

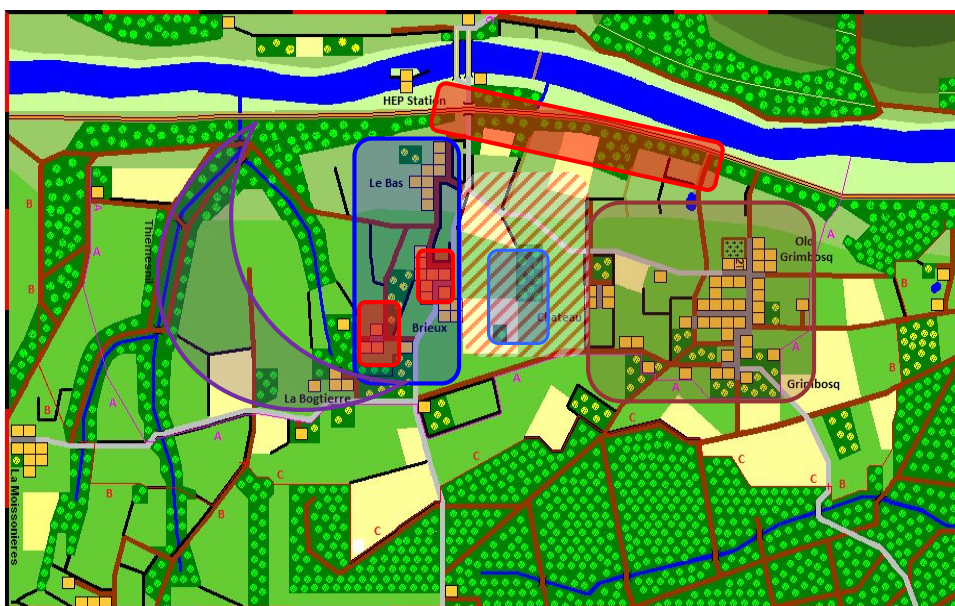
Grimbosq Bridgehead– After Action Report

The battle for the Grimbosq Bridgehead is usually overlooked in write-ups of the Normandy campaign since, within hours of being fought, it became irrelevant when *Operation Totalize* was unleashed.

The Allies are pushing south from Caen. The deep valley of the River Orne is a formidable obstacle and the Germans to the east of the river rely heavily on the valley to protect their flank. Just north of Thury-Harcourt, the British find a crossing point and slip a reinforced brigade from 59th Infantry Division across the Orne, deep into the German's flank. Max Wunsche is ordered to attack with his elite 12SS Kampfgruppe to neutralise the threat.

This game is played on 10' x 6' board with 15mm figures and the 20mm ground-scale. The River Orne runs south-north along the west board edge. The crossings are a damaged road bridge with a Class 40 Bailey Bridge.

British Forces: 176th Infantry Brigade with two squadrons of Churchills from 107 RAC



The Royal Norfolks (purple):

Thiemesnil woods with a strong company in La Bogtierre.

The North Staffs (blue):

Central villages of Brieux and Le Bas, both supported by C Sq. 107 RAC.

The South Staffs (brown):

With A Sq. 107 RAC, hold Grimbosq. One company between Grimbosq & the Chateau

Anti-tank units (red):

Covering central hatched area - open and inviting for German armour...

German Forces: 271 Infantry Division and KG Wunsche

271 Infantry Division: (purple arrows)

Hold the perimeter with three Btns:

- 1 Btn. plus Pioneers to attack Thiemesnil
- 1 Koy. to support attack on La Bogtierre

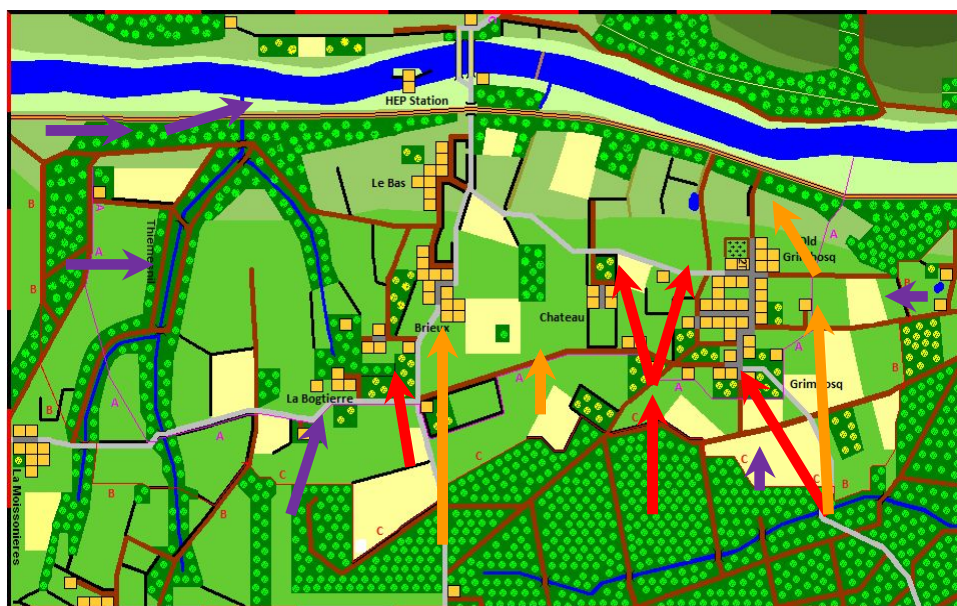
Kampfgruppe Wunsche:

First phase (red arrows)

- Pz IVs lead attack on La Bogtierre
- HQ Koy. attack Grimbosq-Chateau
- Panthers lead attack on Grimbosq

Second phase (orange arrows)

- Pz-Gren in 251s to assault Brieux
- Panthers to advance down flank of Grimbosq to rear areas
- Tigers in the centre to exploit breakthroughs





What the battle was about- bridges.

Nearest to the camera is the damaged road bridge

Upstream is the hastily erected Class 40 Bailey Bridge.

Beyond the bridges is the small HEP station housing the Brigade HQ.

Looking from the south board edge.
The river is hidden at the left of the photo.

At the bottom of the photo are the woods & streams held by the Royal Norfolks.

In the centre, Le Bas, Brioux and La Bogtierre stretch across the table (North Staffs)

In the distance is the large village of Grimbosq, held by the South Staffs.



Hidden in Grimbosq Forest, armour from Kampfgruppe Wunsche assembles for the battle.

A company of Panzer IVs with two companies of 'gepanzert' Pz-Grens, wait to attack La Bogtierre & Brioux.

Tigers from 101 Heavy SS Panzer Battalion form-up alongside 12SS Panthers. Note the heavy Flak presence....



In the south, the battle starts.

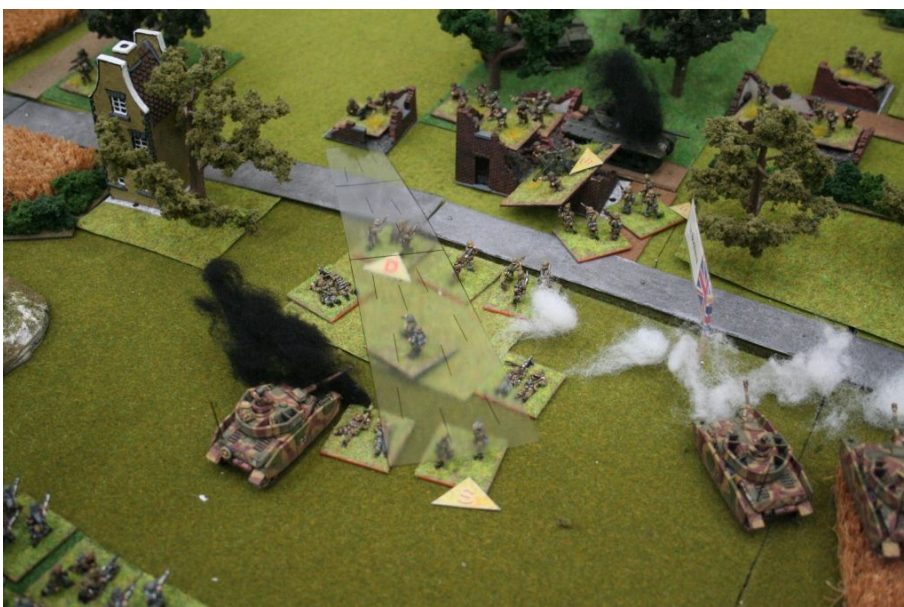
The Fusilier Battalion from 271 Infantry Division (271 ID), supported by the Pioneer Company, starts to infiltrate through the woods towards the Royal Norfolks in the Thiemesnil woods.

These units are under command of the newcomer Generalmajor Jon Loosen!

No sooner have the Germans crossed the start-line than the drone of aero-engines fills the air. Two Squadrons of RAF Mitchells arrive and line up for a bombing run along the edge of the Forest.

12SS units put up a huge Flak screen, shooting down 2 bombers and forcing others off course.

KG Wunsche units escape relatively unscathed but one company from 271 ID suffers badly – the company designated to attack La Bogtierre. The Royal Norfolks in La Bogtierre also suffer when bombs fall amongst their positions.



The Germans are forced to change plans and a company of Pz-Gren dismounts from half-tracks to accompany the Pz-IVs

Fierce defensive fire erupts from the Royal Norfolk's positions. ATGs knock-out two Pz-IV and in return, the Germans KO one M10.

A carefully-sited Vickers MG opens up with grazing fire, pinning down Pz-Grens in the orchards outside La Bogtierre.



At the top end of the board –
“Panzer - Marsch!”

Panthers, accompanied by Pz-Grens, break cover from the Forest and rapidly close in Grimbosq. Communication with the artillery fails, forcing the Germans to rely on the smoke from the battalion mortars.

Churchills from A Sq. 107 RAC are bolstering the defensive positions of the South Staffs as they await the attack.

The scale of the German assault rapidly becomes clear as the Panthers close in on Grimbosq.

A platoon of Pz-IVs breaks cover and starts to move towards the north edge of the village.

The artillery grind begins as a MIKE target is called against the Panthers. As usual, it is the accompanying Pz-Grens that bear the brunt.



Adjacent to Grimbosq, Wunsche leads from the front.

Whilst the Tigers hold position, awaiting a breakthrough opportunity, Wunsche leads forward the KG HQ units, accompanied by a company of Pz-Gren.

Wunsche's command Panther approaches the Calvary and the Germans start to put pressure on the weak South Staffs company defending the Chateau area.





All round the bridgehead, the pendulum swings towards the Germans.

In the Thiemesnil woods, the Fusiliers and Pioneers from 271 ID close in on the Royal Norfolks.

For a while there is stalemate, but weight of numbers soon starts to force the Royal Norfolks back.

At La Bogtierre, the Pz-Grens continue their assault, supported by Pz-IVs and also a flame half-track.

Under the weight of this attack, the Royal Norfolks start to fall-back into the woods behind La Bogtierre.



Meanwhile, between Grimbosq and the Chateau, Panthers from Wunsche's HQ Company accompany Pz-Grens into the network of hedges, fields and orchards.

Pushing ahead of the attacks at Grimbosq and La Bogtierre, Wunsche himself becomes the lead attack unit!



The fighting in Grimbosq, as the German assault starts to bite.

Having been pounded by artillery, the South Staffs are unable to withstand the assault by Panthers and Pz-Grens and pull back from the front of the village.

Grimbosq is a large village and the area around the Church (Old Grimbosq) and graveyard is still held strongly by the South Staffs.

At his HQ in Grimbosq Forest, Regimental Commander SS Stubaf. Siebken, awaits news of the central attack at La Bogtierre.

A company of Pz-Grens, mounted in SdKfz 251's are ready to push past La Bogtierre into Briex.



The Royal Norfolks are finally forced out of La Bogtierre and the Company withdraws towards the rest of the battalion in Thiemesnil.

The 12SS are made to pay the price as the flame half-track is knocked out in close combat. The Germans take control of their first objective and turn their sights onto the village of Briex.



In the centre, Wunsche himself pays the price for leading from the front.

Major Able, commander of A Coy. South Staffs had been forced from the chateau into the orchards & woods behind.

As Wunsche pushes through the area, he falls victim to a close assault by Major Able.

Please note the supporting role played by the ever-deadly 2-in mortar....

Counter-attack...

A mixed group of German armour marauds down the north edge of Grimbosq edging towards the railway and the river.

Unexpectedly, several Churchills, supported by the South Staffs Carrier Platoon, appear out of the woodland to their rear.



However, a vigorous response by the elite 12SS panzers, together with a bold attack by 271 ID units, rapidly neutralises this threat.



Adjacent to this, within Grimbosq itself, the battle of attrition continues.

The South Staffs, with A Sq. 107 RAC, mount a stubborn defence. Inch by inch, they give ground, forced back into the area around the church and the graveyard – Old Grimbosq.

But Pz-Gren casualties are mounting steadily.

Towards the centre, having secured La Bogtierre, 12SS switch their attention to Briex. The Germans have considerable close support including a Grille (bottom centre) and a platoon of 251-mounted 75mm howitzers.

However the unit holding Briex is a fresh company of the North Staffs.



Furthermore, it rapidly becomes apparent that there are more Churchills from 107 RAC's C Sq. to bolster the defence.

The first attack into Briex is repulsed but one Pz-Gren unit manages to hang onto a foothold within Briex.





In the Thiemesnil woods, 271 ID are making steady progress. Having secured the first strip of woodland they now face the Royal Norfolks' Carrier Platoon.

Closer to the river, disaster for the Royal Norfolks - the HQ ME fails a manoeuvre roll. The Battalion CO decides he must "check with Brigade HQ where the next defensive line should be"...

The Pioneer Company advances beside the river threatening to outflank Carrier Platoon.

But within minutes, the situation stabilises.

Lt-Col Freeland returns, having confirmed his orders to stand his ground. And, with losses approaching 50%, it is now the Pioneer Company that starts to fall back.



Across at the opposite side of the perimeter, the stranglehold around Old Grimbosq tightens.

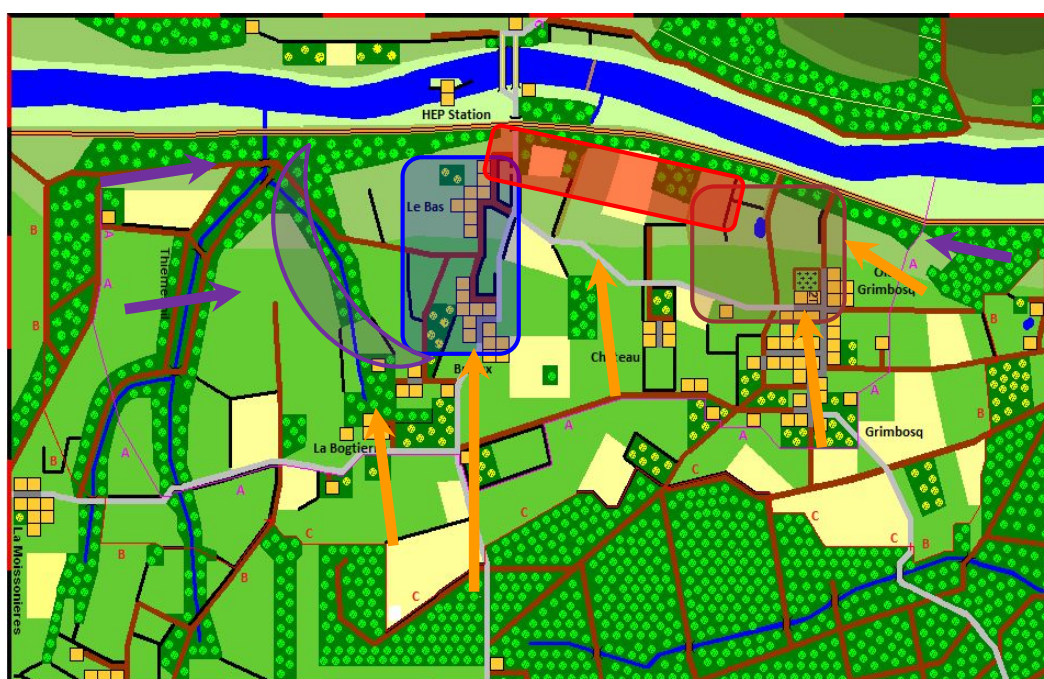
German armour pushes past Carrier Platoon and starts to move into the 'rear areas' of the South Staffs defensive position.

In a desperate close-quarters battle, this time the 12SS come off worst. A Panther and Pz-IV are knocked out in quick succession, not by the 6-pdr ATG but by the PIAT of Battalion HQ Defence Platoon.

As darkness falls, the 12SS try one last push. The Tigers finally move forwards into the gap between Brieux and the Chateau. But there are still numerous ATGs in the woods alongside the river, including the Brigade's towed 17-pdrs.

These soon get to work, quickly claiming a Panther (top right) and three Tigers (centre).

The German attack starts to run out of steam.



The final outcome – inevitably a hard-fought draw.

The Germans gained 27.5 VPs, the British were awarded 27 VP

In the Thiemesnil woods, the 271 ID soldiers pushed the Royal Norfolks hard, securing their initial objective after heavy fighting. But they lacked the armour and heavy-weapons support to make a decisive breakthrough.

In the centre, the Royal Norfolks company in La Bogtierre put up determined resistance meaning that when the tired Pz-Gren reached Brieux, they were fighting against fresh soldiers from the North Staffs. The Tigers held back out of the central open ground until the very end, avoiding springing the British trap. Wise events, given the outcome when they did finally move forwards. The area around the Chateau saw each side take heavy losses in close fighting.

Grimbosq itself saw the heaviest fighting. The pressure from 12SS was relentless. The German artillery was brutal. As one tired Pz-Gren company ground to a halt, another fresh company took over. Dogged resistance by the South Staffs, supported by 107 RAC's Churchills, saw the British hanging on in Old Grimbosq as the game drew to a close.

As with the historical outcome – bridgehead contained but not eliminated...