

After-Action Report – The Battle of Wetlet, Burma 1945

See Mark Hayes' scenario for the background, map, orbats and setup.

Refought by Martin Small and Mark Davies, October 2009.



The right wing of the British-Indian force moves cautiously toward Wetlet. A patrol, consisting of a Humber Armoured Car preceded by a Daimler Dingo Scout Car from the Indian 16th Cavalry, moves cautiously along the lakeside road. Their Jeep-mounted Bren gun sections have already dismounted to take up covering positions in the dry paddy, just in case any of those hidden unit markers should happen to be live Japs!

A platoon of Vickers MMGs from the 7/10th Baluchs also provides overwatch while mounted in their Carriers. 'B' Company, 9th Border Regt meanwhile, cautiously crosses the open ground.

Incidentally, the paddy dykes, modeled out of clay by Martin during the previous evening, look nowhere near as orange in real life!



The view from behind 9th Borders' Tac HQ, which has just dismounted from its Jeeps.



On the left flank meanwhile, a half-squadron from the Indian 9th Horse (The Royal Deccan Horse) advances to contact, with 'A' Company, 9th Borders in close support. An attached FOO from an Indian Mountain Artillery Battery follows closely behind in his Jeep.



Another view of the armoured column. As can be seen, the combination of nullahs crossing the track, allied to thick forest requires the Allies to advance cautiously into the unknown, as an ambush could be just around the next corner...



"Banzai!!" Sure enough, two fanatical Sons of Nippon are lurking in the undergrowth and leap onto the passing Dingo with primed grenades, blowing themselves up along with their victims (i.e. a draw on the close combat table!).



The 16th Light Cavalry has come up against the outpost line of the 5th Company, II/106th Infantry Regiment; part of the Japanese 49th Infantry Division. Spurred into action by the noble sacrifice of his comrades in destroying the scout car, the commander of the 106th Regimental Antitank Company orders his leading gun detachment to open up on the supporting armour car. However, the range is rather long for the underpowered 37mm antitank gun and the antitank gunners now find themselves subjected to fire from the armoured car, as well as Vickers MMG and 3-inch mortars. The gunners are relatively safe in their bunker, but they remain comprehensively suppressed.





As they cross the last nullah before reaching the outskirts of Wetlet, the Borders' 'A' Company commander takes two platoons left, along the nullah, to outflank the likely Japanese position in the buildings in front of them. The remaining platoon, along with the 2-inch mortar section, FOO and the tanks, deploy forward along the tree line, ready to pour fire into the first houses.



Another view of 'A' Company and the Deccan Horse moving up.



'B' Company rapidly pushes back the Japanese outpost line in the wood, but starts to suffer casualties, as effective Japanese rifle fire, allied to indirect fire from a 75mm gun, takes its toll. A section of the 9th Borders' Assault Pioneer Platoon manages to storm the bunker, but the stalwart Japanese gunners manage to escape along with their gun.



With the threat removed, the 16th Light Cavalry move forward again. The armoured car manages to get past the burning wreckage and moves cautiously towards the village. The cavalry Bren sections, the Baluchi MMG Platoon and the squadron commander follow on behind.



Meanwhile on the left, 'B' Company have contacted the enemy. With smoke support from the mountain gunners and the Deccan Horse on overwatch, a platoon assaults the first building. As they approach, a Japanese MMG opens up on the Borders and it rapidly becomes clear that the Japanese have bunkered themselves in the position. Nevertheless, the Deccan Horse provides withering supporting fire and the assault goes in, successfully eliminating the MMG section without loss.



The process is repeated for the second building: the artillery lifts their smokescreen onto the next target and one troop of tanks goes on to overwatch, while the rest move up. The assaulting platoon goes in again, but loses a section to effective fire – some of which is coming from the tree-line to the rear of the building. Once again, the supporting tank troop pours in fire and the infantry assault goes in, though this time the Japanese infantry escape to the relative safety of the trees. The Indian artillery switch their attention to the next likely Japanese position and begin speculatively shelling the tree-line.



The flanking force now makes its move. Again, a succession of light screens is pushed through, but then the Borders run into the main Japanese defence line (6th Company, II/106th Regiment). However, a very confused fight quickly develops; the Borders gain ground, steadily rolling up the Japanese flank, but casualties are even on both sides.



The fighting is also very confused on the British right wing – ‘B’ Company is held up by little more than a platoon of infantry, an antitank mine team and the Antitank Company HQ, but the British suffer a steady trickle of casualties as they eject the dogged Japanese defenders from the lakeside wood. Their right flank, at the captured bunker, now also comes under fire from a flanking MMG in a bunker on the lakeside.



Hot in pursuit of the retreating antitank gun, the 16th Light Cavalry round the corner of the wood... and run straight into trouble! The armoured car comes under fire from another 37mm antitank gun, a brace of MMGs and a 70mm Battalion Gun, which finally knocks out the armoured car at point-blank range with a shaped-charge round.



But the 16th Light Cavalry, through their sacrifice, have revealed the full extent of 5th Company's positions.



On the British left, a troop of the Deccan Horse plunges into the fight alongside 'B' Company, but the wily Japanese defenders manage to strip away the infantry support and then launch their own attack on the unsupported tank troop... *"Banzai!!"*



Another view of the action as the Japanese attack the Deccan Horse tanks. In the background, another troop moves forward as the Indian gunners shell the treeline. Most of the attacking Japanese infantry are cut down in their charge, but the surviving men manage to get through the fire to destroy the tank.



As the armoured car burns, the Japanese defenders are now fully pushed back across the stream. In the background, the 37mm antitank gun section can be seen making good their escape! The 106th Antitank Company commander is last heard shouting *"May the Emperor live for a thousand years!"* before he sacrifices himself, allowing his men time to save the guns.



Retribution is swift: the Indian gunners pound the Japanese 6th Company, as the Deccan Horse launch a coordinated counter-attack alongside the survivors of 'A' Company, to finally crush the last opposition on the tree-line. On their

right, a platoon of 'B' Company, supported by the Carrier-borne Baluchi MMGs, move to outflank the Japanese road-block.



The last survivors of 6th Company are now in serious trouble. Nevertheless, the last surviving platoon launches a desperate charge against the Deccan Horse Shermans (invoking a playtest rule whereby a Japanese unit may charge Disordered instead of Panicking), but is annihilated.



A bitter firefight now develops on the British right, as the remnants of 5th Company defend the stream line, buying time for their heavy weapons teams to fall back to the village. The Baluchi MMGs and the Borders' Assault Pioneer Platoon are brought up into the line in preparation for the inevitable assault on the village.



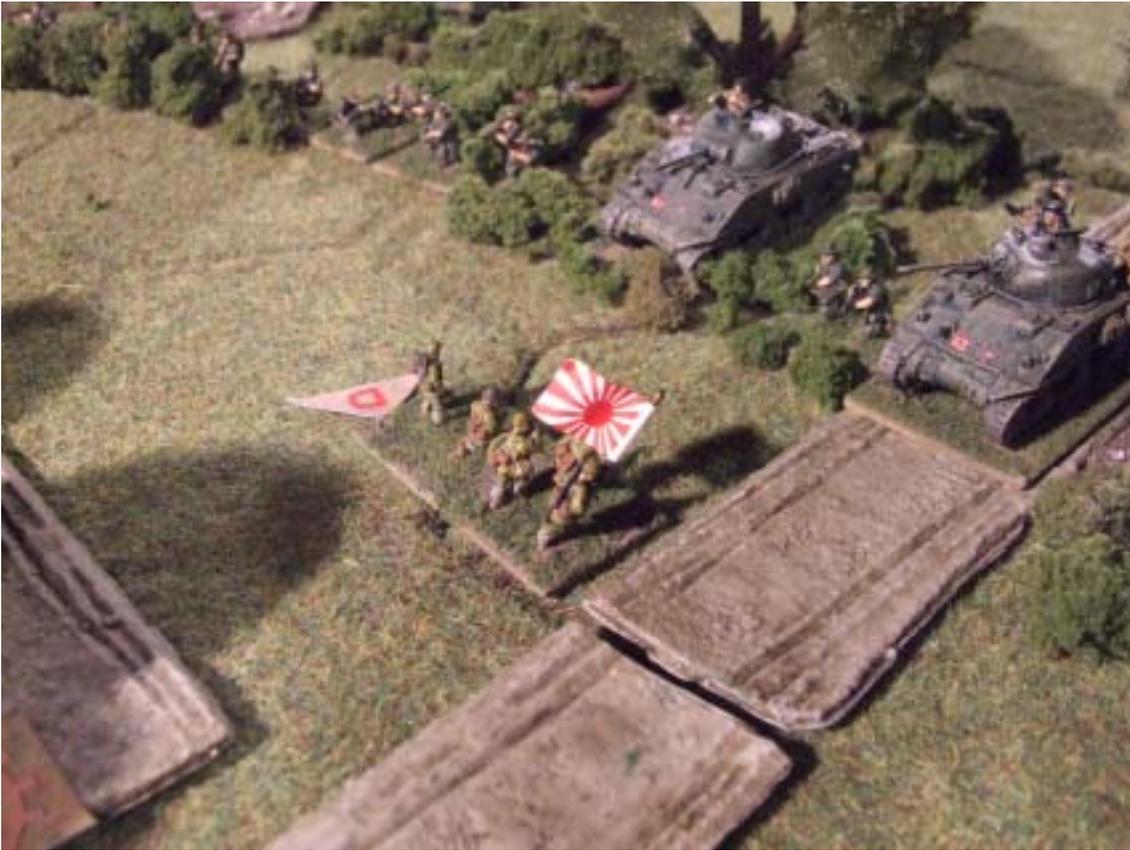
The commander of 5th Company dies while heroically trying to rally his men on the stream line. The fight becomes unequal as the 16th Light Cavalry bring their mortars and massed Bren Guns into the fight. However, the British and Indian infantry are still suffering a steady trickle of casualties as heavy weapons fire pours into the tree line from fortified positions within the village.



As the Allies bring more heavy weapons and the Deccan Horse tanks into the battle for the village, the Japanese outposts are steadily ground down while mortar fire now lifts onto positions within the village. However, the Allies continue to suffer a steady trickle of casualties.



Another view of the firefight across the stream – the survivors of 5th Company, bolstered by the regimental Antitank and Gun Companies, grimly hold on to edge of the village. However, the Japanese still have an ace up their sleeve – the entirely unengaged 7th Company!



The last stand of 6th Company. This could have been a glorious moment for the Imperial Japanese Army, but the company commander shames the memory of his ancestors by escaping, alone, back to the rubber plantation position instead of dying honourably with his men!



However, the Deccan Horse now have a fresh problem – a 75mm gun opens up on them from a bunker within the rubber plantation. It is rapidly becoming clear to the Lt Col Spedding (OC 9th Border) that the village remains a very hard nut to crack.



With their commander dead and under withering fire, 6th Company is crumbling. However, the commander of 106th Regiment gallops in to provide much-needed leadership.

However, the Allied attack has run out of steam. 'A' Company 9th Borders has suffered well over 50% casualties (mainly suffered during the initial confused fight with the Japanese 6th Company) and is effectively out of the fight. 'B' Company meanwhile, has suffered almost 50% casualties and lacks the strength to mount a direct assault on the village. The squadron from 16th Light Cavalry meanwhile has lost all its AFVs and one of its three Recce Bren sections, while the Deccan Horse have lost one-third of their tanks. The Baluch MGs and Indian Artillery however, continue to provide effective support, while the 9th Border and 16th Light Cavalry mortars continue to pound the Japanese positions.

Lt Col Spedding therefore has to call a halt to the attack. Maybe tomorrow he will be able to call up his other two companies, pummel the village with air power and artillery and do it properly, but today his battalion has done as much as it possibly can.

All in all an excellent scenario – thanks Mark!