally we received the order to clear the 'Island.'

### **Mortar Platoon:**

Casualties throughout the campaign were light due, we feel sure, to ignoring all previous teachings on 'The Siting of Mortars in Action'. We do however wish to express our great loss in the deaths of the following Detachment Commanders who were killed in action – Sgt Sawyer F (Haalderen 1 12 44), Sgt Glanister H (Haalderen 1 12 44). Their unflinching sense of duty and cheerfulness has always been of immense value to us in good and bad times.

### **Pioneer Platoon:**

The Pioneer Platoon's main task on the 'Island' was to lay trip wires and assist the Battalion patrols. Good work was done by Cpl Byrne and Pte Biddulph.

### **Carrier Platoon:**

Nijmegen Salient – For several months we held various positions in the bridgehead across the River Waal under appalling conditions. The enemy attack on Haalderen was stopped by the Battalion and the Platoon rendered service in the mopping up of isolated pockets of the enemy. The casualties suffered by the Platoon during this battle was Sgt Tremeer and LCpl Jones, killed, and Sgt H Simpson, wounded. Sgt Simpson was awarded the DCM for his part in this action. Lt Hodge also won the MC.

### **Signal Platoon:**

Our next scene of action was the 'Island' at Nijmegen, where the number of telephones grew to tremendous proportions. We grumbled at the time but they paid their dividend. We liked Elst but hated Haalderen. The tale of Haalderen has been told many times elsewhere.

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## THE ENEMY ATTACKS.

3. Early patrolling on the night 3/4<sup>th</sup> December found the enemy in his usual positions and active. Lt K Evans, of 18 Platoon the left hand platoon of D Company, who was to play such a notable part in the defeat of the Hun, led one patrol to houses about 400 yards in front of his position and saw six Boche. Two of his men were blown up on a minefield and he, with the other surviving members of the patrol, carried the wounded men back the whole distance to our FDLs.

4. At 0315 hrs, heavy Spandau firing and mortaring was directed against the forward platoons of D Company and at B Company and the Commanding Officer ordered immediate RA and Mortar DFs [*Defensive Fire*] to be used as a precaution. Commander of 18 Platoon, D Company, reported by phone that two sections of his platoon were being overwhelmed by at least a platoon and probably more Germans and that for the moment he himself had been by-passed. A few minutes later he said at least a company had got through and thought more were following. Considerable casualties were being caused to the enemy by the Platoon HQ and section still fighting on. A minute later all communication with him was lost and it was thought he too had been over-run by the sheer weight of numbers of the enemy on a narrow front.

5. From Battalion HQ confused fighting was heard in the village and runners reported that the Boche had got to the village centre and were moving left towards Battalion HQ having captured the school, 200 yards from Battalion HQ, and Verey lights were being fired. Officer Commanding A Company (Capt J C Fox), who commanded the central immediate reserve of three Carrier sections (Lt W A Hodge), and one platoon A Company, reported that the Germans were between him and his platoon. In actual fact the Boche were in the next house and were trying to push on.

6. Later it was found that the Boche had swept past 18 Platoon down the road on to the front of the reserve platoon of C Company, 13 Platoon, (Lt J Le Cornu). The Platoon Commander first thought the large body of men were troops withdrawing because of the flooding which had been serious on other fronts but, having had no information and suspicious of the previous firing, he ordered fire to be opened. A voice then shouted in perfect English, "Stop that b.... Bren. We've got a wounded man here." Some stretcher bearers could be seen together with men carrying equipment not properly identified in the dark. The Platoon Commander stopped his firing – but on hearing a German voice reopened his fire and the Boche toppled like ninepins, many diving into the two ponds where they were drowned. The Platoon Commander kept his fire up all night until his ammunition was gone, resisting all attempts at capture. The Boche fired Bazooka and Spandau at his post, killing and wounding a few men.

7. Officer Commanding D Company (Major A B M Kavanagh) reported that a strong attack was in progress against his right-hand platoon but so far had been held with SA and grenades, causing heavy losses to the assaulting troops. So far no attacks had been launched against B and C Companies.

## PLANNING THE COUNTER-ATTACK.

8. The Commanding Officer decided that while the confused fighting was sorting itself out, the first steps must be to:

- a. Smash up any reinforcements for the attack.

- b. Prevent any attacks forming up against other Companies.
- c. Neutralise the enemy position facing B Company.
- d. Make a firm stop in the village with the only forces in the village uncommitted – three sections of carriers.

At this stage it was vital that all troops should hold firm in their positions preparatory to the penetration being sealed off and the enemy mopped up. At 0430 hrs, the Commanding Officer spoke to all Company Commanders over the phone and RT to this effect. As the enemy force seemed to be 150 to 200 strong, Brigade were asked to stand by the Company of RSF to move and 15 minutes later the Commanding Officer requested that they should be moved to an assembly area nearer to Battalion HQ of 7<sup>th</sup> DWR.

9. All RA, 4.2 inch mortar and MMG tasks were then called for in front of C and D Companies and RA tasks on B Company. Later the Brigade Commander gave targets to the Mediums on deeper assembly areas. All fire was quickly brought down and must have caused immense damage to the reserve companies who, it was found from prisoners, were waiting for the success signals in the target areas.

10. During the time, Officer Commanding Support Company (Major B V Thomlinson) had been contacted in the village by phone and he took command of the forces in the village street, giving the Commanding Officer in the command post most valuable information about the battle in between throwing grenades at the Boche across the street. There was indescribable confusion in the village – Spandaus, Brens, rifles, Stens and grenades being freely used between houses and across the street. Boche cries in good English of, “Stop that firing.” Were frequently heard and ignored.

#### THE COUNTER-ATTACK.

11. Though the line had failed to C Company, the 18 set worked perfectly. Officer Commanding C Company (Major G V Fancourt) was ordered to use one platoon and his section of Carriers to counter attack and regain 18 Platoon position and close the gap, but not to prejudice his own Company position in doing so. This was speedily carried out by 15 Platoon (Lt D R Siddall) and, at 0630 hrs, Officer Commanding C Company said Lt Siddall was on part of his objective, was doing some confused mopping up and little more was known. C Company was told that the enemy force could be trapped if the road could be cut at Point X and this he undertook to do if 15 Platoon had not managed it already.

12. Officer Commanding Support Company, in the meantime, had managed to make a stop in the village at Y and all available men were gathered together. The Commanding Officer ordered one section of Carriers to work round the orchard, (Z), next to Battalion HQ, and seal off further penetration west of the school and B Company was told to send a patrol from their right platoon to draw German attention northwards and to regain the house W if possible. The Carrier section actually drove the Boche out of the school building before moving to Z.

13. No further attacks developed and, by dawn, D Company RSF (Major L Rowell) was concentrated in the orchard behind the ‘stop line’ in the village and the Company Commander was told to stand by to clear the houses down the street X and thus link up with the sealing off forces. Officer Commanding B Company (Major G M M Smallwood) was told to protect the left flank of the attack, which was extremely exposed to the enemy view and SA fire from area V. Artillery smoke was to be used if necessary.

14. Just before daybreak, the enemy started withdrawing, harassed by riflemen and LMGs in the houses either by-passed or uncleared by the Boche. Cooks in upstairs window of one Company cookhouse (because of the difficult daylight maintenance conditions all cooking was done forward) were throwing grenades out to speed up the Huns.

15. By daybreak, all seemed clear as far as the ponds behind D Company's positions and the Company of RSF was moved up the village to reinforce the defence.

16. The Carrier Platoon was ordered to occupy the school and protect the right flank of the RSF. Heavy Spandau fire, however, was coming from the houses near Z the other side of the pond. D Company was engaging the Boche from the right flank and one party of 10 was wiped out completely. All the MMG and RA DFs were ordered to be ready on call in case the enemy attempted to break out.

17. The Commanding Officer then met Officer Commanding D Company RSF at the school behind the pond and they discussed the final assault. There was no cover for the attack on the Huns – any movement round the left was open to position on the Wetering Canal and covering fire was difficult in view of our troops on the other side. A left flank approach was agreed upon. It was here that the Commanding Officer met commander 13 Platoon, C Company, who had no ammunition left and the crew of a RA Anti Tank gun who had used all their small arms ammunition during the night.

18. Suddenly fire from at least three Spandaus was opened on the troops in the area from the right rear Battalion HQ. As it was uncertain whether this was a new waterborne approach from the river, the Commanding Officer returned to the centre of the village for more information. Officer Commanding Carrier Platoon (Lt W A Hodge) here told how ten Boche, with several Spandaus, were holding out in a house, Z, and several men had been killed trying to break in. Plans for bringing up an Anti Tank gun and the 'Wasp' flame-throwing section were considered and preliminary orders issued. PIATs had been used without success against the solid concrete gable end.

19. At this moment came a report that the main force of the Boche (between X and Y) had surrendered and 60 prisoners were being marched down the village. Seeing this party and with the roof of the house set on fire by a PIAT fired from Battalion HQ, the defenders in the house Z showed a white flag and came out. Six Spandaus were found in the house.

20. D Company RSF completed their mopping up in 18 Platoon area (X) releasing the sections of 18 Platoon and Anti Tank gun crew taken prisoner and joining with 14 Platoon of C Company. More prisoners were taken. Lt K M Evans, who had continuously denied his Platoon HQ to the enemy and never surrendered, was found still in great form with no ammunition left. The area was quickly consolidated and the Commanding Officer then reorganised A and C Companies to release D Company RSF. At 1100 hrs Brigade was told everything was back to normal.

#### THE BOSCHE INTENTION.

21. A trace found on the body of the Boche Company Commander showed the attack was intended to reach BEMMEL, and POW stated the object was to capture the Nijmegen bridge. Three companies of 16 Parachute Regiment were employed in the attack. 10 Company was reinforced for the assault, bringing it to a total of about 160. 5 and 7 Companies were in reserve to pass through Haalderen to capture BEMMEL. Commander II Battalion, 16 Parachute Regiment, was in command. The complete assaulting force was

wiped out. 110 men, including one CSM, were taken prisoner and 50 Boche and the Company Commander, two officers and another CSM killed inside the Battalion area. Some of these were drowned in the pond attempting to get out of our Bren fire.

22. Great slaughter must have been inflicted on 5 and 7 Companies, forming up 600 to 1,000 yards in front of D Company, by the firing of DFs. Air Op reported a continual flow of ambulances to the area throughout the day. Among the booty were 25 Spandaus and nine Bazookas, together with a tremendous amount of small arms ammunition dumped in 18 Platoon area. Carrying parties and small prams seemed to have been used to bring in this ammunition. Two German dogs were later found.

23. The attack, although carried out with great determination, was always doomed to failure as no attempt was made to neutralise B and C Companies and the platoon of A Company under command. It seemed that the Boche had little idea of the strength of Haalderen although the positions had been occupied for ten weeks. Presumably, he thought that the readjustment being carried out on the left of the British line, due to the deliberate Boche flooding, applied to the right also.

#### OWN CAUALTIES.

24. The 7<sup>th</sup> DWR casualties were: 10 killed, 19 wounded and two missing (believed drowned). D Company RSF: 1 killed, 2 wounded.

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#### ROLL OF HONOUR – 4 Dec 44.

Pte Broderick	George	
Pte Dearing	Roy	C Coy
Pte Dunn	Bernard	
Pte Flannery	John	D Coy
Sgt Hocking	John Hepton	
Cpl Hudson	Frank	
LCpl Jones	John Thomas	Carrier Pl
Pte Landy	John William Retford	
Sgt Myners	Kenneth Austin	
Sgt Tremeer	Arthur George	Carrier Pl

#### Missing:

Pte Steeper (Carrier driver)	C Coy.
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#### Awards:

Lt Evans, MC; Pte Bell, MM; Pte Baker, DCM; Pte Jones, C-in-C's award for gallantry D Coy, Lt Hodge, MC, Sgt Simpson, DCM Carrier Pl.

## The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) - Report from the Regimental Archives.

### Extract From: Roll of Honour - Haalderen 4 December 1944

Number	Rank and Initials	Remarks	Town of Origin	Date of death	Cem, Plot, Row, Grave	Unit
14686689	Pte George	Kia Haalderen	Hull	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 15, D, 2	17th
14579246	Pte Roy	Kia Haalderen delivering message	Halifax	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 19, D, 8	17th
2365532	Pte Bernard	kia Haalderen	London	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 15, D, 4	17th
14287088	Pte John	D Coy. Kia Haalderen	Clonbur	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 1, C, 1	17th
4694312	Sgt John Hepton	kia, Haalderen	Langcliffe	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 11, D, 7	17th
4394857	Cpl Frank	kia Haalderen	Eston	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 19, D, 3	17th
4201131	LCpl John Thomas	Carrier PI, kia, Haalderen	Atcham	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 15, D, 3	17th
1554399	Pte John William Reiford	kia Haalderen	Ilford	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 15, D, 1	17th
1123125	Sgt Kenneth Austin	ACC, kia Haalderen		04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War 7, D 2	17th
4610578	Sgt Arthur George	Carrier PI, kia Haalderen	Torquay	04-Dec-44	Jonkerbos War	17th



## Jonkerbos Military Cemetery, Nijmegen

The Netherlands fell to Germany in May 1940 and was not re-entered by Allied forces until September 1944. Nijmegen is in the east of the Netherlands, south of Arnhem. From 17 September 1944 until February 1945 Nijmegen became a front line town. No.3 Casualty clearing station was situated in a wooded area known as 'Jonkers Bosch'. Those who did not survive their injuries were buried in the adjacent woodland. Following the end of the war the Commonwealth War Graves Commission interred other allied remains. The Cemetery contains 1,629 Commonwealth burials, of which 99 remain unidentified, and 13 war graves of other nationalities.

These are some of the headstones of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment



Pte JWR Landy – Pte G Broderick – LCpl JT Jones – Pte B Dunn



Cpl F Hudson – LSgt H Glannister – Sgt F Sawyer – Sgt AG Tremeer – Pte R Dearing





Serjeant JH Hocking



## 2. One Year On – ‘Yorkshire Pud’, December 1945.

Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945:

### Haalderen 1944.

Today is the eve of the Battle of Haalderen. Few of those who took part in it will ever forget the struggle, which saw some of the hardest and fiercest fighting in the history of the Battalion. We had been four days at Haalderen, four days in the ruined cottages and damp cellars of that once pretty village on the banks of the Waal. On the night of the 3<sup>rd</sup> there was a slight scare about midnight, when it was announced that, owing to the German breaching the dykes, we might have to fall back on to the slightly higher ground nearer Nijmegen.

It was a pitch black night, for the moon did not rise until an hour or so before daylight. At a quarter past three in the morning heavy fire was directed against D Company, holding a line of posts astride the main road facing the enemy. Despite the gallant stand of 18 Platoon, nearly two Companies of German paratroops, intent on seizing the vital Nijmegen bridge, poured through the front line positions on a very narrow front and, within a few minutes, were engaged in heavy fighting in the middle of the village.



18 Platoon filling sandbags, Haalderen

### A Soldiers' Battle.

For the next six hours and the more the battle continued, as platoons, sections and even individual men carried on the fight attacking the enemy. The full story of their heroism has been told elsewhere. But the Battalion will never forget the gallantry of the Carrier Platoon, which drove the Germans from a succession of houses, the stout hearts of the handful of 13 Platoon who held their two little houses against every attack and the steadfastness of all who stood firm although surrounded.



## Part 2

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE BREAKOUT FROM HAALDEREN, 2 APRIL 1945

After five months on the 'Island' 49 Division planned to break out, cross the Rhine and take Arnhem, which had almost been in the hands of 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in September, 1944. 7 DWR received orders for the breakout battle, Op Destroyer, while in billets in Nijmegen in the last days of March, 1944.

Moving back to Haalderen on 1<sup>st</sup> April, the attack was launched at 0600 hrs the next day towards Gent. Objectives were secured by 0825 and the rest of the day was spent consolidating and patrolling.

C Company carried out a particularly daring assault, constrained by minefields and a narrow approach covered by machine guns. Lt Lyon was awarded the Military Cross for his daring and gallant leadership which saved a great deal of time in the seizure of a strongly held position, which proved to be the key to the local enemy defence system.

#

By 10<sup>th</sup> April, planning for Op Anger, the capture of Arnhem, was well advanced and, at 1430 hrs on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 7 DWR crossed the Rhine on a Bailey Bridge, crossed the Ijssel and, on 14<sup>th</sup> April, pushed into Arnhem from the south against strong opposition from Dutch SS troops, moving on to Ede by 18<sup>th</sup> April.

The Battalion was in the line facing Klomp when news was received of the end of hostilities in the West at 1730 hours on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1945, signed by Admiral von Friedenberg and General Kinzel on behalf of Admiral Doenitz, which was confirmed by the Brigadier at 1140 hrs the following day.

General Jodl was authorised to sign the capitulation documents for unconditional surrender at Reims at 0241 hours on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1945, by Admiral Doenitz who had taken over from Hitler following his death in Berlin on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

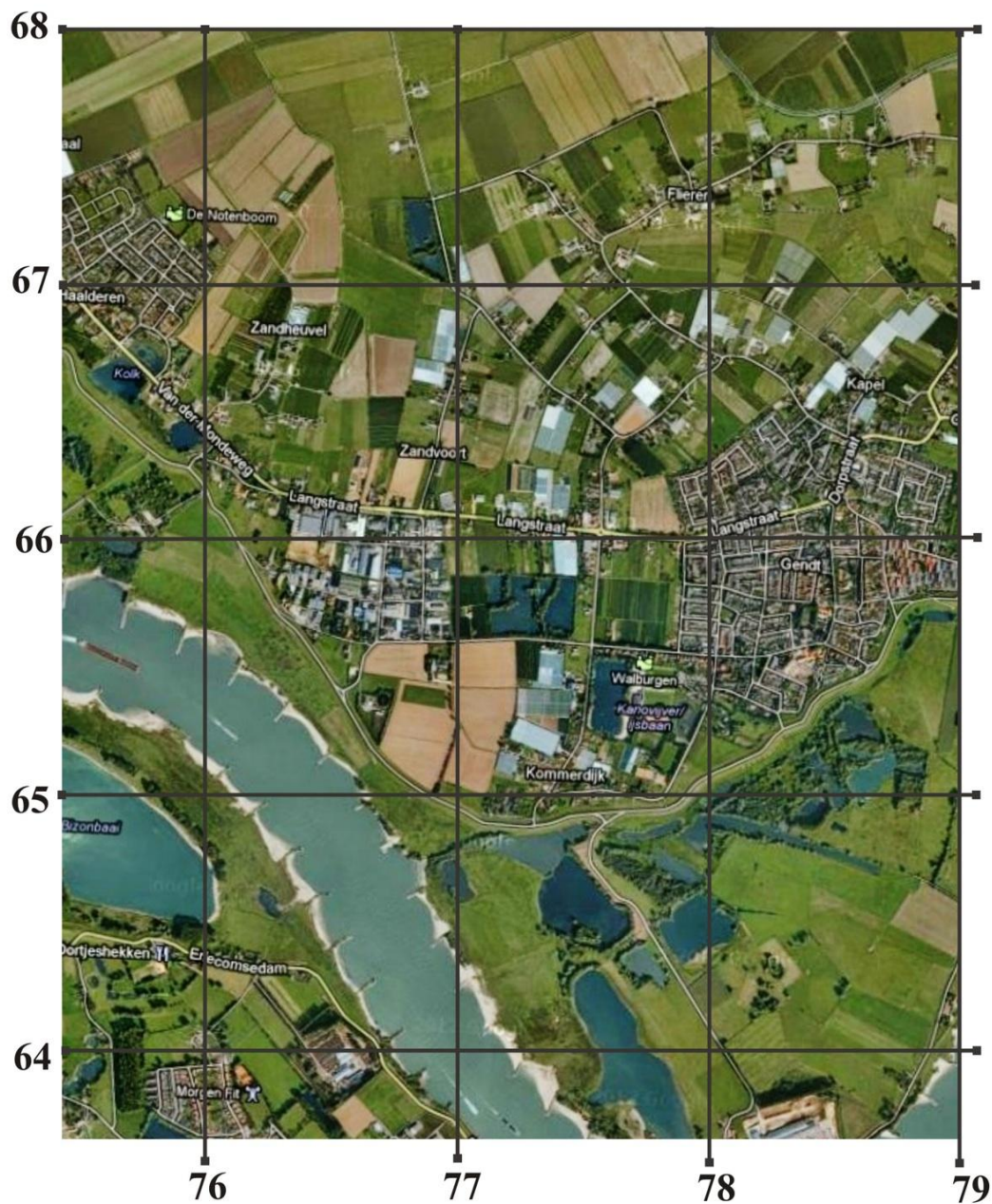
*Scott Flaving, RHQ YORKS, August 2012.*





**Haalderen Breakout – April 1945 (Sketch Map)**





**Haalderen - Breakout April 1945 (Overlay)**  
**[Not to Scale]**

RLH-H05 (Overlay 02)

### Extract from War Diary – April 1945

1 Apr 1945	<p>Preparations for Bn attack at HAALDEREN 7566 continue. Troops briefed and confined to barracks. Final details settled with OC C Sqn 11 CAR (Tanks), 1 Fife and Forfar Yeomanry (Crocodiles), 1 Lothian (Flails) and RA. Details of gaps in minefields to be cleared confirmed with 2 Essex who were holding the line at HAALDEREN. 1800 – Tac HQ set up in HAALDEREN 757668.</p>
2 Apr	<p>0100 – Patrol of 2 Essex confirm enemy still in occupation Houses 769667. 0530 – All Coys in FUPs moving up to start line immediately behind FDLs of 2 Essex. 0600 – Arty barrage opens including arty rocket projector on Houses 764656, Med Regt on Houses 769667, Fd arty, 4.2 inch Mortars, 3 inch Mortars and MMGs all firing on pre arranged target. Infantry move forward. 0615 – 2 white Verey lights fired by Boche from behind house 769667, followed immediately by Spandau fire from 770668. 0620 – 1 white Verey light from 769667. 0630 – D Coy secures N end of their objective at 770668 but held up by bazooka and small arms fire from S and 769667. Tp of tks for sp of D Coy on their way. 0645 – A Coy moving well. No opposition. 12 PW from 764657 evidently completely demoralised by the ‘mattress’. 0720 – C Coy captured and cleared their first objective taking 20 PW without loss in a dynamic attack by the leading Pl (Lt Lyon) at 766662. 0740 – A and C Coys on final objective at KOMMERDIJK 7765 and X rds 775661 but D Coy still having stiff battle against a stubborn strong point. 0800 – Main rd from HAALDEREN as far as 775661 heavily mined with Reugel mines and cratered. 0815 – D Coy secured its objective 769667 captured 1 wounded offr and 14 PW. 0825 – Bn on all objectives, A Coy est 774650 with two secs Carriers at 775656, C Coy 775661, D Coy 769667 and B Coy in res, area 768662.</p>
	<p>0830 – Patrolling by A Coy to GENT en KAPEL 7865, C Coy to 784663, 785664 and DEGEER 7767 unable to catch up with the fast retreating Boche who were being harassed all the time by arty, mortars and MMGs. Mining and booby traps extensive especially on rds 760663 – 786654, 760664 – 784663, 776661 – 775673, minefields and booby traps located in areas orchards N and S of rd 760663 – 769662 at X rds 775656, Houses 767663. All being dealt with by RE and Unit Pnrs. Rd not yet open for tpt or tanks. 1130 – Patrols had reached objectives without opposition and RSF passed through. 1140 – Bn settled down as firm base for remainder of Bde to pass through. Houses in area searched and continuous stream of odd Boche being brought in. 1212 – B Coy took 12 PW from House DEGEER 7767 which had 8 direct hits and other hits on slits and def posns. Boche had 2 Spandau out of four knocked out. In spite of having 4 MGs, 5 machine pistols, rifles and grenades, they showed no fight. 1255 – Enemy now reported attempting to withdraw over NEDER RIJN at Ferry site 806690 being constantly harassed. Coys ordered to concentrate. Total PW taken by Bn, 1 Offr (wounded), 62 ORs, all from 5 and 6 Coys, 361 VG Div. Own cas 3 killed and 6 wounded. Enemy weapons destroyed or captured, 11 Spandaus, 10 machine pistols, 38 rifles, numerous Panzerfausts and grenades. Enemy shelling and mortaring – after the opening stages when the start line was lightly shelled and mortared, was effectively silenced by counter bty for which two 5.5 inch Med Regts were employed. 1900 – Bn HQ moved to 781655, Coys remained in def posns throughout night.</p>
3 Apr 1945	<p>Day spent re-organising, checking arms and eqpt.</p>





**RSM, CO and Driver, Pte Holland, 1944-45**

**Medals and Awards made to members of  
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT**  
*Compiled by C Boothman and Scott Flaving, RHQ DWR*

**Awards for the Breakout from Haalderen - 2 Apr**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Bn</b>	<b>Medal</b>	<b>Date of Award</b>	
Chafer	W K	Cpl	894082	WW2	1/7th	MM	12-Jul-45
Fancourt	G V	T Major	104371	WW2	1/7th	MC	12-Jul-45
Lyon	F M	Lt	345381	WW2	1/7th	MC	12-Jul-45
Smith	J	Cpl	3655204	WW2	1/7th	MM	12-Jul-45
Williamson	S	Pte	14569345	WW2	1/7th	MM	12-Jul-45



**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Chafer</b>	<b>W K</b>				town of origin (If known)
<b>894082</b>					
Medal type:	<b>MM</b>				
Rank held:	<b>Cpl</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign	<b>WW2</b>
London Gazette:	Date	<b>12-Jul-45</b>	Page	<b>3595</b>	Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, October 1944 p 146): At Haalderen (7566) on 2nd April, 1945, during the breakout from the Nijmegen salient, this NCO was in charge of a section in No 18 Platoon, D Company, 7th DWR. He was ordered to assault a house which was strongly held by a determined enemy, armed with bazooka, Spandaus and machine pistols. As he closed up to the house he was shown up by a white Very light, but he managed to get in and clear the house and immediately came under strong enemy fire from the house opposite. A bazooka was fired at his house, wounding himself and two men, and his 2i/c was killed clearing the house, which left him with two riflemen. He climbed upstairs alone and engaged the house opposite with Sten fire and, in spite of considerable enemy fire, bazooka and Spandau, which was directed at him, he held on to this house, firing his weapon from behind a thin, broken wall and held on until assistance came nearly half an hour later. This NCO's personal disregard for his own danger in spite of the fact that he himself had been wounded was an inspiration to his platoon and was in no small way a contribution to the final success of the action.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Fancourt</b>	<b>Gerard Vivian</b>	town of origin (If known)	<b>Bradford</b>
<b>104371</b>			
Medal type:	<b>MC</b>		
Rank held:	<b>T Major</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b> Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date <b>12-Jul-45</b>	Page	<b>3592</b> Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, October 1944 p 144): At Haalderen (7566) on 2nd April, 1945, Major Fancourt was in command of C Company which had the important task of opening up the heavily mined axis for the subsequent breakout of the Nijmegen salient. The enemy position facing this Company were in strong houses and had been occupied for six months, the ground was known to be heavily mined and only one approach gave any chance of success without heavy casualties on mines - that down the main road, which was guarded by several Spandaus and a known DF position. Major Fancourt's plan called for the leap-frogging of his three platoons down 2,000 yds advance to his objective - a most skilful operation in the half light with no possibility of manoeuvre because of the mines. The first objective was taken after a short struggle. As Major Fancourt was with the leading platoon he was able to guide the succeeding platoon onto its next objective. Heavy crossfire then broke out from further strongpoints in the left hand Company objective, almost abreast of Major Fancourt's position. Major Fancourt, despite the casualties to his Company through the enemy fire, decided to push on to his next objective, which was 1,000 yards beyond, with the risk of being isolated. He then led his Company through the fire and quickly secured his objective. His quick decision to maintain his objective ultimately helped the Company on his left, drove another enemy post into immediate surrender and allowed the following RE to clear the mines from the road far quicker than might have been expected. Major Fancourt's skilful planning and his own personal calm in a most difficult operation in an enemy minefield was a great example to his Company which was so determined to advance that it succeeded in securing the follow up battalion's first objective.

**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Lyon</b>		<b>F M</b>		town of origin (If known)	
<b>345381</b>					
Medal type:		<b>MC</b>			
Rank held:		<b>Lt</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign WW2
London Gazette:	Date	<b>12-Jul-45</b>	Page	<b>3592</b>	Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke, October 1945, p 145): At Haalderen (7566) on 2nd April, 1945, this officer was in command of No 15 Platoon of C Company in the initial breakout from the Nijmegen bridgehead. The Platoon had the most difficult task of the operation - to assault an enemy post, which had been built up and occupied for six months and was covered by mines. As anti personnel mines were known to exist in the orchards round the house, it was decided to attack frontally down the road which was thought to have only anti tank mines, a plan which called for courage and not manoeuvre. The leading troops were soon under fire of 3 MGs. Lt Lyon, with another soldier, then attempted to rush the house, both being hit by bullets, Lt Lyon's binoculars saving his life. Lt Lyon withdrew into a nearby ditch, reorganised his section and led another assault which, together with skilfully placed PIAT fire, resulted in the destruction of the post, 3 enemy being killed and 17 taken prisoner. But for this Officer's action a most difficult operation to capture the FDLs might have ensued. His gallantry and skill was all the more praiseworthy as it was his first time in action as an officer.



**Details of Individual Gallantry Awards  
Held by Regimental Headquarters The Duke of Wellington's Regiment**

<b>Williamson</b>	<b>S</b>		town of origin (If known)		
<b>14569345</b>					
Medal type:	<b>MM</b>				
Rank held:	<b>Pte</b>	Battalion/unit	<b>7th</b>	Campaign	<b>WW2</b>
London Gazette:	Date	<b>12-Jul-45</b>	Page	<b>3595</b>	Medal location: (If known)

**Announcement:**

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in North West Europe.

**Citation:**

(Iron Duke 1945 p 146): At Haalderen (7566) on 2 Apr, 1945, Pte Williamson was a member of a platoon of C Coy which was assaulting an enemy strongpoint, wired and covered by mines, during the initial operation to open the Nijmegen Bridgehead. Pte Williamson and his platoon commander first of all carried out a two man attack on the post in darkness, under the covering fire of the other men. Pte Williamson was hit in the chest, the magazines in his pouches being torn open but, fortunately, he was not wounded. Pte Williamson and his platoon commander then withdrew to a nearby position until a fire plan could be made and then he went in again with two grenades. This plan succeeded and those enemy not killed were taken prisoner. The great courage and devotion to duty of the private soldier in a difficult operation in which few men could be deployed because of mines and booby traps brought about the capture of a strongpoint without any casualties to the platoon and opened up the way for a most successful further Company operation.

## The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) - Report from the Regimental Archives.

### Extract From: Roll of Honour - 7 DWR - Haalderen Breakout Battle and Arnhem - Apr 1945

Number	Rank and Initials	Remarks	Town of Origin	Date of death	Cem, Plot, Row, Grave	Unit
14497470	Pte Gordon	Kia Haalderen	Bradford	02-Apr-45	Jonkerbos War 2, F, 4	1/7th
326885	Lt Herbert Alexander	7 <sup>th</sup> , att to 11 RS Fus	Hartlepool	17-Apr-45	Arnhem & Oosterbeek 7, A, 1	11 RSF
4616993	Cpl Walter Britford	Carrier blown up by mine	Rotherham	17-Apr-45	Arnhem & Oosterbeek 7, A, 3	1/7th
4911353	CSM Thomas	DoW, Arnhem	Bloxwich	15-Apr-45	Milsbeek 11, F, 12	1/7th
4389129	Cpl Raymond	Ex Green Howards, kia Haalderen	Normanby	02-Apr-45	Jonkerbos War 10, A, 2	1/7th
4919266	L-Sgt Benjamin John			15-Apr-45	Arnhem & Oosterbeek 8, B, 19	1/7th
2056127	Pte Hugh Steel	Ex Royal Engineers, Kia Haalderen	Sale	02-Apr-45	Jonkerbos War	1/71



1st 7th Battalion Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment  
Officers, April 1945

**Rear:** KM Evans, W Horne, EM Lyon, J Le Cornu, J Cannon, D Delaney, PA Debreux, HS Boarer, J Lappin, G Culy  
**Centre:** TB Bax, HS Le Mesurier, E Mattock, JC Fox, DN King, D Ross, BM Kilner, JK Illingworth, B Temple, GF Driver  
**Front:** RH Farrar, GV Fancourt, BV Thomlinson, JR Rollin, Lt Col CD Hamilton, WL Denton, ABM Kavanagh, SSM Smallwood, AL Somerville

## Part 3

### German Attacks on the Nijmegen Bridges, 1944 - 1945

26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> September 1944

*Extract from:- Battle of the Reichswald, P Elstob, Ballantine 1970, p 38:*

The importance of the Allied gains in Holland (*following Op Market Garden*) was not lost on the Germans. The sixty-five mile long salient ending with the Waal bridgehead became Hitler's number one priority and he ordered a panzer brigade, a battalion of Tiger tanks and an anti tank battalion to reinforce the variegated divisions on the eastern side of the corridor now known as the First Parachute Army and put under General Kurt Student. Hitler also ordered that two panzer divisions recently withdrawn from the Aachen front be refitted and sent to wipe out the corridor. Nijmegen was described as the 'gateway to the Reich' and the destruction of the bridges was to be accomplished 'at any cost'.

The First attempts came from the Luftwaffe who mounted a number of heavy attacks during the night of 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> September and the following day. But the Allies had hurriedly got Dutch airfields operating and were able to send wave after wave of fighters – over four hundred – to meet the German bombers and forty-six of them were shot down. The attempt to cut the bridges with bombs was called off.

Two days later a dozen frogmen swam down the river at night towing floating mines and managed to attach some to both bridges. Most of these brave men were captured or killed but their mines exploded dropping a span of the railroad bridge into the river and blowing a 25 yard gap in the road bridge. Although they had to work under observed artillery fire the Engineers immediately put up an emergency bridge supported on barges anchored between the permanent bridges. They also repaired the gap in the road and, to guard against any more desperate attempts, the river was floodlit, booms and nets laid and anti tank guns sited along the banks and the whole area constantly patrolled.

Traffic continued to flow north over the bridges to enlarge and reinforce the salient in preparation for a major offensive from it.

Although south-west Holland was cleared by 28<sup>th</sup> October, the Germans launched a strong attack west from the Venlo salient on the day before and it took all available Allied strength to stop them. The Germans also kept up the pressure against the northern and eastern perimeter of the Nijmegen bridgehead 'the island' as this area surrounded by floods came to be called.

Nor had the Germans abandoned their attempts to destroy the Nijmegen bridges and so cut off the 'island', the obvious springboard for an attack. Mines were floated down the Waal and some slipped past the boom defences and damaged the barge bridge. A new type of boom put a stop to this but the Germans were desperate and continually tried new ideas right up until the time the offensive was finally launched. One dark January night, for instance, a flotilla of seventeen one-man Biber submarines was slipped from towing vessels a mile or so upstream from the easternmost boom. Only three got all the way to within sight of the bridges and two of these were engaged by artillery and one sunk. All the vessels were lost but nine of the daring submariners got back. Most of the others froze to death.



The Germans had finally realised that they were not strong enough to destroy the bridges but they had another card to play – the bridgehead area could be very much reduced by flooding; if the built up banks of the Neder Rijn were breached at a critical moment most of the ‘island’ could be inundated. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, after a period of heavy rain, the Germans blew holes in the dykes and the low-lying land north of Nijmegen slowly began to fill.

The Allies had been well aware of this danger and had made detailed plans to evacuate not only their troops and equipment but civilians and their goods and livestock. After three days the only land still above water was a semi-circle of some three miles radius north of the Nijmegen bridges. As the Allied troops fell back the Germans delivered a sharp local attack against the eastern edge of the shrinking perimeter but were repulsed.

### **28 September 1944**

*Extract from:- The Frogmen, Waldron & Geeson, Pan, 1954, p 138:*

In October, 1944, the British forces were established across the Waal River with a bridgehead into the enemy’s territory. Over the river at Nijmegen were two bridges, a railway bridge and a road bridge, which were to serve for the crossing of Allied armour and for the passage of supplies for the maintenance of our forward positions. The German Staff ordered that these vital bridges must be destroyed, but they ruled out the possibility of demolishing them by aerial bombardment because of the strength of the RAF and the heavy concentration of ground defences.

The Waal River, with its swift flowing current, ran from German held territory through the ground held by the British, including the town of Nijmegen, and back again into territory held by the Germans. The German Staff took these factors into consideration when they conceived their plan for the destruction of the two vital bridges. The plan involved the use of high explosive charges, cylindrical in shape and of almost neutral buoyancy. These were to be floated down the Waal River, guided by their frogmen, to the Nijmegen bridges, where they were to be attached and later exploded by a delayed action fuse, thus destroying the objective. The whole operation was to be carried out under cover of darkness.

Hitler himself approved the plan and ordered Himmler to be responsible personally for seeing that it was carried out without delay. He further instructed Himmler to tell each of the swimmers that the Fuhrer had ordained that the operation must succeed and that there would be an Iron Cross for each of the swimmers, or their relatives, when the bridges were destroyed.

Fast cars brought the German frogmen and their equipment from Venice, while scientists and engineers prepared the torpedo-like charges and their fuses, and a great deal of Staff work went on preparing the details of the plan. Altogether there were to be six high explosive charges; two were for the railway bridge and four for the road bridge. The two charges destined for the railway bridge were to have a twenty foot rope secured to the nose of each of them, so that they would proceed down the river parallel and about 20 feet apart. Four frogmen were detailed for these, two to each charge, one pulling or guiding on a bowline, on the outside of each charge, and one steadying or braking on a sternline behind, and one on each side of the charge. The four charges for the road bridge were connected in a similar fashion with a second row of charges attached to, and following in line with, the first pair. Eight frogmen were to be disposed around them on guiding and dragging lines.

The plan, briefly, was this. When the charges arrived at the bridges, carried down the river by the swift current, each pair of leading charges would straddle a pier of the bridge with their bowline, the rope catching the pier and causing the charges to stop and lie against the structure. The frogmen would then sink the charges to the bottom and operate the fuse mechanisms which would cause them to blow up after a suitable delay. Both parties of frogmen were then to carry on swimming down the river towards German held territory; then, at a pre determined time, coloured rockets would be fired from the shore so as to indicate to the men the lie of the zone which was friendly to them. When they arrived at this point, the men would come ashore, contact German units, show a special pass, decline to answer any questions and demand to be driven at once to Himmler's temporary Headquarters.

There were a lot of snags and hazards to this plan. In the first place, the swimmers had not used this type of explosive charge and had no experience whatever in guiding such massive cylinders in fast-flowing river conditions. The water at Venice was warm but the temperature of the Waal River was very chilly and the swimmers would be immersed for many hours at a stretch. The charges would need to be very carefully guided in the darkness to prevent them from becoming grounded or stuck in the mud on a bend in the river, and there could be no rehearsal – there wasn't time, their was a gamble born of desperation. The British defences and counter-measures were unknown. There would, of course, be sentries and searchlights at strategic points and at the bridges themselves, the sentries would probably be equipped with hand grenades, Tommy guns and depth charges, there would also be steel cables stretched across the river – anti-boat wires, as they were called. There might be complicated underwater defences, the dreaded barbed wire in coils and coils supported on a twenty four-inch-mesh steel net held vertically in the water across the river. That would be a death trap for a frogman, held and pressed against it by the current, oxygen bag pierced rubber suit and hands torn to ribbons and a slow and painful death. The Germans had no illusions about the risks entailed; they knew, none better, that the British had used frogmen as saboteurs in attacking lock gates and ships in harbour and that they had a very great deal of skill and experience in underwater warfare. It was only to be expected, therefore, that they would be equally efficient in means of preventing such attacks upon themselves.

It looked like a 'suicide operation' and Himmler made no bones about it to the men when they arrived at his Headquarters. He told them that they must succeed, since the operation was being undertaken by direct order of the Fuhrer. On the night of September 28<sup>th</sup>, at approximately 2000 hrs, the twelve swimmers were brought to the bank of the Waal River a few miles above the British forward positions and about 17 miles above Nijmegen. The high explosive charges were already in the water, with the control lines attached to them and the fuse mechanisms locked in place by the scientists and engineers who were attending to them. The swimmers, dressed in black rubber suits and helmets, put on their large black frog-like fins which laced up with cord at the back of their feet. Their leaders gave them their final instructions, "You are to swim as much as possible on the surface, breathing air. You must reserve your oxygen for use under water at the target, or for use if you have difficulties in passing through the enemy defences. You have only a maximum of thirty minutes oxygen when swimming under water. You have a short distance in friendly territory, in which to become accustomed to steering and handling the charges before you pass into the British zone. When the 'straddle' has been effected on the objective the team leaders will sink the charges to the bottom of the river and operate the time-delay keys. After you have successfully laid your charges, you are to join parties and keep together. Heil Hitler!"

The first four swimmers donned their oxygen sets and entered the water. They picked up their guiding lines, took up their positions and were soon away with the charges for the railway bridge, disappearing into the darkness without a sound or a splash.

The minutes ticked by as the other eight swimmers sat huddled on the bank conversing in low tones and glancing often at the luminous dials of their underwater watches. When the time came, they put on their oxygen sets and slipped quietly into the water. It wasn't quite so easy for this party, with four big, unwieldy charges for the Nijmegen road bridge, and they had some difficulty in moving them out from the bank into the stream. These swimmer were, however, determined men and they overcame their difficulties. On their passage downstream the only defence measure they ran foul of was a steel cable stretched across the river. Both parties negotiated the course successfully and arrived at their objectives within operational limits of the planned timing.

The water was very cold and only the physical condition of the men, coupled with their hopes of success, enabled them to overcome the numbness caused by their long immersion in the water.

The first party to reach their objective was the one detailed to attack the railway bridge. They saw it clearly rising from the waters, chose their pier and, while the men on the drag lines exerted every effort to slow down the speed of the charges, the leaders effected a perfect straddle of the bridge pier, bringing the charges to rest. The two leaders immediately opened the vent-valves flooding the charges, which sank to the river bottom. Then, going to oxygen, they followed the charges down and operated the fuse keys. Now it was time to wait until the road bridge party arrived at their objective and carried out their part of the plan.

The latter party managed a course down-river on time and without detection but ran into trouble passing the charges under the steel cable. When they arrived at the road bridge, they effected a partial straddle but had a great deal of difficulty in hauling the charges into position near the base of the bridge structure. Eventually the job was accomplished but two of the party were almost out of oxygen by that time.

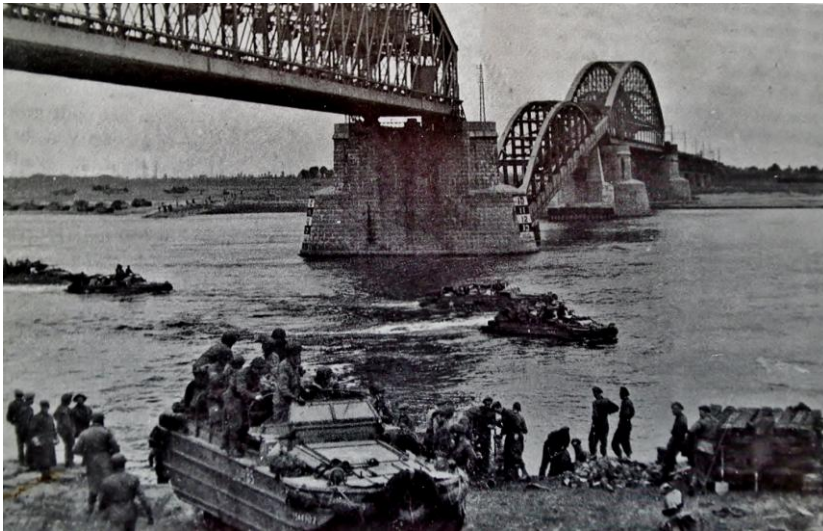
The two parties, now cold and tired but silently elated, met to carry on down the river for what seemed to them the easiest part of the whole operation. The river was wide and the night was dark and, if they kept to the middle of the stream, they were confident that they would escape detection. After swimming with the current for about six and a half miles they saw coloured rockets soaring into the sky from the direction of the expected friendly territory. These rockets were fired from well inside the German held area and a long way from the river banks, so that the British would have no suspicion that a river operation was in progress.

The leader of the party guided his men to the river bank and they all came ashore. After a short rest the party struck out across the fields in the direction of the rockets, carrying their frog flippers in their hands. Suddenly a challenge rang out – and the challenge was not in German. Immediately the swimmers wheeled about and dashed back towards the river. Their rubber suits were torn on bushes and brambles as they dodged this way and that, trying to keep out of the path of the fusillade of shots which followed them. As they neared the river bank the firing increased, one man fell wounded and another was shot through the chest as he entered the water. Their pursuers caught up with them and they were forced to surrender to a patrol of Dutch underground forces who, as it happened, were carrying out a patrol in the form of a reconnaissance patrol ahead of the British lines. Under the rifles of

the patrol they brought their comrades to the bank of the river – one was dead and the other dying. They then formed up and were brought back under escort to the British lines where they were handed over to a British Sergeant and a party of soldiers. Their demeanour was courageous - they expected to die – but their heads were held high. On the way to the British interrogation point they were given a hot drink and one British soldier gave them cigarettes. This kindly action tended to have something of a ‘de-frosting’ effect upon the studied attitude of some of the Germans until a sharp word from their leader caused them to assume a mask of indifference once more.

The charge under the railway bridge duly blew up and wrecked one of the spans. Shortly after that two of the four charges under the road bridge detonated but the others failed to explode. The bridge was damaged but the effect was insignificant compared to the wrecking which would have occurred had all the charges exploded. Later on, British divers went down and rendered the charges safe, and they were subsequently recovered.

As far as is known the Iron Crosses were awarded.



Above is a view of the eastern side of the Rail bridge, damaged by German Frogmen. In the foreground of the photo below is the Allied pontoon bridge, built on the western side of the damaged rail bridge. In the distance, under the span of the first section, is the road bridge, which remains standing today.







This current view of the two bridges, taken from the eastern side of the original road bridge, shows the repaired rail bridge. The damaged central span and northern arch have been replaced with a single level concrete section.

## 4<sup>th</sup> December 1944

*Extract from:- The Polar Bears, P Delaforce, Chancellor Press, 2001 p190:*

### The Battle of Haalderen

On 4<sup>th</sup> December the enemy made a determined attack on the 7<sup>th</sup> 'Dukes' at Haalderen. Major Hamilton had just attended a Brigade conference for Operation Noah, an emergency evacuation plan. He noted, "The Boche had blown several gaps in the bund (river banks) in the NW of the Island and rushing Rhine flood water had already overwhelmed some defensive posts without warning. We expected every distant rumble to be followed by a tidal wave. Three companies of the German 16<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment attacked the 'Dukes' at 0315 hours with heavy Spandau and mortar fire, and they swept through the forward positions. Chaotic close-quarter fighting went on all night. The Polar Bear Field Regiments brought down shattering DF targets. Many casualties were inflicted on the enemy, many diving into nearby ponds, where they drowned. Bazookas were fired at the houses held by the 'Dukes' in Haalderen. By 1100 hours on the 5<sup>th</sup>, of the assaulting parachute company strength of 161 men, 110 were taken prisoner and 50, including the company commander, were killed. Heavy casualties were also inflicted by the divisional artillery on the two rear parachute companies. The 7<sup>th</sup> 'Dukes' own casualties were only 31. It was a notable victory. Lt K Evans was awarded the MC and Pte Stimpson, who kept the Bren gun in action for four hours, after being wounded, received the MM. As Major Hamilton recalled, "It was a soldiers' battle – even the cooks joined in."

Major A L Rowell commanded D Company of the 11<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots Fusiliers, who were in a counter-attack role supporting the 'Dukes' and helped in the final phase, clearing part of Haalderen and capturing 77 prisoners for the loss of three casualties. The Fusiliers took over for 10 days to relieve the 'Dukes' and they, in turn, were relieved by the 1<sup>st</sup> Leicesters on the 16<sup>th</sup>, moving back to Bommel.

## 13 January 1945

*The Polar Bears, P Delaforce, Chancellor Press, 2001 pp 187, 190:*

Brockforce, commanded by Lt Col D V G Brock of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Kensingtons, was the name of the special force to defend the vital Nijmegen bridge. The Companies' marksmen fired joyously on pieces of wood, wreckage, hen coops and anything that might harbour explosives.

One of the 11 RSF's duties (part of Brockforce) was to guard the bridge and shoot at random any suspicious objects floating downstream. At night two searchlights shone down the river. These were very effective and known as Monty's Moonlight.

On 13<sup>th</sup> January there was much anxiety for Brockforce. The wreckage lying in the river at the railway bridge was shattered by an explosion at 3 am. It was an attack by three midget submarines. One beached on the north bank of the river Waal and the crew was killed by shelling. Another was hit by artillery fire and blew up and the third was heavily engaged, turned round, dived and disappeared. They carried mines or torpedoes and also large, floating logs with mines lashed to them – 12 ft long and 2 ft in diameter. Although hit by 40 mm shells, the logs did not blow up and the mines had to be defused.

## 18<sup>th</sup> January 1945

*The Polar Bears, P Delaforce, Chancellor Press, 2001 p 191:*

### The Battle of Zetten

Early on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> January a heavy attack was put in by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment, which had crossed the Neder Rijn on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup>, supported by bazooka and Spandau fire. Major G P Brown, C Company 1<sup>st</sup> Leicesters, deployed his Wasp Carriers. Lt A P Gardiner was awarded an immediate MC as his platoon were attacked on three sides and LCpl Basil Light earned the MM in bitter house-to-house fighting. The battle raged all day on the 18<sup>th</sup> as D Company came up to help with a troop of Canadian tanks.

Most of the 19<sup>th</sup> was quiet apart from intermittent shelling. At nightfall A and B Companies of the Leicesters and two Companies of the Glosters relieved the battered survivors. The Leicesters suffered 60 casualties in the two days of battle, but they accounted for 150 of the enemy killed, wounded and captured.

However the Boche kept on attacking and the GOC sent in most of the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade to stem the tide. It was now estimated that 12 companies of paratroopers were determined to get through to the Nijmegen bridge via Zetten. During the 20/21<sup>st</sup> B Company of the Kensingtons fired 300,000 mortar bombs in support.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Wales Borderers and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Essex were ordered to recapture the whole town of Zetten, supported by two troops of Canadian Armoured Regiment tanks. The main objective of the Welshmen was the capture of the fortified 'castle', a stone built building surrounded by a moat, at Hemmen. Major Gillespie had the bright idea of using mortar smoke bombs to set the 'castle' alight. To everyone's surprise, no less than 120 enemy emerged – at tea time on the 21<sup>st</sup> – from the ruins and surrendered to a bewildered but proud South Wales Borderers platoon.

During the Zetten battle the Polar Bears suffered 220 casualties, but they took 400 prisoners and accounted for another 300 killed or wounded.

**Acknowledgements:**

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Richard Macfarlane, DWR Museum

(c) S Flaving, Cert Ed, and R Harvey (DWR), 2013.



# The Defence of Haalderen, Activity from 1st - 6th December 1944 - 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	1	0000	No activity in the area. Some patrol, strength in unoccupied 'D' Coy. Patrols to be maintained in area, and some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	1	0500	No activity in the area.	
Haalderen	1	1200	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	

Suspect error in grid reference probably 755670

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

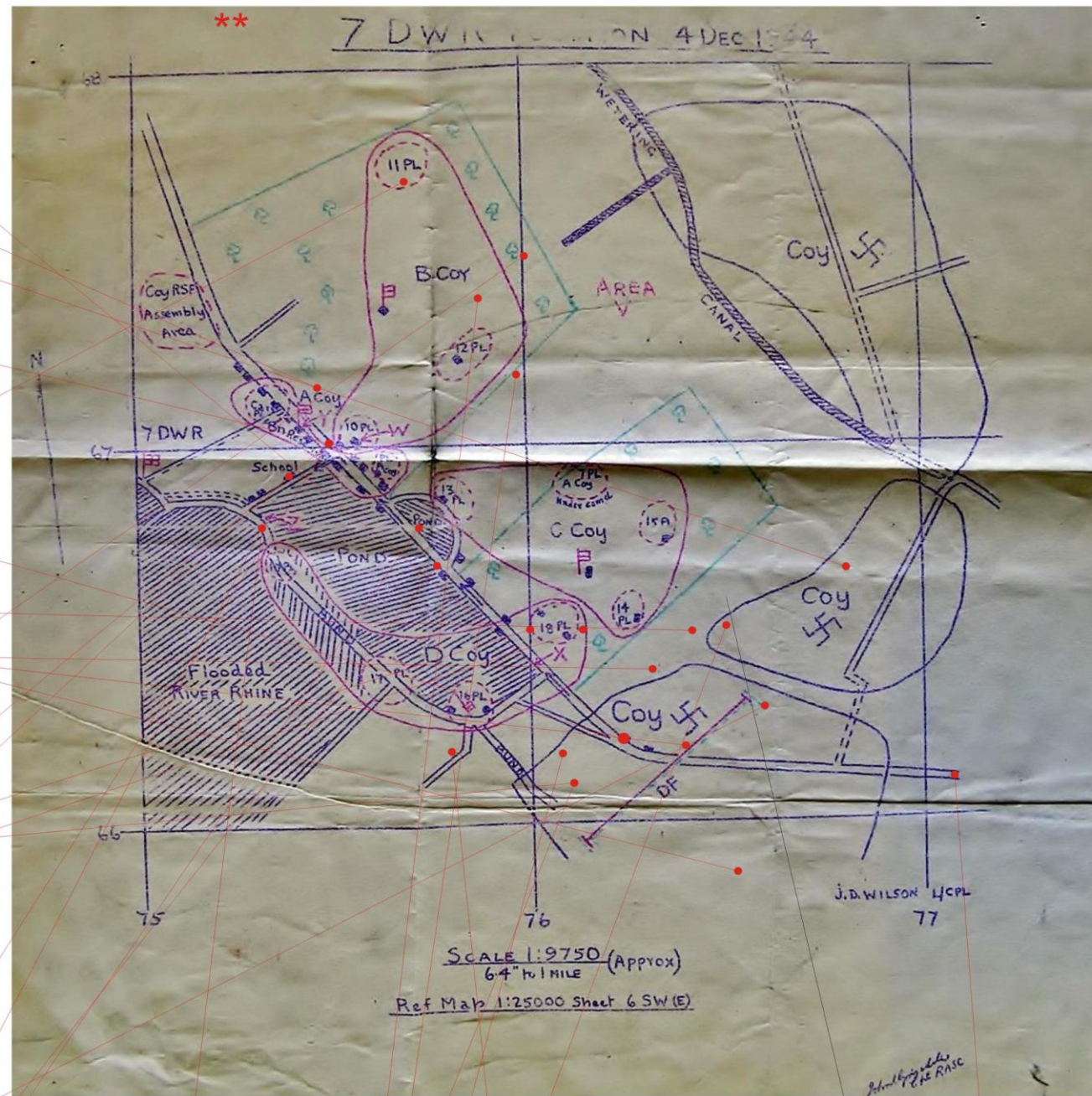
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	1	1800	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	2	0000	No activity in the area.	
Haalderen	2	0500	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	2	1200	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	2	1800	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	3	0000	No activity in the area.	

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	3	0500	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	3	1200	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	3	1800	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	



WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	4	0000	No activity in the area.	
Haalderen	4	0500	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	4	1200	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	4	1800	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	5	0000	No activity in the area.	
Haalderen	5	0500	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

7 DWR

From 1 Dec 44 to 31 Dec 44

Signature of O.C. unit or senior staff officer

WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

7 DWR

From 1 Dec 44 to 31 Dec 44

Signature of O.C. unit or senior staff officer



WAR DIARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendix
Haalderen	5	1200	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	5	1800	Patrols in area, some reports by small units, some of which, there are some reports, may be made in the morning.	
Haalderen	6	0000	No activity in the area.	