

Battle of the 'NorMons', Pavee, Normandy, 6th August 1944

A Battlefield: WWII Scenario

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With assistance from R Mark Davis and Richard De Ferrars

Scenario Overview

This battle is often referred to as the Battle of Sourdevalle although the British maps of the time mistakenly had the village of La Fauvelliere labelled as Sourdevalle, just north of the hamlet of Pavee. It's taken me a while to piece together what happened on the 6th August at Pavee as the fighting was so intense few records of any detail were made. All I have is the verbal account given to me by my Gran's brother-in-law, my 'Uncle Evan', also known as Private Evan 'Eddy' Rees, equipment repairer, battalion HQ, 3rd Monmouthshire Regiment, 11th Armoured Division. Evan went from Normandy to Lubeck with the 3rd Mons. Of all their battles, he said, this was their worst.

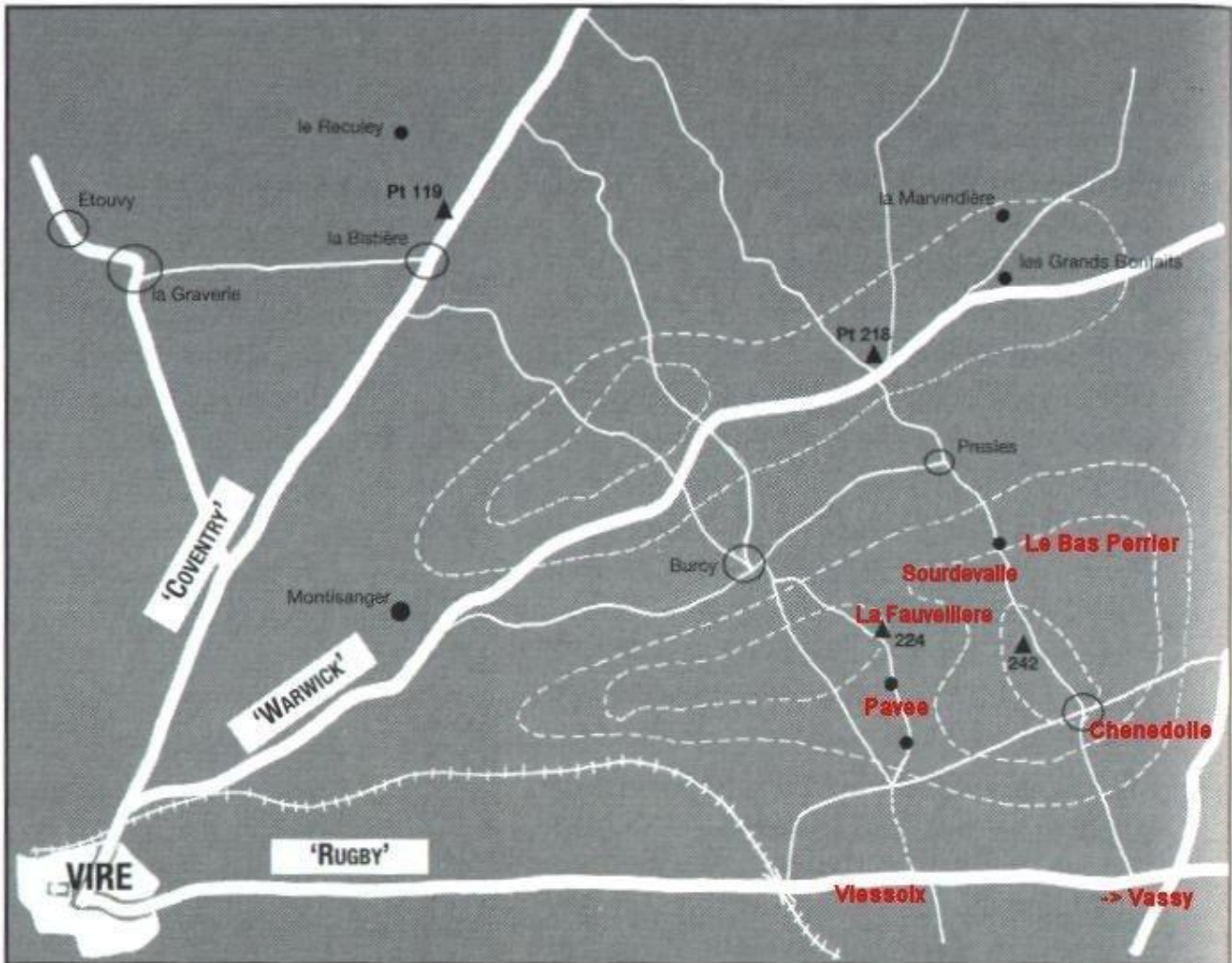


Figure 1 Operation Bluecoat Overview map

This map gives a good overall view of the area fought over during this part of Operation Bluecoat. 11th Armoured Division had achieved a breakthrough on the boundary between two German Corps and had advanced on two axis, one Presles to Chenedolle, and the other Bury to east of Viessoix. By 2nd of August 3rd Mons had established a defensive position on the ridge around Pavee overlooking the Vire - Vassy highway, an old Roman road that ran dead straight east to west. 3rd Mons were supported by 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry with Shermans.

Although the 3rd Mons were in an Armoured Division they were organised as a x4 Company Infantry Battalion. 2nd Fifes were a x3 Squadron Sherman battalion with x19 Shermans per Squadron.

Around Le Bas Perrier and Chenedolle were 8th Bn Rifle Brigade supported by 23rd Hussars, with 2nd Warwicks taking over from 8th RB on 4th August.

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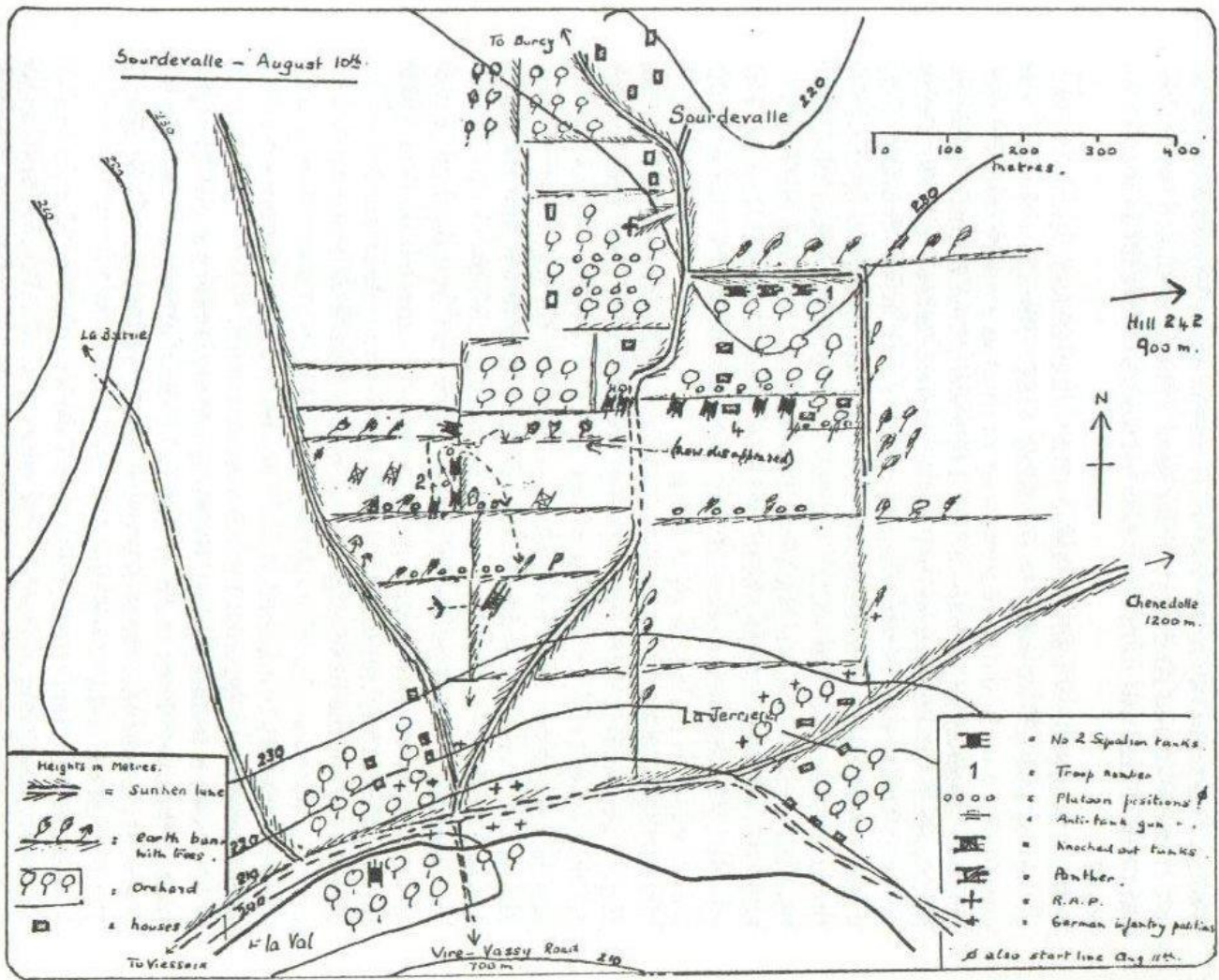


Figure 4 Sketch Map of Pavee Area drawn by Guards Armd Div 10th August

Figures 2 and 3 give a pretty good indication of the terrain around Pavee. The detailed map Fig 2 is taken from a modern 1 to 25000 map of the area and as such shows some post 1944 features, particularly the new road from Le Coisel to La Fauvelliere. The sketch map (Fig 4) is good in that it shows the bocage field boundaries around the farm at Pavee, although the sketch map scale is a bit out and Pavee is incorrectly labelled as Sourdevalle.

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Figure 5 Satellite picture of Pavee and the Highway

Fig 5 is a modern satellite picture showing some new farm buildings. The distinctive 'V' road junction is still evident and the Vire - Vassy highway along the bottom. The junction of a sunken lane is evident joining the highway and going north upto the 'V' junction. I believe that the German attack came up from the south-east corner from the buildings to the right of the 'NorMons' pin marker, marked on the sketch map as La Jerriere but actually spelt La Jarriere. It is about 800m from the 'V' junction to the highway.

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German prelude

This is where things get interesting. II SS Panzer Corps had shoved sSS Pz 102 with 30 odd Tiger Is into the line around 2nd August with support from 9th SS Div Escort Co and 9th SS Recon Bn(-), getting them to Vire. In the next few days they moved out from Vire in an effort to counterattack north-east, and one Company moved towards Villers-Bocage getting as far as La Bistiere, whilst another Company went north-west. On the night of 4th August 2nd/102nd with x7 Tigers and 3/9th SS Recon Co moved in a big southward loop to end up north of Chenedolle and at Pierres north-east of Chenedolle. I believe that 1/102nd stayed around the Vire/La Bistiere area. As for 3/102 there isn't much mention of them and I think that by that time it may have been dissolved to keep 1st and 2nd Cos at a reasonable state.

9th SS was the main German unit tasked with blocking the British breakout. On the night of 3rd August 9th SS Pz is listed as having x18 Panther, x7 MkIV, x9 StuG, < 30 Tigers. By 5th August they were down to x11 Panthers, x8 MkIVs, x8 StuGs and x20 Tigers.

A Heeres 600th Pioneer Battalion is also listed as well as a KG from 12th SS HJ.

Advanced units of 10th SS Frundsberg were reported arriving east of Chenedolle on the evening of the 5th.

British prelude

2nd Fife and Forfar had sent patrols to the Vire-Vassy highway on the 2nd August, but had had to retreat when 102nd Tigers had appeared. The Brits had, nevertheless, managed to establish positions overlooking the highway and were thus able to interdict any German movement. This meant that the Brits were becoming an obstacle to German buildup/reinforcement of the Mortain counterattack.

On 5th August 9th SS had launched a major attack on the 3rd Mons but were beaten back by heavy artillery fire. 3rd Mons were constantly shelled, mortared and stonked with 'Moaning Minnies' from the time they arrived. 9th SS are listed as having Wespe and Nebelwerfer support, as well as the obligatory 81 and 120mm mortars. By the 6th August 3rd Mons were down to about x2 Companies and were hanging on by their finger nails.

Day of the Battle

3rd UK Infantry Division was tasked with feeding units in to take over from 11th Armd Div and one of its' units, 1st Bn Norfolk Regiment, had managed to make contact with 3rd Mons on the night of the 5th and promised to reinforce during daylight hours of the 6th (unusual but circumstances dictated). 1st Norfolks had themselves received casualties in fighting around La Bistiere. However, they managed to get up to Pavee by the afternoon of the 6th and were in the process of replacing the Mons when the Germans attacked up the hill from the south at around 17:30. Both battalion commanders decided to keep both forces in place and so battlegroup 'NorMons' was formed. It totalled 550 men (approx 4 Companies).

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British Briefing

Situation

The 3rd Mons have been at the sharp end of a major penetration of the German front line for 4 days now and the Germans don't like it. They need to clear the ridge that the 3rd Mons occupy in order to be able to use the Vire-Vassy highway unobstructed, principally to use it for forces to pass along for the Mortain counter attack.

Mission

Your mission is to stop any German counter attack and hold the ridge south of Pavee at all costs.

Enemy Forces

The Germans have been feeding their best troops into the front line around you as soon as they've been able to extricate them from the line further to the East and North-East. Yesterday the 9th SS counter attacked and were beaten off only with the aid of massive artillery support.

They've got their own artillery and plenty of 'Moaning Minnies' and Tigers have been encountered in the area as well. So expect more trouble.

Deployment

British troops are deployed in area 'C' on the map overleaf.

All infantry can be classed as 'Dug-In'. For details of the appropriate mods for this see 'Richard and Paddy's House Rules' at the BF website.

Game Sequence

The Germans are the first player.

The game lasts 20 turns or until one side concedes.

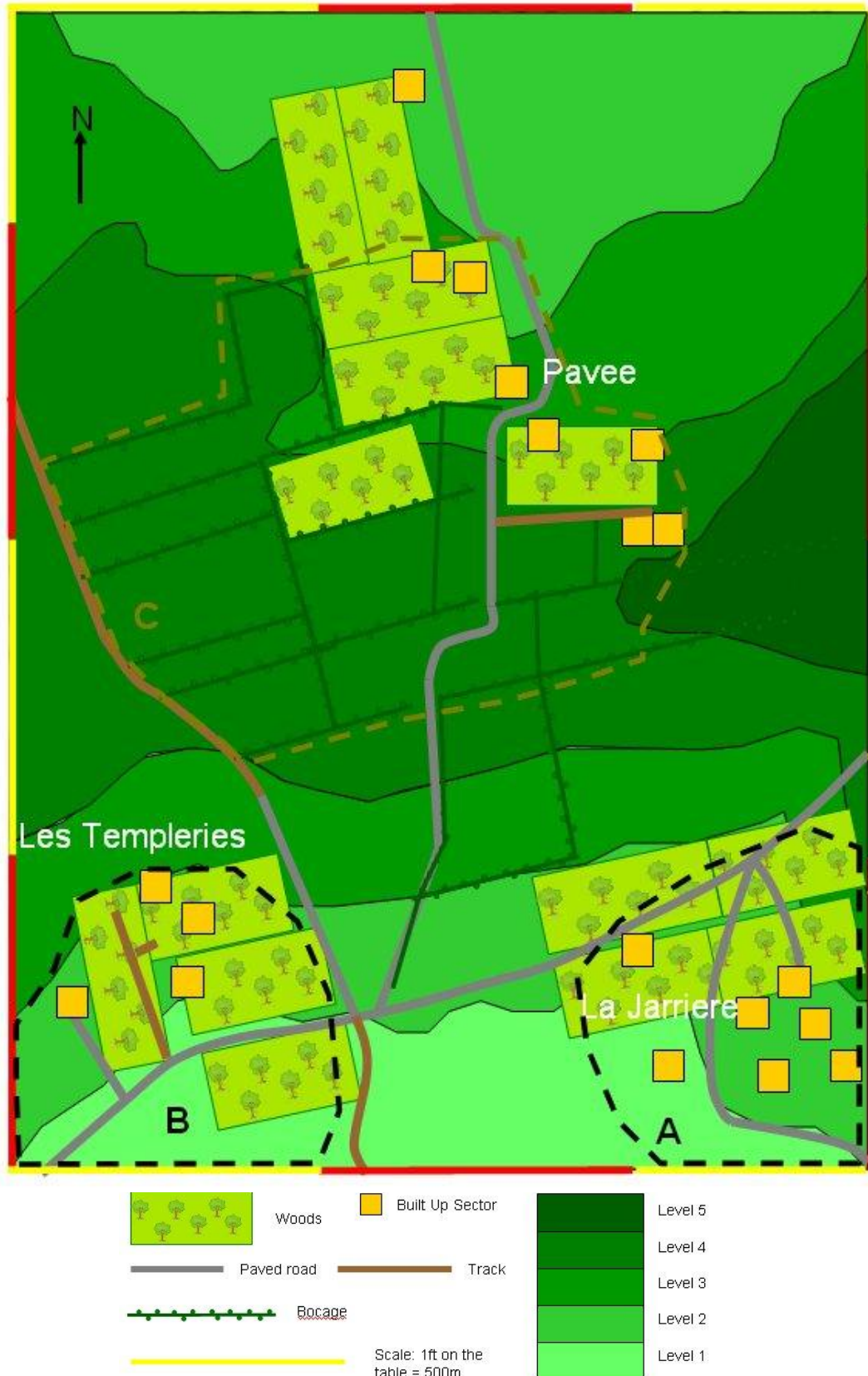
Victory Conditions

If the Germans get at least 1 tank and 3 infantry squads off the north edge of the map they win.

Any other result is a British win.

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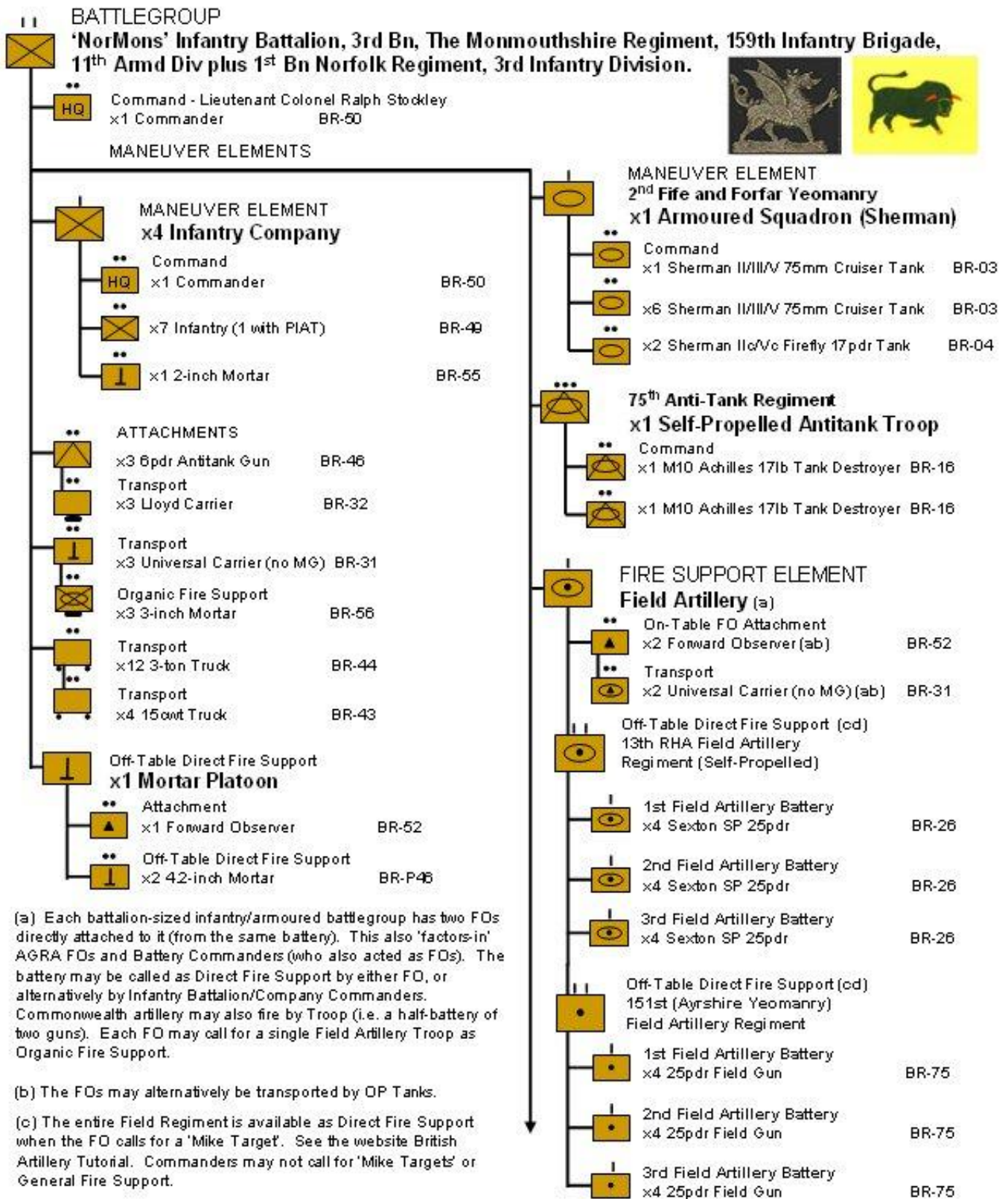
Note the map is 4ft 8" by 2ft 10". Sprinkle lots of shellholes about.



Friendly Forces

All British troops have been in action for a number of days and would normally be rated as Veteran but due to fatigue are rated as Experienced for this scenario.

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(a) Each battalion-sized infantry/armoured battlegroup has two FOs directly attached to it (from the same battery). This also 'factors-in' AGRA FOs and Battery Commanders (who also acted as FOs). The battery may be called as Direct Fire Support by either FO, or alternatively by Infantry Battalion/Company Commanders. Commonwealth artillery may also fire by Troop (i.e. a half-battery of two guns). Each FO may call for a single Field Artillery Troop as Organic Fire Support.

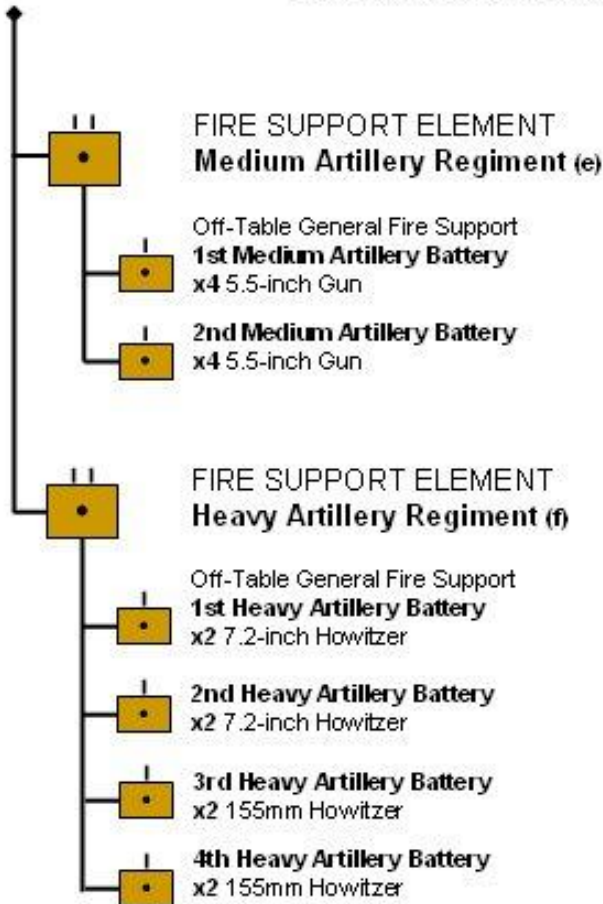
(b) The FOs may alternatively be transported by OP Tanks.

(c) The entire Field Regiment is available as Direct Fire Support when the FO calls for a 'Mike Target'. See the website British Artillery Tutorial. Commanders may not call for 'Mike Targets' or General Fire Support.

(d) The division's entire artillery group will be available as General Fire Support when the FO calls for an UNCLE target. An Armoured Division had two Field Regiments – one SP and one Towed. General Support is also available from AGRA. See website British Artillery Tutorial for details and overleaf for details of Medium and Heavy units available for this scenario.

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'NorMons' British Fire Support Elements 1



(e) Medium Regiment is available in General Support for a Defensive Fire Mission (i.e. VICTOR Targets). Alternatively, the Medium Regiment is available as General Support to thicken a divisional UNCLE target. See website British Artillery Tutorial for details and notes below.

(f) Heavy Regiment is available in General Support for a Defensive Fire Mission (i.e. VICTOR targets). See website British Artillery Tutorial for details and notes below.

British Artillery Fire Support Scenario Notes

If a target of sufficient value was detected, then all the guns of the field regiment (24 guns) could be brought down in a MIKE pattern as General Fire Support. Note that in MIKE and all of the higher level patterns, only concentrations are used. This means that a Mike pattern of 24 actual tubes (12 BF templates) covers only 6 BF templates. Also, some accuracy was exchanged in return for quick response times, so there is an *automatic* Danger Close with all MIKE and higher-level artillery concentrations. For MIKE patterns, this is one template deep, but UNCLE and higher concentrations will have an automatic Danger Close to a depth of two templates.

'Mike Target'
Field Regiment (25pdr) Concentration

| | | |
|---------------|------|------|
| 0/+1 | 0/+1 | 0/+1 |
| 0/+1 | 0/+1 | 0/+1 |
| Danger Close! | | |

'Uncle Target'
Armoured Division Concentration
(Two Field Regiments)

| | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|
| 0/+1 | 0/+1 | 0/+1 |
| +1/+2 | +1/+2 | +1/+2 |
| 0/+1 | 0/+1 | 0/+1 |
| Danger Close! | | |

The 11th Armoured Division is supported by only 2 field regiments. Up through MIKE, the missions were the same, but the UNCLE pattern had fewer guns. Here is an UNCLE pattern made up from 2 field regiments. Two regimental concentrations overlap in the centre, resulting in higher fire values. Note that the Danger Close is 2 templates deep.

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Although Troop FOs could request a Mike or higher level mission, they might be competing with other requests for fire. We simulate this by having Mike and higher level missions require a General Support roll from a FO only. However, higher level officers sometimes functioned as observers and they had the authority to override competing requests. In this scenario the British player may specify that a specific FO stand has that authority and is to do this before the start of the game. In that case, the observer can call in the higher level strike (MIKE, UNCLE, VICTOR) with a single Direct Support roll.

Only trained FOs can call in General support and if the observers all become casualties, the British may lose the ability to call in MIKE and UNCLE missions. However, in the British system, regiments had a pool of 'first reinforcements' which included a Captain as well as more junior officers, and in if an observer became a casualty the Battery Commander would order one of the gun position officers up to the line as a replacement. On the first friendly player turn after an observer becomes a casualty roll a d10. On a 1, a replacement FO and appropriate transport becomes available on the friendly map edge. Keep rolling every turn, increasing the chance of success by 1 until the replacement arrives. Of course the original casualty will count for victory conditions and morale purposes even if replaced.

One Medium Regiment is available in General Support for a Defensive Fire Mission. Medium regiments were also used to thicken the larger missions fired by AGRA (i.e.VICTOR targets). Alternatively, the single Medium Regiment is available as General Support to thicken a divisional UNCLE target (add +1 to the values in the center of the UNCLE templates above). Medium regiments consisted of 2 batteries of 8 tubes each. While 8 tubes would normally result in 4 BF templates/battery, Medium regiments were important assets that were not generally assigned to shelling missions. If the target is large enough to warrant a medium regiment, it also warrants a concentration. This means that the Medium batteries will only appear as a concentration pattern in this scenario and the Medium Regiment is limited to just 4 turns of fire in this scenario.

Medium Regiment (5.5-inch)
Concentration

| | |
|-------|-------|
| +2/+3 | +2/+3 |
| +2/+3 | +2/+3 |

One Heavy Regiment is available in General Support for a Defensive Fire Mission, or for thickening AGRA (i.e.VICTOR Targets). The Heavy Regiment is not to be used individually. The Heavy Regiment has just 2 turns of fire available for this scenario.

Heavy Regiment (7.2-inch & 155mm)
Concentration

| | |
|-------|-------|
| +3/+4 | +3/+4 |
| +3/+4 | +3/+4 |

MIKE MISSIONS:

MIKE missions require a spotted target.

MIKE missions require a forward observer (not troops or commander).

MIKE missions require a successful roll for General support, unless using the specified 'Direct Support' FO when a Direct Support roll may be used. If it is not successful, an ordinary concentration mission will arrive.

Unlike UNCLE missions, there are no restrictions on the number of Mike missions that can be called during this scenario.

UNCLE and VICTOR MISSIONS:

The British player has only 3 UNCLE missions and 2 VICTOR missions for the entire game.

To call an UNCLE or VICTOR mission, the player must use a forward observer (not a commander or troop).

A spotted target is required for an UNCLE or VICTOR mission.

The player must declare that he is calling for an UNCLE or VICTOR mission before performing the call-for fire roll. UNCLE or VICTOR missions require a successful roll for General support, unless using the specified 'Direct Support' FO when a Direct Support roll may be used. If it is not successful, an ordinary concentration mission will arrive.

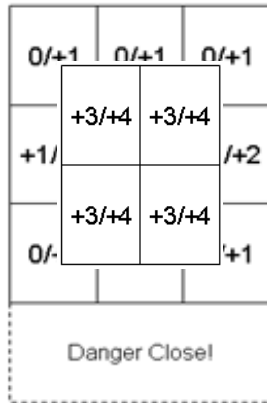
UNCLE targets and higher were usually employed where a MIKE had already been used yet German attacks were still coming in. Therefore, a MIKE fire is required to be in place on the target before an UNCLE or VICTOR can be used (but do not apply the 'Bracketed' +1 call-for-fire modifier).

Victor missions were the divisional artillery, thickened by the Corps' AGRA.

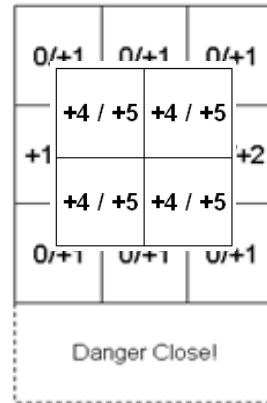
Use the templates below applying the specified mods for whichever template covers the target. Note that the centre templates already include the mods for the thickening fire from the Field Regiments and so no further mods are required.

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VICTOR template
UNCLE with Medium Regt



VICTOR template
UNCLE with Medium and Heavy Regt



Battle of the 'NorMons', Pavee, Normandy, 6th August 1944

German Briefing

Situation

The Tommies have been on that ridge for days now. They have a view of the highway and can call down arty fire whenever we move along it. We need to clear them off that ridge.

Mission

Your mission is to counter attack and clear the ridge south of Pavee at all costs. So get up that hill!

Friendly Forces

We've got together some Tigers, MkIVs and some Stugs and a couple of companies of Heer Engineers. Command have promised us the use of some 10th SS Panzer Grenadiers. As soon as they get here the attack will commence.

We've got some artillery and Werfer support as well.

All German tanks are rated as Veteran.

The 10th SS Panzer Grenadiers are rated as Veteran. Note they're not using any transport in this attack.

The German Engineers are rated as Experienced.

See next page for a listing of exactly what troops you've got.

The Nebelwerfers have x2 turns of fire available, the Wespe's have x4 turns of fire available.

Enemy Forces

The Tommies have tanks and infantry support but we've been shelling them for days and our attack yesterday very nearly succeeded. One more attack should finish them off.

Game Sequence

The Germans are the first player.

The game lasts 20 turns or until one side concedes.

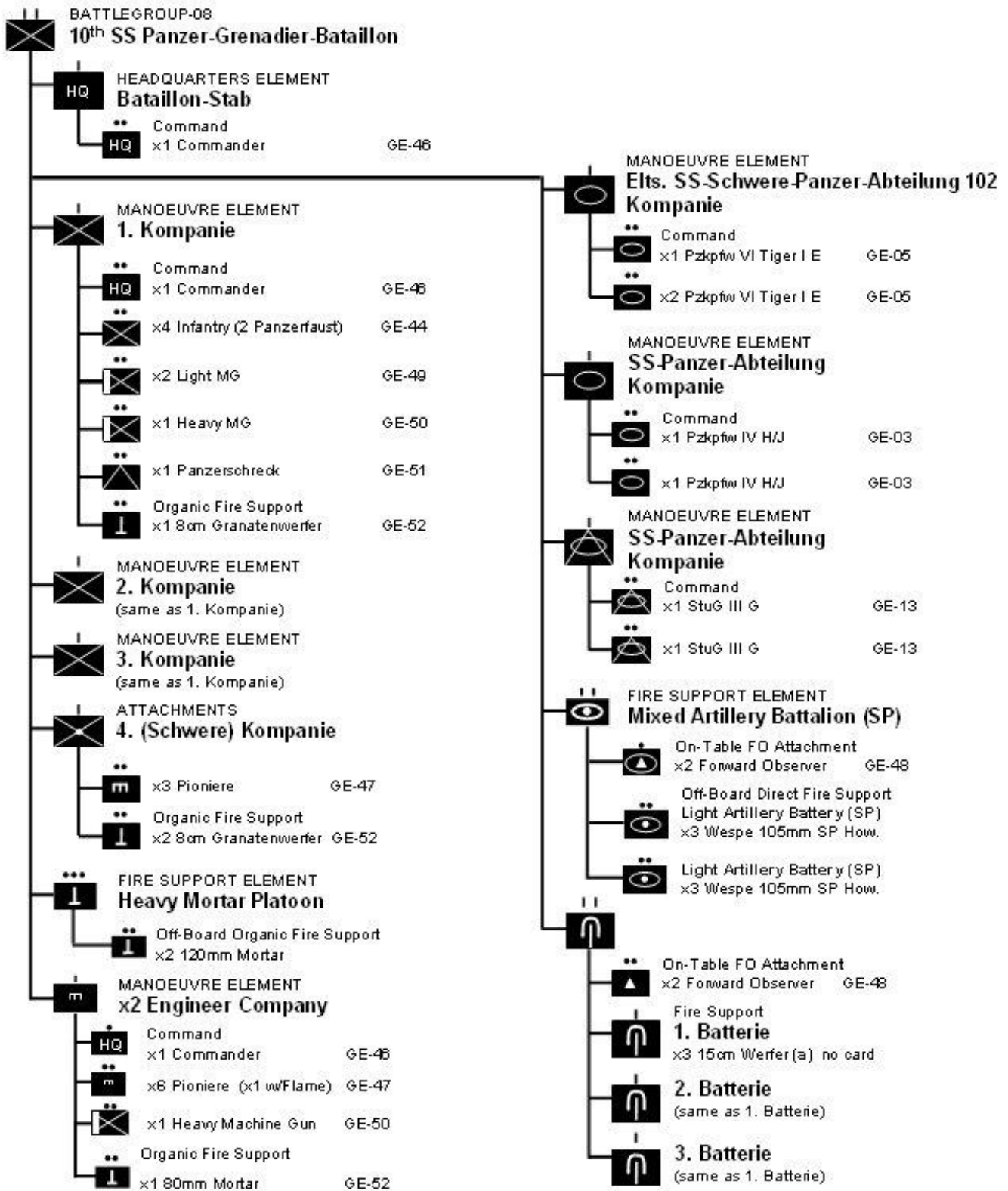
Victory Conditions

If the Germans get at least 1 tank and 3 infantry squads off the north edge of the map they win.

Any other result is a British win.

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'NorMons' German 10th SS Maneuver Elements & Fire Support



Battle of the 'NorMons', Pavee, Normandy, 6th August 1944

Deployment

German troops are deployed in areas 'A' and 'B' on the map. Note the map is 4ft 8" by 2ft 10". Sprinkle lots of shellholes about.



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Umpires Notes

The Battle

From what I can gather the Mons stayed in their trenches on the left (west) flank and the Norfolks took the right (east) flank. Battalion HQ was on the reverse slope in a big old stone building in Pavee. The German assault appears to have been mainly infantry, with tank support quoted as 'Tigers' by the Brits but possibly MkIVs from 10th SS. I'm going to take it as approx x10 Tigers were used in the attack. Exactly what German forces attacked is not clear, except that 10th SS Panzer Grenadiers are quoted as being the attackers. Engineers are also mentioned. I believe that at least a Bn of German infantry attacked and probably straight off the line of march from the highway.

2nd Fife and Forfar had a Squadron on the left, a Squadron on the eastern flank and a Squadron in reserve. There may have been a Company of Norfolks in reserve north of Pavee. 6lb AT Guns were certainly in evidence.

German infantry managed to get onto the plateau area of the ridge at Pavee but were beaten back by artillery fire. It is quoted as the entire VIIIth Corps Artillery responded and possibly some American support as well. Americans were to the immediate right of 11th Armoured and were in range. My Uncle Evan even said that they called in American and Naval gunfire support, but I think they were a bit too far south for that. What I think Evan overheard was them calling for a 'Yoke' fire support call (Evan was in the Bn HQ and heard the calls). However, I don't think they got that level of support. 11th Armoured had a FA Rgt of x24 Sextons (about 2 miles up the road) and a FA Rgt of x24 25pdrs (Ayrshire Yeomanry). Corps Arty was x2 Bty ea of x8 5.5" and x2 Bty ea of x8 7.2". Certainly I think that it was the Allied artillery landing on their own positions that cleared the escorting German infantry cover from the tanks and also persuaded the German tanks to withdraw. Evan said that the Mons knew that it was suicide to get out of their foxholes but that some of the Norfolks tried to do so and were cut down by the artillery.

Hand-to-hand fighting ensued until the early hours of the morning before the Germans finally retreated. During the course of the fighting Corporal Sidney Bates of the 1st Norfolks charged attacking German troops with a Bren gun to cover his mates who were pulling back with wounded comrades. He stopped the attacking Germans but was mortally wounded. He was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

My Uncle Evan said that the German tanks attacked so close they were machine gunning the Brit infantry in their foxholes from 10 feet range. Evan also said that on the Mons return visit to the battlefield in 1994 they could still see their foxholes in the remains of an orchard. Evan re-counted "Oh, Jones 252 was over there. They blew him over there, then over there, then there and finally into a tree over there. We kept telling him to stop dancing. He were dead mind."

2nd Fife and Forfar seem to have been in action, suffered some losses, retreated to re-arm and refuel, returned about 19:30 hours but were down to 2 Squadrons total by this time. Steel Brownlie of the 2nd F+F quotes as they lost at least 5 tanks in his Company on the 6th and that by the end of the 7th August they were down to just 5 tanks in his Company remaining of the 19 they started with.

Aftermath

On 7th August 2/102 are listed as having only x2 Tigers. By the 11th they were down to 1st and 3rd Cos x7 Tigers, 2nd Co x6 Tigers.

My Uncle Evan said that the artillery fire had been so intense that the wood the Germans attacked from disappeared. He said there wasn't a match-stick left of it. Civilians returning to the area a few days later remarked on the complete devastation of their farms.

A German attack is also listed as having come from the Le Coisel area towards la Fauvelliere area to the north-west, which they reached before being beaten off. I believe that Tigers were involved in this attack and may have been forced back by heavy arty. It is probable that the Reserve of 1st Norfolks and a Company from 2nd Fife & Forfar were used to cover this attack.

Tigers also fired from Hill 242 north of Chenedolle, although no attacks seem to have come from there. Heavy arty was certainly used on them and 'kept them quiet' and it is probable that a Company of 2nd Fife & Forfar were also deployed to cover any attacks from Chenedolle, hence just leaving one Company to assist the 'NorMons'.

There is now a small memorial to Sidney Bates and the 'NorMons' on the bend in the road at Pavee. About 160 of the Pavee defenders were killed, wounded or missing. It is not known how many Germans were killed but it was many.

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Bibliography

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'Taurus Pursuant' – the history of the 11th Armoured Division.

Dedication

For Evan Rees – this one's for you Ev ☺