

620. The relative inactivity of Brigadier Allard's other units can well be understood if the situation is viewed from a divisional level. Fus M.R.s! action at Munderloh (4194) was merely an exploitation of the left pivot on which 4 Brigade was swinging to the north-west. The task of the remainder of the Brigade was to hold and attempt to shake loose the opposition by continuous patrolling. This programme was carried out quite successfully and by the end of the day the Germans facing Camerons of C. and S. Sask R. had become keenly aware of the threat of being out-flanked from the north-east first by the Fus. M.R., then in a wider sense by 4 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., S. Sask R., Camerons of C., 29 Apr 45)

621. 4 Cdn Inf Bde's attack was marked by total success despite the most deplorable weather, which especially hampered the movement of the tanks. Shortly after first light R.H.L.I. which had earlier been pinched out of the front line, took over R. Regt C's. positions around Kirchkimmen. This left the Royals free to assemble in the area presently occupied by Essex Scot on the left and it was from here that Lt-Col Lendrum launched his attack to the north-west. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 28, 29 Apr 45). The heavy rain and muddy roads did not encourage the "going", but R. Regt C. made good progress against very light resistance and by 1030 hours reported that it was in full possession of the four farms^x north of Hesterort (4496). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 5831, 5834, 5844)

622. As soon as R. Regt C. was firm, Essex Scot received the signal to advance. Lt-Col Pangman's companies moved through the Royals and, having reached the main highway on a front of two companies, passed on to consolidate on the northern side without trouble. At this point the brigadier, realizing that he must "grab off" as much of the main axis as possible in order to allow for the repair and clearance of the road, ordered R.H.L.I. to thrust on between the two forward units. (Ibid: serials 5809, 5862, 5869, 5875; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.L.I., 29 Apr 45). Having an easy time, the Hamilton Battalion travelled straight up the highway and established a strong position astride the axis centred on the crossroads (420030) 2000 yards west of Dreckort (4499). (Ibid). This did not mean, however, that the road itself was completely clear. There were many large craters and felled trees along the way and the enemy had left an unusually large number of buried bombs and mines to delay the Canadian's advance. (Ibid)

623. On the right flank opposition was equally light against Brigadier Megill's battalions. Of these R.H.C. had swung north in the morning to cross the railway between Hude (4802) and Delmenhorst. The only interference came from a 20-mm gun around which a platoon of Germans were dug in, but this resistance did not last long against the intense fire of 10 Cdn Armd Regt's Shermans. By 1605 hours the Black Watch was strongly entrenched on either side of the railway south of Hude, and at that time R. de Mais went through to attack the town itself (4802). The enemy was totally unable to stand up to the withering fire directed at him by R. de Mais. Within three hours Lt-Col Lalonde reported that Hude was clear and that his patrols were

^x Fuchsberg (4397)
Hurrelhausen (4497)
Krahenhoop (4398)
Schoolaber (443981)

out in strength. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, R.H.C., R. de Mais, 29 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 5933, 5935, 5945). During all this time, Calg Highrs had remained in their positions north of Hohenboken (5199) but had allowed a portion of 8 Cdn Recce Regt to pass on to the north-west and follow the right side of the railway. In this area, however, the enemy had cratered his roads well. Although some measure of protection was afforded to the Black Watch and to R. de Mais for their attack on Hude, progress was slowed up by the many obstructions. (Ibid, serials 5888, 5895, 5929, 5942)

624. Maj-Gen Matthews immediate problem was to get his brigades in proper line-up for the assault against Oldenburg. For the past twenty-four hours 6 Cdn Inf Bde had held the pivot position while the other two formations swung in from the east. The actual movement for position was not yet completed, and thus on the evening of 29 Apr the orders issued to these brigadiers implied a continuation of the plan until such a time as the General Officer Commanding felt that his line was sufficiently secure to commence what was to be 2 Cdn Inf Div's final attack of the European war. In the centre 4 Cdn Inf Bde was instructed to clear the woods (3900-3999) astride the highway some 3000 yards ahead of the area occupied by R.H.L.I. and also to assume responsibility for the Munderloh sector. On the right 5 Cdn Inf Bde was first to sweep through the forest west of Hude then commence a second sweep northwards towards the Weser River. Brigadier Allard was given the task of clearing that part of Staats Forest Oldenburg which lies north-west of Sandhatten, while on the far left flank 3 Cdn L.A.H. Regt advanced in concert with 6 Bde to seize the road junction (3194) west of Astrup (3194) and the farms at Hoven (3393). (Ibid, serial 5953)

625. The operations continued accordingly throughout 30 Apr.. On 6 Bde's front Fus M.R. handed over the village of Munderloh to 8 Cdn Recce Regt and then went back to form up within the perimeter held by Camerons of C. north of Kirchhatten. From here the advance was carried north-westwards without opposition. By night-fall Lt-Col Dextraze had occupied all the road and rail crossings (3495) east of Strock (3395) and also held a dominating position overlooking the open ground to the east. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, Fus M.R., 30 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 5989, 6000). Meanwhile, S. Sask R. and Camerons of C. had also improved their holdings. S. Sask R. moved north from Sandhatten through the heavily-mined and wooded land to fill in the gap between Fus M.R. and the river to the west. (W.D., S. Sask R., 30 Apr 45). On the other flank Camerons of C. went straight up the brigade's axis from Kirchhatten. By maintaining a fairly heavy curtain or artillery and mortar fire along the open eastern flank, the highlanders were able to make good progress and overrun several small groups of Germans, who, though somewhat reluctant, had been left to cover the obstacles. (W.D., Camerons of C., 30 Apr 45). By the end of the day the Camerons were consolidated firmly astride the main road Kirchhatten - Oldenburg with one company at the crossroads (389958). The other three companies were situated further north and to the left, tying in to complete the brigade's front line with Fus M.R. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 6015, 6019, 6097)

626. The best results of the day were achieved by Brigadier Cabellu's battalions. Their advance was made over soggy ground, around countless demolitions and craters and through a maze of mines which, like the obstacles, seemed to increase as the Canadians approached Oldenburg. Fortunately the enemy was not

present in any strength, for the state of the ground considerably hampered the movement of most of the Canadian tanks and crocodiles. Only R.H.L.I. were permitted to retain a few tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt on the harder surface of the main axis. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 30 Apr 45). After a morning of patrolling to determine the best routes westwards, all these units moved off; R.H.L.I. in the centre, R. Regt C. on the left following the line Fuchsberg (4397) - Tiefegrund (4197) - Sandtange (3898), while Essex Scot came over the western slopes of the Lintel feature (4300-4400) from the area of Dreckort (4399) and Heiligen (4499). Behind the forward elements of each fighting company the sappers toiled unceasingly to repair and maintain the roads so that the supporting arms and administrative sections of each unit might follow up to do their share in the work at hand. (Ibid, also W.Ds., 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 29-30 Apr 45, 11 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 29-30 Apr 45)

627. The enemy was observed on several occasions behind his various road blocks and craters, but whenever the slightest sign of resistance appeared each battalion commander brought his mortars and artillery into play with such good effect that no direct assault was ever necessary. On the right Essex Scot having reached the road leading north from the main axis to the railway line at Wusting (4102), swung towards that place with two companies, while the others kept to their course westwards and (keeping parallel to R.H.L.I.) began to cross the Hennelsberger Moor (3701-3801). Simultaneously, as the R.H.L.I. slowly approached the important road centre (3601) (about 6500 yards south-east of Oldenburg), R. Regt C., having, already cut the road Oldenburg - Kirchhatten (376983) at a point about 2200 yards from 6 Cdn Inf Bde's northern outposts, was now turning north to join hands with its sister battalion. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Apr 45; also serials 6011, 6025, 6039, 6078, 6095, 6100, 6101)

628. Meanwhile the operations by 5 Bde to secure the right flank had gone on despite the appalling ground conditions. R. de Mais completed clearing its area at Hude, then sent a company group on to the north-west to capture Pfahlhausen (4603) while patrols swept west along the railway line to insure the position. With the fall of Pfahlhausen Lt-Col Lalonde organized a battalion stronghold based on Pfahlhausen and the road leading south to the prominent feature in the angle of the railway. This was to provide a protective left screen for Calg Highrs later as well as the start line for 8 Cdn Recce Regt's patrols to the open flank. In due course 8 Cdn Recce Regt fanned out south-westwards to contact 4 Cdn Inf Bde and to secure a further length of the railway leading to Oldenburg. (Ibid, serials 5985, 5986, 5988, 5999, 6003, 6027, 6041, 6064; also W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and R. de Mais, 30 Apr 45)

629. Calg Highrs and R.H.C. began their own extensive sweeps to the north and north-east at about the same time. One company of the Black Watch struck out on a long patrol from the railway south-east of Hude and followed Calg Highrs. It was Lt-Col Thompson's intention to check the parallel roads on his immediate front from his present base, while the northern task force went about its own work. The operation progressed without interference. "B" Coy R.H.C. tailed Calg Highrs as far as the village of Neumuhlen (488054), then turned east in the direction of Hekelermoor (5004). Here the troops established standing patrols while bridges and routes over the canal to the north were checked. This work was completed by late afternoon, whereupon "B" Coy, wet and bedraggled after its long journey over the

water-soaked land, returned to settle within the regimental base on the southern edges of Hude. (W.D., R.H.C., 30 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 5986, 6070)

630. Calg Highrs were the only unit to meet any sort of opposition. The highlanders having passed through R. de Mais at Hude went directly north, following the railway and leap-frogging strong patrols of platoon and company strength one through the other.

At 0900 hrs, "C" Coy headed for their objective some 3000 yds ahead but were halted to protect sappers called up to fill craters and remove road blocks all along the axis. Indeed, during the whole day, heavy explosions indicated that the enemy was denying us the use of all roads in the area; and since the soggy fields criss-crossed with a multitude of ditches, made cross-country vehs movements impossible. It soon became apparent that the advance was to be slow with little close support from the tanks.

(W.D., Calg Highrs, 30 Apr 45)

By 1100 hours, however, "C" Coy, assisted by concentrations of artillery and mortar fire, was consolidating at Ochholt (478053). During the early afternoon, the remaining companies moved up with some Shermans of 10 Cdn Armd Regt to occupy the crossroads (4806) east of Neuenkoop (4706-4806), the road fork at Neumuhlen (4905), and the ground between these two places. At these points the infantry came under long-range small arms and mortar fire, but did not suffer any casualties. (Ibid, also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 5986, 5990, 6023, 6032, 6064)

631. Thus, as the last day of Apr ended, Maj-Gen Matthews was able to survey the scene with considerable satisfaction. On the far left the prodding attacks by 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt up the road to Wardenburg had enabled 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt to improve its own positions west of the Hunte River. (Ibid, serials 6022, 6031, 6105). On the immediate left 6 Bde was firm in the area of Sandkrug (3595) and ready to thrust northward. In the centre 4 Bde held a threatening position astride the main divisional axis, while on the right Brigadier Megill's battalions were soon to be so strongly placed at Hude that they too would well able to converge on Oldenburg directly from the east. The immediate object, however, was to regain firm contact and maintain it while the routes to the forward areas were being repaired. This need governed the intention issued to the brigade at 2115 hours 30 Apr, which read as follows:

4 Cdn Inf Bde using area woods 3900 3999 as firm base to open axis and regain firm contact with enemy. 5 Cdn Inf Bde form firm base area HUDE to continue sweep NORTH to R WESER and R HUNTE. 6 Cdn Inf Bde form firm base area SANDKRUG to exploit towards OLDENBURG and regain firm contact. 8 Cdn Recce Regt (14CH) with one sqn to tap out to R WESER remainder in Div res. 3 Cdn LAA Regt to continue adv NORTH.

(Ibid, serial 6088)

632. It is plain to see at this point that much of Maj-Gen Matthews' plan depended upon the work of the engineers. It was strictly a question of time - how much could the sappers do and how long would they take to do it. Certainly the past

week might be correctly termed a sapper's nightmare, and all three field companies of the division were almost exhausted from the continuous labour. Never before had the engineers and infantry worked so intimately for such a long period. (W.Ds., H.Q. C.R.E., 2 Cdn Inf Div; 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 7 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 11 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 27-29 Apr 45)

633. Showing considerable cleverness the enemy had challenged Canadian engineers with all sorts of diabolical contraptions: aerial mines wired to bridges, aerial torpedoes buried under the roadbeds, and many other forms of practical hate. All these had been met and mastered without serious injury. But the novelty of the enemy's equipments passed quickly into the mental file of each sapper, for there was little time to spare for study of them. There were craters to be filled, gaps to be bridged, mines to be lifted, and buildings to be "deloused" of any of a thousand and one booby traps. The bulldozers crews did not spare themselves in their effort. These monster machines worked from dawn till far into the night without pause. The engineers knew too well that the infantry needed close support, and only by filling-in the successive craters or by creating a diversion for them could the tanks be kept moving forward. The night 30 Apr/1 May was no exception. On each route one could hear the roar of the Diesels, the clank of shovels and picks, and the sure-toned voices of those directing the work. There were roads to be made so that the division could attack. (W.Ds., 2 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 7 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 11 Cdn Fd Coy R.C.E., 29-30 Apr 45)

THE FALL OF OLDENBURG

Operations 2 Cdn Inf Div, 1-4 May 45 ^{**}

634. Opposition to the advance of 2 Cdn Inf Div, though somewhat lighter, continued on 1 May. On the main route leading north-eastwards to Oldenburg Brigadier Cabeldu's battalions kept up the pressure, moving forward whenever opportunity presented itself. Rapid movement was out of the question since both the main road and its immediate flanks required much work by the divisional engineers, who laboured long after dark under the glare of searchlights brought forward to illuminate the area. (2 Cdn Inf Div, Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45; also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, May 1945). On the right 5 Cdn Inf Bde was kept busy clearing the region about about Hude (4802), which was scarred by mine craters and littered with road blocks. Working northwards along the Hude (4802) - Berne (4910) railway, Calg Highrs encountered a group of enemy and heavily engaged them with medium gun fire; neither R.H.C. or R. de Mais reported any worth-while contact with the enemy during their clearing and patrolling activities. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 1 May 45)

635. The busiest by far of Maj-Gen Matthews' brigades was Brigadier Allard's, which had the task of bringing up the left flank between the Hunte River east of Wardenburg (3096) and the left of 4 Cdn Inf Bde. It was no easy job, for the ground was densely wooded and there were but few roads. Nevertheless, both Fus M.R. and Camerons of C. pressed forward with great determination. By last light Fus M.R. had expanded their positions

^{**} Reference maps as for para 604; also Appx "F"

some 2500 yards north of Streek (3396) to reach the edges of the forest and thus dominate the southern approaches to Bummerstode (3199), while on the right Camerons of C., having swept northwards between the railway and the road Kirchhatten - Oldenburg, now held a strong position in full contact with 4 Cdn Inf Bde, southwest of the main road fork (3601) above Tweelbake (3699 - 3799 - 3899). S. Sask R. rested in reserve throughout the day. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 1 May 45)

636. So ended another day of the chase, with the enemy still hastily withdrawing behind his screen of craters and blown bridges and the Canadian troops working feverishly to brush aside these obstacles in order to close with him. Up to this time there had been a possibility that the enemy's whole scheme of demolitions and retirement would eventually lead to his organized defence of Oldenburg and a last stand based on this ancient city. This theory must now be dispelled, for not only was Oldenburg being outflanked by 4 Cdn Armd Div^x from the west but the only troops deemed capable of such a defence were those of 8 Para Div, and these according to a prisoner, had been pulled back much further to the north several days before. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, May 1945, Appx 3, 2 Cdn Inf Div Int Summary No. 83, 1 May 45). The daily intelligence summary states:

It is now clear that the civilian element in **OLDENBURG** is unwilling that the town should be defended. Several PW and linecrossers have reported that the Burgomaster has attempted to have the place declared an open city as it contains at least a dozen medical installations and many wounded incl some Allied personnel. It is not believed that the military commander will be influenced by civilian pressure but there are some indications that the defence will be half-hearted, and two offr PW have stated that the town will not be held.

(Ibid)

637. However, in order to persuade the inhabitants of Oldenburg as to the folly of further resistance, Maj-Gen Matthews ordered his staff to prepare some propaganda leaflets. These were printed at Delmenhorst during the evening of 1 May and at 0900 hours on the following morning a shower of propaganda filled shells was loosed onto the city of Oldenburg. (W.D., G.S., H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, 2 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 2 May 45, serial 6870)

638. Meanwhile the movement towards the city went on without interruption other than halts called to allow the sappers to clear the obstruction on the various routes. The rain made the going difficult and roads within the divisional sector soon began to deteriorate. Yet, despite all this, 2 Cdn Inf Div pushed on. On the left 6 Cdn Inf Bde advanced shortly after 1100 hours. S. Sask R. passed through Camerons of C., being preceded by flails thrashing at the road bed to detonate the mines. There was only the slightest resistance, and in a matter of hours S. Sask R. had reached the southern outskirts of Oldenburg. At this point some brisk house to house fighting took place but the main portion of the city was in sight and Lt-Col V. Stotts' men pushed on towards the river. The companies deployed along the water

^x 4 Cdn Armd Div were out of contact with 7 Para Div.

barrier and covered the demolished bridge site. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and S. Sask R., 2 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May, serial 6977)

639. As the S. Sask R. pressed on the the north, Camerons of C. swung west from their positions towards the railway. "A" and "B" Cos reached the tracks without trouble and it appeared for a time that Lt-Col Rutherford's men would soon be settling along the river on the left of S. Sask R. Brigadier Allard changed his plan, however, and ordered Camerons of C. to disengage and concentrate at Bummerstede (3299) north of Fus M.R. present positions. Camerons of C. entered Bummerstede (3299) and were consolidated by 2000 hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and Camerons of C., 2 May 45). Over on the extreme left both 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt and 29 Cdn Armd Regt (of 4 Cdn Armd Div) also made good progress. In conjunction with Lt-Col Wotherspoon's tanks, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt occupied Tungeln (3099), Zwischenlethe (2999), and Wardenburg, thus securing the left of 6 Bde and freeing Fus M.R. for other employment. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 6881, 6894; also W.D., 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 2 May 45)

640. East of the main road (Kirchhatten - Oldenburg) 4 Cdn Inf Bde had also edged forward to enter Oldenburg. The advance began at about mid-morning. R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot both made good gains, for opposition was almost non-existent. R.H.L.I. followed the south side of the railroad (Oldenburg - Hude) and made for the railway bridge (3305). At the same time Essex Scot followed the road north of the tracks to reach the bridges (3405 - 3504) over the Neuer Canal (3503). The Scottish overran the area of Neuenwege (3604) and exploited northwards with strong patrols to sweep the Blankenburger Holz woods and to search out the Kloster Blankenburg estate (3606), which housed a large hospital. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and R.H.L.I. and Essex Scot, 2 May 45)

641. By late afternoon the two forward battalions were firmly holding the south-eastern exits from the city and pouring great volumes of harassing fire on the eastern exits north of the Hunte River. But further operations could not be developed owing to the state of the roads along which the advance had been carried. There was much work for the engineers as the War Diary of 4 Cdn Inf Bde relates.

The principle concern at the moment is engr resources. There is still considerable work to be done on the main highway to make it a good two way axis. Maj Nelson, OC 2 Cdn Fd Coy RCE reported his men would be working all night (again) to complete work. Reccees at all br sites were going on and recce boats and bridging material was being rushed fwd so that br ops could begin as soon as practicable.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 May 45)

Since nothing more could be accomplished for the time being, Brigadier Cabeldu ordered R. Regt C. into a concentration area in rear of R.H.L.I., (Ibid) and while the remainder of 4 brigade firmed up, the divisional artillery moved in bounds to new positions in preparation for the attack on Oldenburg proper. (Ibid)

642. Now that the major part of 2 Cdn Inf Div had turned in towards the city, the part played by 5 Cdn Inf Bde about Hude and by 3 Brit Inf Div on Maj-Gen Matthews' right flank

should be noted. From the firm base at Hude, which was in turn protected on the left by R. de Mais' positions at Pfahlhausen (4603) and on the high ground immediately north-west of Hude, Brigadier Megill's^x other battalions probed to the north and north-east. Calg Highrs went straight up the railway for about 3000 yards, then turned westwards past Neuenkoop (4706 - 4806) to explore the country around Koterende (4607). In this area the enemy was contacted and heavily engaged by artillery. At the same time other patrols moved to the right of the railroad tracks towards Hiddigwarden (5105), calling down gunfire freely whenever any suspicious movement was observed. As it was tiring work the Commanding Officer spelled off his companies in rotation and allowed each a period for rest and refitting. (W.D. Calg Highrs, 2 May 45)

643. The Black Watch operated in a similar manner. Early on 2 May "A" Coy was moved out to Hekelermoor (5103) with instructions to establish a base there and patrol through the villages of Hiddigwarden (5107), Hekeln (5207), and Harmenhausen (5306 - 5406). The company reached Hekelermoor (5103) without incident, but had considerable trouble in finding a way across the canals to the north-east. Finally, after wide-spread search, a footbridge was located and the patrols set out. Harmenhausen (5107) and Hekeln (5207) were found clear of enemy but when the Canadians approached Hiddigwarden they were heavily fired upon and were forced to disengage. A withdrawal was then ordered and a smoke screen laid down to cover the troops as they crossed the open fields back to "A" Coy's firm base. The enemy's reaction was not taken lightly and, in order to ensure the safety of the foremost position, "C" Coy was dispatched to Hekelermoor to reinforce the holding of that place until the following day. (W.D., R.H.C., 2 May 45). It was now decided to attack Hiddigwarden, and the brigade commander asking for Weasels to transport his assault force across the soggy fields. (Ibid)

644. 185 Bde of 3 Brit Inf Div, still based along the railway to the north of Stenum (5598), was equally active with its patrols. Its actions can best be described by the paragraph contained in report produced by General Crerar's liaison officer at headquarters of 2 Cdn Corps.

2. 3 Brit Inf Div: 8 Brit Inf Bde. Now cleared river bank as far WEST as 6004. 185 Brit Inf Bde have cleared up to rd DEICHSHAUSEN 5806 - BUTZHAUSEN 5406. NO further adv is possible until the highground around VEGESACK has been cleared.

(First Cdn Army: Liaison Offrs Reports, op cit, May 1945, dated 021700B)

A glance at the map of the area of Vegesack (5809) will indicate the importance of the high feature. This does not mean, however, that the British were stalemated. Observation posts already set up by 185 Bde proved most useful, and whenever movement was seen it was quickly attended to by the guns at the British brigade's disposal. The positions of this brigade remained unchanged until the cease fire on 5 May. (Scarfe, Assault Division, op cit, p. 268)

^x Brigadier Megill, D.S.O., went on course to U.K. on 1 May and his place was taken by Lt-Col S.W. Thompson, D.S.O., M.C.

THE CROSSING OF THE KUSTEN CANAL AND
HUNTE RIVER BY 2 CDN INF DIV, 3 MAY 45. *

645. Maj-Gen Matthews' main task now was to get into Oldenburg, clear the city and push through to the north. Plans for this operation were drawn up before dusk on 2 May. There were actually alternative plans, one to be carried out if Oldenburg was not defended while the other would be put into effect if any sign of resistance to the river crossings arose.

Plan (a) if OLDENBURG abandoned. 4 Cdn Inf Bde to cross KUSTEN canal and sweep to NE of inter bde bdy. 6 Cdn Inf Bde to cross KUSTEN canal and sweep to NW of inter bde bdy. 8 Cdn Recce Regt (14CH) be prepared to pass through OLDENBURG directed on axis OLDENBURG - MEERKIRCHEN 3819. Plan (b) if crossings opposed. 4 and 6 Cdn Inf Bdes to take up posns along canal to recce and prepare for crossings. 5 Cdn Inf Bde to continue sweep NORTH to R WESER and R. HUNTE. 3 Cdn LAA.Reg to continue adv NORTH to OLDENBURG.

(2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit,
2 May 45, serial 6965)

646. During the night 2/3 May each of forward battalions laced the northern bank of the river with small arms, tank and artillery fire. At the same time the southern bank was carefully swept over by patrols, who gathered in many prisoners as well as a considerable number of slave labourers, some of whom were immediately put to work improving the Canadian axes. (Ibid, serials 6993, 7003, 7005, 7008; also W.Ds., Fur M.R., R.H.L.I., Essex Scot, Camerons of C., S. Sask R., 2 May 45). Meanwhile, Brigadier Allard had ordered Fus M.R. to move up to the river line on the left of S. Sask R. Accordingly, Lt-Col J.A. Dextraze had his first company at the river bank by 0400 hours 3 May and, using whatever assault boats the engineers could provide, soon established the full company on the north bank. There had been no opposition. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 May 45; also W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1945, Appx 4, Ops Log, 3 May 45, serials 7, 8, 10). (Ibid, serial 9)

647. Shortly after Fus M.R. reported their success, a further message from Lt-Col Destraze indicated that the enemy was under orders to leave the town. His message read:

Infm from civs and PW. Enemy just received orders to get out of town. Would suggest harassing fire on rd centres going out of town, also air OP to be in action Approx str of enemy 800.

(Ibid, serial 16)

A sustained fire of every sort was soon raining down on the noted avenues of escape. (2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log, op cit, 2/3 May 45, serial 7028)

648. Meanwhile the build-up by Fus M.R. went on without interruption. Assault boats ferried most of the troops across, although others crossed the water barrier over a bridge which had been first located by air observation planes. Originally this structure (320037), which lies directly south of

* Reference maps as for para 604; also Appx "F".

Oldenburg, was found to be ready for demolition, but the ever-quick engineers soon remedied this and put the bridge in working order. (Ibid, serial 7027, 7030). By 0930 hours Fus M.R. were all across the obstacle and working deeper into the city towards the inter-brigade boundary as indicated by the line of the railroad. (Ibid, serial 7031)

649. Once the French-Canadians had expanded their lodgment, Brigadier Allard moved his tactical headquarters across the canal and set about arranging for the advance of his other battalions. Camerons of C. had long since been warned to move up into the area occupied by S. Sask R., and during the morning final details were discussed for exploitation. Camerons of C. crossed into the main portion of Oldenburg at 1415 hours, and first swung westwards to a line of outposts on the left flank of Fus M.R. (who were by this time clearing the business section of the city), then further west towards Bloherfeld (2705). Later in the day S. Sask R., accompanied by its armoured support from 10 Cdn Armd Regt, also crossed the canal and moved swiftly through to take up a position just east of Ofen (2808). Similarly, Fus M.R. also shifted to the north-eastern outskirts of the city to occupy the area south of the Airfield (2908, 2909). The movement of 6 Cdn Inf Bde was mainly made for security purposes to ensure that none of the enemy could re-enter the city. While the infantry battalions adjusted themselves, a troop of "A" Sqn 8 Cdn Recce Regt ventured further north to regain contact. (Ibid, serial 7097; also W.Ds., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 May 45; 8 Cdn Recce Regt, 3 May 45). All in all it had been a day of real achievement. The western portion of Oldenburg was clear, 4 Cdn Armd Div had been contacted, and the troops had not suffered in the venture. (W.D., H.Q. 6 Cdn Inf Bde and S. Sask R., 3 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 3 May 45, serial 7104)

*
4 CDN INF BDE MOVES INTO OLDENBURG, 3 MAY 45

650. Over on the right in 4 Cdn Inf Bde's sector, our troops enjoyed similar success. After a night of exchanging volleys of small arms fire with a few diehards of the enemy's rearguard, the commanding officer of R.H.L.I. got in touch with the mayor of the city, who volunteered to guide the Canadians across the river to take over the city. Actually this misguided civilian could do little else since 6 Bde already had some of its troops inside the citadel. Nevertheless, Lt-Col H.C. Arrell decided to act quickly and ordered all his companies to cross the obstacle at once in the assault boats which had recently arrived.

These were manned most enthusiastically by Polish and Russian ex-PW who soon had all R.H.L.I. rifle Coys across and moving through the town.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde,
3 May 45)

651. At this stage Brigadier Cabeldu called an "Orders Group" to outline his plan for the occupation of the eastern and northern sections of the city and for the pursuit. Since the enemy, in true will-o-the-wisp fashion, had vanished from the scene, R. Regt C. was to cross immediately followed by Essex Scot. (Ibid)

* Reference maps as for para 604; also Appx "F".

During the morning there were fantastic scenes in the city - one or two Cdn offrs armed only with pistols marching back with 50 or 60 enemy tps armed to the teeth. Most of the citizens kept in doors greatly assisting the checking. The Burgomaster proved very helpful particularly in organizing the local police to help in the patrolling. In a very short time all houses had been checked and the citizens had posted up their lists of household personnel.

(Ibid)

The Royals and Essex Scot crossings encountered no difficulty. (Ibid)

652. While the infantry units searched out the houses and patrolled the city streets, intensive reconnaissance of the canal and river banks were carried out to locate a good bridge-site so that the supporting vehicles might follow up. At first the situation appeared discouraging but as the brigade's diary states -

Fortunately, shortly after noon the engrs in blowing away part of damaged br on the main entrance in 6 Bde S Sask R area blew the br flooring right into posn. It was one chance in a million for within half an hour there was a solid ~~el~~ 40 br capable of two way tfc with excellent highway approachos on both sides-----At once Div gave this bdc vechs priority of passage and even before the other brs were completed our vechs were streaming across to follow up the rifle coys on foot.

(Ibid)

653. By mid afternoon 4 Cdn Inf Bde was firmly consolidated on the northern outskirts of Oldenburg. Having completed a sweep through the city, R.H.L.I. were settled in the angle formed by the railway and the road bounded by the villages of Hoheheide (3308) - Gr. Bornhorst (3508) in the region of Ohmstede (3408 - 3505). This position represented the right flank of 4 Cdn Inf Bde. In the centre Essex Scot held strong company areas astride the road Haseln (3309) - Nadorst (3308), while on the left R. Regt C. faced north along the road south of Beim Weissen Moor (3109 - 3209). None of these units encountered any opposition on the objectives which they now occupied. In these areas the three fighting regiments were to pass a quiet night. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 3 May 45)

654. There was little change for the rest of the division. 5 Cdn Inf Bde on the far right flank put in another day of patrolling towards the Weser river. 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, now pinched out of the battle by the converging advances of 6 Cdn Inf Bde and 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, was ordered to stand down but to be prepared to move on short notice, while Maj-Gen Vokes' armoured reconnaissance unit, having completed its long semi-circular journey from its original base at Garrel (1984), was now given a priority of passage over the bridges south of Oldenburg so that it could rejoin its parent formation west of the city. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 3 May 45; also 2 Cdn Inf Div Ops Log op cit, 3 May 45, serials 7074, 7095, 7107, 7125, 7128). But the one group of tired

troops who most deserved a rest was not allowed any such luxury - these were the engineers, whose long hours of toil for the past several days and nights had mainly been responsible for the success achieved so far. There were still many bridges to be built, mines to be lifted, and craters to be filled in so that the build-up for the next advance might be completed. (W.Ds., 2 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 7 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 11 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 3 May 45)

655. Apart from the general movement forward of supplies and supporting weapons, there was little other activity in the night 3/4 May. The intention was for 4 and 6 Inf Bdes to regroup in their present areas. 5 Cdn Inf Bde was to continue its vigil on the eastern flank. The Corps intention stated nothing more than that 2 Cdn Inf Div would continue its advance northwards in due time. (Ibid, 4 May, serial 7144). The bridging situation at the moment governed all movement and, until the build-up was completed and the guns could come further forward, the pursuit had to wait. On the morning of 4 May Maj-Gen Matthews in his remarks on the continuation of the operation stated that little was known as to how far the main German force had withdrawn. (2 Cdn Inf Div - Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, op cit, 28 Apr - 5 May 45, para 5 and 6). 2 Cdn Inf Div at this time was completely out of contact. The reconnaissance troops (8 Cdn Recce Regt) were out all across the front, but so far, even they had little to report apart from the usual road blocks, craters, mines, and felled trees. Later in the day, when it appeared that the advance towards the North Sea would be resumed, a change in dispositions was ordered. 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt was instructed to take over from 5 Cdn Inf Bde so that the latter formation might be free to move on up the Nordenham "thumb" north of Oldenburg. Maj-Gen Matthews' object, as announced on the afternoon of 4 May, was to

to get astride the road and railway running south-west across the "thumb" from BRAKE (square 4296). 8 Cdn Recce Regt was required to recce across the entire front of 2 Cdn Inf Div.

(Ibid)

The plan called for a thrust on a front of one brigade led by 5 Cdn Inf Bde, with 4 Cdn Inf Bde clearing the flanks and 6 brigade in reserve. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Inf Bde, 4 May 45)

657. The order group held at headquarters 5 Cdn Inf Bde left no doubt as to the Canadian's intentions for the morrow if further aggressive action was necessary. (Ibid). But, as was the case in other sections, rumour of the enemy's capitulation was also circulating among Maj-Gen Matthews' men. (Ibid)

658. By midday of 4 May 45 the situation all across Lt-Gen Simonds' front was completely favourable. Oldenburg had fallen to 2 Cdn Inf Div; 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div, with improved roads behind them and fair going promised to the north, were girding themselves for the final dash to the coast; while 3 Cdn Inf Div was accepting the surrender of large numbers of the enemy on the road to Emden, at the same time closing in steadily on that port. The story of each of these advances has already been told, but in order to complete the picture of 2 Cdn Corps Operations it is essential to note the part played by 5 Cdn Armd Div while under Lt-Gen Simonds' command. (See Paras 319, 357, 370, 375, 376 to this report with regard to the relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div by 5 Cdn Armd Div)

X
OPERATIONS OF 5 CDN ARMD DIV

The Move From Western Holland to the Groningen Area

20 Apr 45

659. 5 Cdn Armd Div's operations during this period may be conveniently divided into two phases. Phase I began on 20 Apr 45 and lasted until 26 Apr 45. This included the move up from Western Holland to the Groningen (2215) area, the relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div, and the regrouping prior to the fully-developed attack designed to eliminate the Delfzijl (4526) pocket. As these moves were of a non-tactical nature and involved occupying areas which had been previously cleared, it is considered that a more coherent story would result if they were described before Phase II, which involved the actual assault on the Pocket beginning on 24 Apr 45. This plan will be followed in the narrative below.

660. On 20 Apr 45 5 Cdn Armd Div was operating in Western Holland under 1 Cdn Corps. Divisional headquarters was located at Barneveld (5295), 5 Cdn Armd Bde at Putten (5408) and 11 Cdn Inf Bde at Veldwijk (5413). (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div, 5 Cdn Armd Bde, and 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Apr 45). In the morning Maj-Gen B.M. Hoffmeister, C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D., went to H.Q. First Cdn Army for a conference with the G.O.C.-in-C. at which the passing of his division to 2 Cdn Corps and its future movements were outlined. (W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Div op cit, 20 Apr 45; AEF 45/1 Cdn Army/C/H Army Ops Log, serial 69, 20 Apr 45). Later in the day Lt-Gen Simonds held an orders group at his headquarters and gave the details of his plan for the employment of 5 Cdn Armd Div. As a result, 5 Cdn Armd Div was to take over from 3 Cdn Inf Div in the provinces of Friesland, Groningen and Drente, in order to allow that division to move further right and continue operations east of the Ems river. The area assigned to 5 Cdn Armd Div was bounded by the coast of Holland from Zwolle (8936) to the line of the Groningen (2215) - Delfzijl (4626) canal, inclusive, representing a distance of some one hundred and fifty-three miles. 5 Cdn Armd Div's functions in the new area were to be; one, the guarding of the coast of Holland against any attempted German landing from the still-occupied Frisian Islands, and two, to prevent any enemy escaping from the pocket of Western Holland via the IJsselmeer through Friesland. (W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 20 Apr 45; AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/F, Docket II: Folio I, 5 Cdn Armd Div History of Ops, 31 March to 5 May 45, Part III; W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Apr 45; AEF: 45/11 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D Report on Ops 11 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 April - 2 May 45)

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4083 Netherlands 1:50,000 Sheet 7 - Groningen, G.S.G.S. 4416 Central Europe 1:100,000 Sheets 11 - Emden, M1 - Groningen West, 1A - Leeuwarden, 2A - Denhelder, G.S.G.S. 4414 Eastern Holland 1:25,000 Sheets 2607 - Delfzijl, 2507 - Vierhuizen, 2707 - Siddeburen, 2506 - Uithuizermeeden, 2606 - Westeremden, 2706 - Woltersum, 2608 - Loquard, 2705 - Woldendorp, 2605 - Warfum, 2705 - Groningen; also Appx "G"

661. For this task 5 Cdn Armd Div was organized into two brigade groups, called originally Cumberland Force and Johnston Force after the names of the respective commanders of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 11 Cdn Inf Bde. A divisional reserve was also formed. This designation was of very short duration, for an order issued by Divisional H.Q. in the evening of 20 Apr gave instructions that the Commanders' names would not be used and that the brigade groups would be known by their respective numbers. (W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Div op cit, Appx 36, Message 20 Apr 45). The composition of the brigade groups were as follows:

5 Cdn Armd Bde Group

H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde
2 Cdn Armd Regt (Ld S.H. (R.C.))
9 Cdn Armd Regt (B.C.D.)
Westmnr R. (Mot)
Perth R.
8 Cdn Fd Regt
88 Bty 5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt
1 Cdn Fd Sqn

11 Cdn Inf Bde Group

H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde
C.B. Highrs
Ir R.C.
3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.)
4 Cdn A Tk Regt
17 Cdn Fd Regt
41 Bty 5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt
10 Cdn Fd Sqn

Divisional Reserve

5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.)
5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt less two batteries

(Ibid: appx 34, Op Instr No. 1, 19 Apr 45)

662. 5 Division's move north began on 21 Apr, with headquarters and 11 Cdn Inf Bde Group leading. Divisional headquarters staged overnight in Heerenveen (7886) and reached Groningen (2215) on 22 Apr 45. The infantry brigade had all but one unit in the new location by 2359 hours on 21 Apr. Brigade headquarters set up at Heerenveen. C.B. Highrs were centred on Dokkum (3427) and occupied the ground enclosed by Holwerd (7732), Nieuwe Bilt dijk (6125), and Engwierum (9326), in a coast defence role. Ir R.C. made their headquarters at Joure (6987) with companies at Sneek (6059), Makkum (4398), Lemmer (6374), and Stavoren (9326). 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt, with under command 11 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy (The Princess Louise Fusiliers), was organized into two battle groups and situated at Franeker (5312) and Harlingen (4411). It was given the task of securing the eastern end of the Causeway (421026) running across the Ijsselmeer. 41 Cdn L.A.A. Bty was responsible for clearing stragglers from the Zwolle area and maintaining contact with 1 Cdn Inf Div across the Ijssel river. 17 Cdn Fd Regt was deployed in support, its battery areas being near Harlingen (4411) and opposite the island of Ameland (6841). 3 Cdn Armd Recce Regt (G.G.H.G.) did not travel with the brigade convoy but moved independently in two groups, wheeled first and tracked second. The wheeled party arrived in the brigade sector on 22 Apr and concentrated at

Oudeschoot (8083). A further change on the same date was the occupation of IJsselmuiden (7843) by 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt. The second portion of G.G.H.G., completing its move on 23 Apr, went into position with Regimental Headquarters and "A" Sqn at Oudeschoot, "B" Sqn at Akkerwoude (8223), and "C" Sqn at Joure (6987). Later in the day "C" Sqn moved to Sneek (6059). Since 3 Cdn Inf Div had started leaving the area before 5 Cdn Armd Div arrived, there was no formal hand-over. The change was completed without incident. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/C/H Ops Log, serial 210, 21-22 Apr 45; AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA/C/F, Folio 1, Reports on Ops, 20 Apr to 2 May 45, 17 Cdn Fd Regt, 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt and 5 Cdn L.A.A. Regt; W.D., 2 Cdn Armd Recce Regt 22-23 Apr 45)

663. The main body of 5 Cdn Armd Bde Group left the Putten (5408) area at 1700 hours 21 Apr 45. After the start a change of route to a more direct one caused some confusion, and the units did not arrive in a body. The diarist of the armoured brigade wrote:

Units kept coming in all night, some of the Arty getting into the old route and not arriving until the morning of 22 Apr 45.

(W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 21 Apr 45)

On the night of 21 Apr and morning of 22 Apr locations of the brigade group were; Brigade headquarters, 2 Cdn Armd Regt and 9 Cdn Armd Regt in the vicinity of Vries (2298); 5 Cdn Armd Regt at Assen (2190); Westmr R. (Mot) at Tolbert (0709); Perth R. at Zuidlaren (2900); 88 Cdn L.A.A. Bty in area (2697); and 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), wheeled convoy only, at Eelde (2105). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 22 Apr 45; AEF: 5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA, op cit, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)). The above moves brought the bulk of 5 Cdn Armd Bde group into north-eastern Holland ready to carry out its part of the divisional relief of 3 Cdn Inf Div.

664. Later on 22 Apr 5 Cdn Armd Bde began its take over. Brigade headquarters was established at Bedum (2423) along with battalion headquarters of Westmr R. (Mot), which placed companies at Warffum (2133), Uithuizen (2935), Winsum (1827), and Onderdendam (2327). The Westministers thus took up position on the left flank of the brigade. Perth R. relieved the Regina Rif, setting up headquarters at (387337) and companies at Losdrop (3931), (402343), Bierum (4132), and Godlinze (3831). All the above was completed by 2300 hours 22 Apr 45. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, Westmr R. and Perth R., 22 Apr 45)

665. In the afternoon of 23 Apr a conference between the G.O.C. 5 Cdn Armd Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div was held. Plans were made for the further relief of Maj/Gen Keefler's formation. The Armoured Division was to take over as far as practicable toward the Dutch-German border. (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Div 23 Apr; 5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, serial 245, 23 Apr 45). 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) deployed in support of 5 Cdn Armd Bde in the area of Wirdum (3625) (5 Cdn Armd Div RCA, report on Ops, op cit, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)). 2 Cdn Armd Regt proceeded to the Westmr R. (Mot) area to be ready to take over from the motor battalion. (W.D., 2 Cdn Armd Regt 23 Apr 45). By 2330 hours, 9 Cdn Armd Regt, with "A" and "B" Sqns dismounted as infantry, relieved the R. Wpg Rif in Appingedam (4125). The relief was completed satisfactorily although movement was hampered by heavy shelling from the German

coast batteries around Delfzijl and Marsum (4227). (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt 23 Apr 45). Meanwhile Ir R.C. had come under command of 5 Cdn Armd Bde and were situated around Siddeburen (4217). They were to take over from 1 C. Scot R. as soon as the Scottish had captured Wagenborgen (4517). W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde and Ir R.C. 23 Apr 45)

666. Further changes took place on 24 Apr. On this date a final settlement of the boundary was made between 5 Cdn Armd Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div. The Dutch - German border, inclusive to 5 Cdn Armd Div, from Coevorden (5853) to the Dollart (2060) was defined as the dividing line between the two divisions. (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, serial 296, 24 Apr 45). H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde went to Ten Boer (3020), handing over command of its sector to G.G.H.G. The Horse Guards occupied Leeuwarden (6914) with R.H.Q. and "A" Sqn. (W.D., 11 Cdn Inf Bde, Appx 7, Ops Log, serial 7, 24 Apr 45, W.D. 3 Cdn Armd Recce Rgt 24 Apr 45). 2 Cdn Armd Regt took over from Westmr R. (Mot), which then moved to positions on the division's right flank, which had been open up to this time. By 1600 hours it was situated in the area of Oostwolde (5312). Meanwhile Ir R.C. had completed in the early morning a successful relief of 1 C. Scot R., locating headquarters at Siddeburen (4217), "A" & "B" Cos in Wagenborgen (464184 and 459175), "C" Coy in Nieuwolda (4817), and Support Coy at (414176). Two troops of tanks from 5 Cdn Armd Regt were placed in support of the Ir R.C. stood by at battalion headquarters awaiting the infantry advance. 17 Cdn Fd. Regt, less one battery, deployed in rear of the Irish in its usual supporting role. (W.Ds., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Regt, Westmr R. (Mot), Ir R.C., 24 Apr 45)

667. At 0900 hours on 25 Apr 11 Cdn Inf Bde was given command of 5 Cdn Armd Brigade's sector, and the inter-brigade boundary was set as follows; (all inclusive or exclusive to 11 Cdn Inf Bde) a line from, exclusive Noorderhoogebrug (2217), to exclusive Zuidwolde (2319), to inclusive Westerenden (3128), to Kolhol (3634) and (420380). (W.D. H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, page 16 and Appx 9, serial 1273, 25 Apr 45). More regrouping in the division saw the C.B. Highrs concentrated at Loppersum (3226) in the role of 11 Cdn Inf Bde reserve. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 25 Apr 45)

668. On 26 Apr 31 Brit A.A. Bde, with under command 98 Cdn A. Tk Bty and in support 342 Brit H.A.A. Regt, took over the left sector of 5 Cdn Armd Div area from G.G.H.G. The boundary between the Anti-Aircraft Brigade and 5 Cdn Armd Bde was; all inclusive to 5 Cdn Armd Bde, from (949259), along the road to Kollum (9421), to the road junction (954195), to Buitenzijl (9218) and the line of the road south-east to the road junction (962135). (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, serial 1294, 26 Apr 45). After the relief G.G.H.G. moved into 5 Cdn Armd Bde area, and located R.H.Q. at Kollum (9421), "A" Sqn at Kollumerpomp (9724), "B" Sqn at Dokkum (8427), and "C" Sqn at Grijpskerk (0419). (W.D., 2 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 26 Apr 45). A composite group formed of dismounted gunners from 16 Bty and self-propelled guns from 82 Bty 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt was given a right-flank protection task. It took up position between Finsterwolde (3711) and the canal on the Dutch-German border, where it remained until the end of operations. Apart from picking up a few stragglers, there was no activity on this part of the Divisional front. (5 Cdn Armd Div RCA, report on Ops, op cit, 4 Cdn A. Tk Regt, 20 Apr to 2 May 45). From this date to the end of hostilities, 5 Cdn Armd Bde and 31 Brit A.A. Bde carried out a passive coast-watching function,

with nothing of importance to report.^x (5 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log op cit, 26 Apr to 3 May 45)

THE DELFZIJL POCKET: TOPOGRAPHY

669. Before going on to an account of the fighting involved in the clearing of the Delfzijl pocket, it is proposed to give **first** a brief description of the ground over which 5 Cdn Armd Div had to advance and secondly an estimate of the German forces involved. When taken over by the Armoured Division, the Delfzijl pocket could be said to be contained by the Ems estuary and a line running from Hoog-Watum (433335) on the coast through Bierum (4132), Krewerd (4029), Appingedam (4125), Wagenborgen (4618), and Oostwolde (5312) to the Dollart at (582172). This represented a perimeter of approximately 19 miles in length. On the 24 Apr units of 5 Cdn Armd Div held this perimeter, having taken over from 3 Cdn Inf Div. Any subsequent advances resulted in enemy reaction; therefore this area has been selected as the extent of the "Delfzijl Pocket" when the assault began.

670. A glance at the map will show that the area was divided into two sectors, one in the north and the other in the south. They were separated by a flooded region roughly wedge-shaped with its apex reaching the town of Delfzijl and its sides bounded on the left by the Damster river and on the right by the Afwatering canal. Military operations in the flooded region were so difficult that a frontal advance on Delfzijl was not considered feasible. Generally, there was very little cover in the area, the ground being flat and woods non-existent. Vehicle traffic, tracked or otherwise, was restricted solely to roads. Although the fields (polders) were too soft to bear the weight of any transport, they could be crossed by infantry on foot. The effect of artillery fire on troops in the open was considerably lessened because the shells tended to penetrate into the ground before exploding, thus reducing the number and range of lethal fragments. Two railway lines ran into Delfzijl from Loppersum (3426) and Slochteren (3713). Their embankments provided a measure of cover in that they were about four feet above the rest of the ground. Delfzijl itself was the only fairly large built-up area, being about 1200 yards in length and 300 yards in width. It was well isolated from the right sector by a river and two canals converging to the south-west of the town, which cut it off from the land to the west. Small villages were scattered throughout the whole area, but the houses, **unlike** those in Italy, provided very poor protection. Due to the flatness of the terrain visibility was very good thus making movement in daylight extremely hazardous. (Maps: Eastern Holland 1:25,000, Sheets 2606, 2607, 2608, 2706, 2707, 2708).

THE DELFZIJL POCKET: ENEMY STRENGTH

671. The backbone of the enemy's defensive strength in the pocket was built around three Naval Fortress Battalions, Nos. 359, 360 and 368. As their title implies, these battalions were trained for defence of fortifications and had little or no experience in conducting operations in open warfare. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Army/I/F Int Summary No 300, para 3). The exact number of enemy troops opposing 5 Cdn Armd Div is rather hard to estimate because no count of their dead is given. However, 3821 prisoners of war were taken by

^x No further mention will be made of these formations during the story of the battle to follow.

11 Cdn Inf Bde Group and 39 by 5 Cdn Armd Bde. (W.D., 11 Cdn Inf Bde., 3 May 45 and W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Bde Appx 9, Ops Log serial 1175, 24 Apr 45). A prisoner captured by the Westmr R. (Mot) stated that a force of approximately 300 were manning the guns on Reider spit. This figure cannot be checked as all Germans were evacuated before these guns were overrun. (W.D., Westmr R. 30 Apr 45). Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the total enemy strength was well over 4,000. As in all pockets of this nature, it was filled with remnants of field formations together with all sorts of base and lines of communication troops. They were organized into small battle groups, which proved to be comparatively ineffective due to the inexperience of many of the men in infantry fighting. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/L/F Int Summary No 131, Part 1, 25 Apr 45)

672. Field works and digging were on an extensive scale. A continuous trench system, bounding the landward side of the pocket, was constructed more or less parallel to the coast and about 2000 yards inland. It was roughly 20,000 yards in length, beginning at (439306) and ending in the area of the Reider Spit (5624). (Map: Eastern Holland, Delfzijl 1:25,000, Def overprint 20 Apr 45; W.D. 9 Cdn Armd Regt, Air Photos, dated 19 Apr 45). It was, of course, impossible to occupy these trenches in their entirety; therefore the defensive system was a series of prepared localities based on the various built-up areas. These were centred on Nansum (4329), Holwierde (4229), Biesum (4327), Uitwierde (4427), Delfzijl (4526), Farmsum (4625), Weiwerd (4724), Woldendorp (5320) and the Reider Spit (5623). Mines were encountered in some numbers, mainly in the Nansum-Holwierde area, north of Appingedam, and across the neck of Reider Spit. (W.D. Perth Regt, B.C.D., & Westmr R., April 1945). This was the general picture of enemy strength, dispositions, and prepared defences. (W.Ds., Perth R., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, In R.C., Westmr R., C.B. Highrs, 23 Apr to 3 May 45)

673. The weapons available to the Germans were a varied lot. The artillery in the pocket was not numerous only 18 guns of 75-mm or over being captured. (AEF: 11 Cdn Inf Bde/C/D Docket I, Report on Ops 20 Apr - 3 May 45, Appx "A"). This comparatively small number of guns at first made it difficult to reconcile the many reports of severe shelling sent in by all units. However, this was clarified somewhat when it was realized that 28-cm Batteries on Borkum fired ten to fifteen rounds per gun daily into the Delfzijl area, and heavy coast guns in Emden were also active. (AEF: 45/1 Cdn Army/L.F. 1 Cdn Army Int Summary No 300 and No 305). The main enemy batteries within the pocket were located around the Nansum (5426) area and the Reider Spit. The former were 105 Millimetre and the latter 12.8-cm flak guns used in a ground role. Both were in concrete emplacements and very difficult to neutralize. In fact, none of these guns were knocked out by counter-battery fire throughout the operation. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA Folio I, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.) Report on Ops 20 Apr - 2 May 45). Two self-propelled guns were captured but there is no evidence of any tanks. 20-mm Flak guns were plentiful, and there were sufficient light machine guns to equip the rifle companies of about eight battalions. 81-mm mortars were surprisingly few, only six being found. The rest of the weapons included the normal infantry types such as rifles, grenades, rocket launchers, and light mortars. It would seem that the Germans never carried pistols, or at any rate their presence never seemed to be reported. This operation was no exception in that respect. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops Appx "A" op cit)

THE CLEARING OF THE DELFZIJL POCKET: PHASE I, 23 APR 45 ^H

674. To tell the story of the actual clearing of the Delfzijl pocket it is necessary to go back to 23 Apr 45. On that date the regrouping of the assaulting units had been completed and the attack began. Although the end of German resistance was expected in the near future, it was decided to start the attack at once for the following reasons: one, the length of the perimeter meant that three of the four battalions available would have to be kept deployed at all times in order to maintain the necessary pressure on the enemy forces; two, the weather was miserable; and three, the German shelling was accurate and was taking a steady toll of Canadian troops. The plan adopted was divided into two phases; Phase I called for a reduction of the perimeter and Phase II a direct assault on Delfzijl. To carry out the details of Phase I, Perth R. was to seize and consolidate the line of Holwierde (4229) - Nansum (4329). B.C.D. were to face up to the enemy east of Appingedam (4125), but not to get involved in a formal attack. Ir R.C. was to investigate the flooded area south of Appingedam, push forward to the coast in the vicinity of Oterdum (5024) - Termunterzijl (5323) and, as soon as relieved by Westmr R. (Mot) in this area, swing left and attack towards Farmsum (4625). Westmr R. (Mot) was to move to Termunterzijl (5323) and then turn right to clear the Reider Spit. Finally, C.B. Highrs were to remain in reserve with tasks to be allotted later. (AEF: 45/11 Cdn Inf Bde, Report on Ops 20 April - 2 May 45). Tank support was supplied by 5 Cdn Armd Regt (8 N.B.H.). One squadron was attached to Perth R. and two troops to each of Ir R.C. and Westmr R. (Mot). (W.D., H.Q. 5 Cdn Armd Bde, Appx 9 Ops Log, serial 1190, dated 24 Apr 45). No details were given originally regarding the details of Phase II. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit)

675. Phase I of the operations to clear the Delfzijl pocket began on 23 Apr with Perth R. advancing to the attack on Holwierde (4229). From the account to follow, it will be seen that this area produced the most severe fighting, because any advances here more directly affected the defences of Delfzijl than elsewhere. At 1600 hours 23 Apr Lt-Col M.W. Andrew held an Orders Group and outlined the plan for his battalion. This called for a simultaneous occupation of Groote Nes (424315) and Kleine Nes (420312) by "C" Coy and Krewerd (4029) by Sp Coy, to begin after last light. On the successful completion of these moves, elements of "A" Coy were to take Katmis (420300) and Olde Klooster (4113304), and "B" Coy, reinforced by a platoon from "D" Coy, were to seize Holwierde. The action began well. Krewerd was occupied without opposition at 0045 hours and "C" Coy was on its objectives by 0200 hours. The enemy began to react with accurate shelling. The effectiveness of his fire may be judged when it is realized that he had guns on the coast at (439302) and therefore was able to reach the whole of the Perth's area at a range of only about 3000 yards. One platoon of "B" Coy reached (420302) by 0505 hours, followed by a sub-unit of "A" Coy on Katmis by 0525 hours. "B" Coy reported opposition and called for artillery support, which was promptly given. Enemy guns continued to give trouble, but by 1015 hours "B" Coy was firm on the north edge of Holwierde. The main resistance came from artillery fire, and the day's fighting resulted in the Perth's having one officer and seven other ranks killed, one officer and twenty-three other ranks wounded, and one other rank missing. They took 22 prisoners. (W.D., Perth R. 23-24 April 1945; W.D., 5 Cdn Armd Bde Appx 8, Ops Log serials 1151, 1159, 1160, 1217, 1310, 1810, 1925, 1231, 24 Apr 45)

676. Meanwhile, "A" and "B" Sqns, B.C.D., dismounted, with two troops of tanks from "C" Sqn in support, had relieved R. Wpg Rif in Appingedan by 2310 hours 23 Apr and had occupied positions already described. Two bridges in the immediate area were checked, and a troop of tanks sent from "C" Sqn to Jukwerd (4027) on picket duty to prevent any enemy from infiltrating between B.C.D. and Perth R. A patrol of three Reconnaissance tanks was sent to Hoekhuizen (415278) to clear out any Germans who might be there, but no contact was made. Accurate and heavy enemy shelling continued throughout the day. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 23-24 Apr 45)

677. As described before, Ir R.C. had relieved 1 C. Scot R. in area Wagenborgen on 24 Apr. Light shelling, the gathering up of a few enemy stragglers from 368 Fortress Battalion, and the arrival of two troops of tanks from 8 N.B.H., concluded the activities of the Irish on that date. (W.D., Ir R.C., 23-24 Apr 45; 5 Cdn Armd Bde Ops Log, op cit, serials 1152, 1169, 1217, 1620, 1945, 24 Apr 45)

678. Westmr R. (Mot) began moving in the morning of 24 Apr to take over the right flank of the pocket. As related before, they proceeded to area Oostwoldse (5212) with intentions of pushing on to the north on the same date. The Battalion plan, as outlined by Lt-Col G.C. Corbould, D.S.O., was to push two companies forward "C" Coy right and "A" Coy left. The axis was to follow the road running north through Oostwolderpolder from (542130) to (543150), thence along the dyke to a point one mile south of Woldendorp. "C" Coy was to follow "A" Coy to the bridge north of Oostwolderpolder at (543150), turn east and make its way over the dykes to the sea, and then swing north-east. "B" Coy was ordered to relieve "C" Coy of Ir R.C. at Nieuwelde (4917) after dark. (W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 24 Apr 45). Two troops of tanks and six 105-mm Shermans from 8 N.B.H. were allotted in support. The 105's were under control of 17 Cdn Fd Regt and fired by them as artillery on call. (REF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA, op cit, 17 Cdn Fd Regt). At 1800 hours "A" Coy crossed the start line and made its way to (543150), with no contact and only occasional rounds of shell fire falling in the vicinity. "C" Coy then pushed on and joined it at the same location. "A" Coy called for fire on some suspected enemy positions; this was supplied by the 105 millimetre tanks. No casualties were suffered and nothing more was reported on 24 Apr. (W.D., Westmr (Mot) 24 Apr 45; 5 Cdn Armd Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 1235, 24 Apr 45)

679. During 25 Apr Perth R. did not make any further advances. A few prisoners of war were picked up by "B" Coy in Holwierde (4229). On "C" Coy reporting that they were being shelled accurately by four self-propelled guns, 8 Cdn Fd Regt replied. At 0900 hours 11 Cdn Inf Bde took over command of the sector from 5 Cdn Armd Bde and directed the remainder of the operations from Ten Boer (3020). An attack by fighter-bombers on the enemy guns along the dyke at (439302) was planned for 1420 hours. The artillery was to fire smoke shells as markers, but the aircraft arrived early and bombed without target indication, therefore causing very little damage. A large German patrol near the southern outskirts of Holwierde at (423296) and suspected positions at Uiteinde (428312) and (430312) were engaged by artillery and mortars. At 2330 hours an enemy patrol was driven off by "B" Coy Perth R. leaving seven dead. (W.D., Perth R., 25 Apr 45)

680. B.C.D. were again subjected to heavy shelling in their holding positions. Continuous line patrols were necessary to keep communications open. As the enemy were systematically

knocking down the houses with accurate, heavy-calibre fire, Lt-Col H. Angle, D.S.O., ordered the evacuation of civilians from Appingedam. This was carried out. During the afternoon a patrol of reconnaissance tanks went out and contacted Perth R. at Krewerd (4029). (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 25 Apr 45)

681. Patrolling occupied the attention of the Irish Regiment during the night 24-25 Apr. One patrol made contact on the Weer Dijk at (478175), and another returned without seeing any enemy. "C" Coy was relieved by the Westminsters, and moved around to some buildings on the Wold Weg at (406199). "B" Coy passed through "A" Coy and dug in at Schaapbulten (4621) without incident. "D" Coy reached a point 500 yards north of Wildehof (444204), unmolested by the enemy. The day's activities were concluded by a reconnaissance patrol to Tjuchem (428208), which found the area flooded and the bridge over the Afwaterings canal destroyed. (W.D., Tr R.C., 25 Apr 45)

682. Westmr R. (Mot) continued their advance during the early morning of 25 Apr. By first light, "A" Coy reached the junction of the Polderweg and the Lipskerweg at (544151) and "C" Coy the junction of the Lipskerweg and the Nieuwe Dijk at (561156). Progress was slow due to the lack of cover and a very brilliant moon. "B" Coy completed the relief of "C" Coy of the Irish and took up position in Nieuwolda (4917), with a platoon pushed forward to a group of buildings 400 yards south of Kopaf at (480180). At 1130 hours further progress was made and "A" and "C" Coys were established 200 yards south of the junction of Nieuwe Dijk and Dwars Weg at (545172) by 1300 hours. Tactical B.H.Q. moved to Munrikeveen (548161) in the early afternoon, and almost immediately drew enemy shell fire, as did "C" Coy H.Q. No casualties were suffered. Movement was restricted during daylight and nothing further occurred during 25 Apr. (W.D., Westmr R., 25 Apr; W.D., H.Q. 11 Cdn Inf Bde Appx 7, Ops Log, serial 1, 25 Apr 45)

683. Perth R was relatively inactive on 26 Apr. The delay was caused by cratering in the roads, especially at (399313) on the Godlinze - Holwierde road, which prevented the supporting 8 N.B.H. tanks from getting forward. Plans were made to clear the line of the dyke from Hoogwatum (433335) to (435324) and from there to the road at Uiteinde (428312). The operation was to take place in two phases. In Phase I, "D" Coy with one troop of tanks from 8 N.B.H. was to clear as far as Hoogwatum while a platoon from "C" Coy cut the dyke at (435324). On the successful completion of this action, Phase II was to see the advance of "D" Coy, through "C" Coy's Platoon, to secure the road at Uiteinde. (W.D., Perth R., 26 Apr 45). 8 Cdn Fd Regt was to provide, on call, concentrations on all known enemy positions. 109 Brit H.A.A. Regt, which had just come under command 5 Cdn Armd Div, was to engage the guns in the Nansum (4329) area from 2200 hours to 0200 hours. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 62, 26 Apr 45). Poor visibility caused the cancelling of a bombing attack on the coastal guns north of Delfzijl. Shelling continued throughout the day over most of the Perth sector, resulting in one killed and seven wounded. (W.D. Perth R., 26 Apr 45)

684. Throughout 26 Apr B.C.D. carried on in their holding role. They continued a plan of rotating the dismounted personnel they had on the ground in Appingedam and reported heavy shelling over their whole area. This shelling from large calibre guns from Borkum or Emden was very effective in flattening houses completely. (W.D. 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 26 Apr 45). To assist 11 Cdn

Inf bde in its battle for Delfzijl additional artillery support arrived. This consisted of six (105-mm) tanks from G.G.H.G., which deployed in 8 Cdn Fd Regt's area and went under its command. It was intended to use these guns, with hollow charge shells, against the enemy concrete emplacements. In addition, other (75 millimetre) tanks, also from G.G.H.G., concentrated near Groningen to await orders to move up also for employment as artillery. The remaining battery of 17 Cdn Fd Regt arrived in the regimental area and went into action. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serials 25, 29 and 68)

685. Patrolling occupied the attention of Ir R.C. during the early morning of 26 Apr. Contact was made on the Slochteren - Delfzijl railway at (478226), and Meedhuizen (4421) was found to be clear. Later in the morning Lt-Col L.H.C. Payne held an orders group in which he detailed the plans for the day's fighting. All companies except "B" Coy were to advance. At 1400 hours "C" Sqn, 8 N.B.H. joined the Irish, and half an hour later "A" Coy moved off. In spite of opposition and heavy shelling, it reached its objective, Zomerdijk (487200), by 1630 hours. "C" Coy followed "A" Coy, and while passing through came under fire and suffered casualties, but gained its new position, buildings on the Nieuwe Kloosterlaan, 1500 yards north of Zomerdijk at (485215), by 1800 hours. "D" Coy then started out and, although running into considerable opposition, was firm in its allotted area, the railway crossing over the Wester Weg at (470221), by 2300 hours. Shelling continued throughout the battalion locality, but, the situation being in hand the companies were dug in securely by midnight. (W.D., Ir R.C., 26 Apr 45)

686. While continuing across the open fields towards the sea, "C" Coy Westmr R. (Mot) became involved with a strong German patrol 500 yards north-west of the intersection of the Dwars Weg and Hoofd Weg at (549179) in the early hours of 26 Apr, and a short fight ensued. The enemy was driven off in disorder, leaving four prisoners behind. A reconnaissance patrol, ordered by brigade, made their way to Scheeveklaap (488178) to investigate a crossing at this point. They returned with the report that it was strongly held and that the site was not suitable for bridging. At a morning conference at brigade headquarters, permission was granted to withdraw "B" Coy from Nieuwolde (4917) as the projected Irish advance would take them across this Coy's front. The Brigadier's plan directed that Lt-Col Corbould get two sub-units North of Woldendorp (5220) as soon as possible. During the afternoon "C" Coy then pressing on towards the sea, was shelled and suffered some casualties in area (5518). The commanding officer then made his plan as follows. "A" Coy was to move into Woldendorp from the south, "C" Coy was to come back from the exposed right flank and follow "A" Coy, and finally "B" Coy was to get around Woldendorp from the north-west and so outflank it. Support was to be supplied by 17 Cdn Fd Regt and a troop of 8 N.B.H. The attack got under way during the afternoon, and "A" Coy occupied positions on the Oostwolde - Woldendorp road 300 yards north-west of the Middendijk at (534186), waiting there until joined by "C" Coy at 2300 hours. The day ended with heavy firing from the 12.8 centimetre flak guns on the Reider Spit (5623), but casualties remained surprisingly light. (W.D., Westmr R. (Mot), 26 Apr 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 25, 26 Apr 45)

687. At 0035 hours 27 Apr Perth R. began to carry out the plan as outlined (para 675). "D" Coy reached its objective on the dyke at (433334) at 0220 hours. Forty minutes later the platoon from "C" Coy dug itself in firmly at (434320) and was supported by one anti-tank gun and a Wasp flame thrower, thus

successfully completing Phase I of the operation. Phase II was got under way immediately, "D" Coy passing through the "C" Coy platoon towards its objective. At around 0515 hours the enemy became more active. From then on small arms fire grew more intense. 8 N.B.H. tanks were called on for support; with their help Perth R. reached Uiteinde by 0618 hours. Resistance in the area did not cease, one tank being knocked out. The company commander asked for more armour, and called down artillery fire on a self-propelled gun north east of Nansum at (439297). The enemy continued to react very strongly and between 0900 hours and 1000 hours 71 prisoners were taken by our troops. 8 N.B.H. tanks in the area of Uiteinde and between Kleine Nes and Bierum (417316) were subjected to heavy shell fire. This fire was kept up and one tank was eventually destroyed. The tank commander stated that he might have to withdraw to save his vehicles, which were very exposed. "D" Coy again called artillery fire on some 50 Germans seen forming up around the dyke north-east of Nansum at (440301), but it failed to disperse them. At 1145 hours Lt-Col Andrew called an orders group to formulate another plan as Phase II was now complete. Enemy shelling continued the rest of the day and was particularly heavy in "D" Coy area, where the Artillery Observation post was set on fire. (W.D. Perth Regt, 27 Apr 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serials 2, 11, 18, 22, 27 Apr 45)

688. Meanwhile, Brigadier Johnson had outlined further tasks for Perth R. The regiment was instructed to seize the line Holwierde (4229) - Nansum (4329) in order to prepare the way for the direct assault on Delfzijl. C.B. Highrs were informed that they would be given the latter task. This represented Phase II of the Brigade Plan (see para 674). C.B. Highrs were told to be ready to pass through the Perth R. as soon as the Nansum - Holwierde line fell. (Ibid, serial 19, 27 Apr 45)

689. In the early morning of the 27 Apr a patrol from the Recce Tp and "C" Sqn, B.C.D. proceeded to (416282) on foot. It reported enemy movement around the tile works at (417282) and 8 Cdn Fd Regt was called on for fire, which was put down at 0345 hours. Shelling in Appingedam continued spasmodically during the day. A patrol to Marsum (4227) was ordered, and at 2130 hours it set out. Without enemy interference it reached a position close to the village where it was able to observe and hear movement. The serenity of the night was rudely disturbed by the sudden descent of a counter-mortar concentration in the vicinity of Marsum. Ignorant of brigade's intention in this matter the patrol made a hurried withdrawal in some exasperation. There were, however, no casualties. Enemy shelling ceased at midnight. (W.D., B.C.D., 27 Apr 45)

690. Ir R.C. was inactive during 27 Apr and made no further moves. All companies were shelled. Lt-Col Payne gave out his plans for continuing the battalion's advance, which was to begin at 0100 hours 28th. (W.D., Ir R.C. 27 Apr 45)

691. At 0240 hours 27 Apr the **Westminsters** once again drove forward to complete their task of seizing Woldendorp (5220). Under cover of an artillery programme and the fire from a troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks, "A" Coy, its scout platoon engaging with rapid fire, swept across the remaining 1500 yards of open ground in brilliant fashion. So completely did it surprise the enemy, he did not realize what was happening, and before he could recover, "A" Coy was firmly established in the northern part of the town (529203). The score was many German dead and 30 prisoners taken, to no casualties for our troops. One company, however, had insufficient numbers to occupy the whole of the town, so the

Germans returned and got back into Woldendorp, thus cutting off "A" Coy for some time. Meanwhile, "B" Coy had established itself at (512195) the junction of the Heem Weg and Munsterlaan. The Commanding Officer then ordered "B" Coy to continue north-west of the town and "C" Coy to join "A" Coy and assist it in mopping up. Because the Westministers were now under fire from the heavy flak guns on Reider Spit at a range of only from four to 5000 yards movement by daylight was extremely hazardous. Therefore, nothing further happened during daylight hours. At about 2030 hours all companies reported counter-attacks coming in, but only on "A" Coy did one actually develop. After a busy half hour, the attack was broken up, "A" Company using every available weapon including some captured ones. Great assistance was given by 17 Cdn Fd Regt and the supporting troop of 8 N.B.H. (W.D., Westmr R., (Mot) 27 Apr 45)

692. Meanwhile, Brigadier Johnson came up to the Westminster headquarters to outline the progress of the rest of the Brigade. Casualties had been heavy and progress very slow, especially in the Perth area. The Westministers were told that it was imperative that they get on to the sea as quickly as possible, and try to knock out the guns on the spit which were now within deadly range. It was also desired to prevent any large-scale evacuation from Termunterzijl (5323), and, by squeezing the pocket from the right to take some of the pressure off the units working on the left. Consequently, "C" Coy began its attack on Woldendorp at 2220 hours. The Germans fought well from good positions and at midnight the Westministers were still fighting their way forward to try to join "A" Coy. (W.D., Westmr Regt, 27 Apr 45; 11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops log, op cit, serial 12, 19, 28, 44, 48, 27 Apr 45)

693. In the early hours of 28 Apr the Perths pushed out once more into the wet darkness to carry out their part of the completion of Phase I of the Brigade plan (see para 685). Company tasks were as follows; "C" Coy was ordered to take out the enemy guns north-east of Nansum at (439299), "D" Coy to dig in around some buildings south-east of Klein Wierum (436307), "A" Coy to attack and hold Nansum (4329), while "B" Coy maintained a firm base in Holwierde (4229). Some of the difficulties of ensuing operations can be appreciated when it is realized that the three attacking companies were now working within 1000 yards of the German guns on the coast, which were well protected by small arms and strongly emplaced in concrete. Once sighted by these guns there would be very little possibility of taking cover. "C" Coy started out, but by 0300 hours was in trouble as a mine field had been encountered in the area of Gaarbindeweir (432318). Several anti-personnel mines exploded, wounding the company commander and killing one of the platoon commanders. A patrol sent forward to try to discover a gap returned at first light, unsuccessful. "C" Coy was then ordered to withdraw. With the coming of daylight enemy shelling became severe, as anticipated, and several casualties resulted. "D" Coy began its advance at 1515 hours to take positions east and south-east of Kleinwierum at (440310) and (435307), meeting slight opposition at first. The company called for artillery fire and got on. By 1630 hours opposition had stiffened and enemy gun fire became intense. Artillery was asked for again, and was given. "D" Coy was now approaching its objective practically under the muzzles of the enemy coast battery, but smoke brought down by the mortars provided cover. At 1750 hours "D" Coy had one platoon at (435307), which took 20 prisoners. More smoke was called for at 1815 hours, and the final objective (439310) was reached at 1945 hours. "D" Coy now firmed up and dug in. (W.D., Perth R., 28 Apr 45)

694. Meanwhile, "C" Coy had been ordered to follow "D" Coy, and now was instructed to pass through and carry out its original task. (W.D., Perth R., 28 Apr 45). This was not an easy one, because it was found very difficult to knock out the German guns. These could be neutralized by artillery fire only as long as the guns were actually firing. Thus, when the fire had to lift in order to allow the infantry to get on to the objective, they could retaliate. "C" Coy solved this however, literally "leaning on" an artillery concentration on the enemy battery, thus appearing amongst the enemy gunners before they had time to make use of their numerous small arms. (AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA Folio I, 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). Report on Ops, 20 Apr - 2 May 45). By 2245 hours it had overrun the guns and taken 177 prisoners. This operation was carried out with dash and skill, and a very sticky position fell with comparatively few casualties. "A" Coy, which had concentrated in Bierum (4132), was ordered to advance through "D" Coy and attack Nansum (4329). They were pushing on as 28 Apr came to a close. (W.D. Perth R., 28 Apr 45)

695. B.C.D. spent 28 Apr preparing for their attack on Marsum (4227) which had been ordered at the Brigadier's conference in the morning. This was to go in as soon as the Perths had completed their operations for the day. Enemy shelling eased off somewhat, and, apart from a routine patrol to Krewerd (4029), and calling down artillery fire on targets on their front, there was nothing further to report. (W.D., B.C.D., 28 Apr 45)

696. After a day's inactivity, Ir R.C. moved on again with the intention of seizing the town of Oterdum (5024). (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 17, 27 Apr 45). Lt-Col Payne decided to advance with two companies up, "A" Coy to move up along the dyke of the Terneuter Canal, and "C" Coy directed toward Heveskes (4824). "C" Coy proceeded according to plan, and, in spite of meeting considerable opposition and having to pass through some wire, reached (488234), 500 yards from Heveskes at first light, taking 23 prisoners. (W.D., Ir R.C., 28 Apr 45). "A" Coy on the other hand, was not so successful. Proceeding along the dyke, between 0445 and 0530 hours it became involved in a serious small arms battle with the Germans. The company position at this time was obscure but was reported in a general area (520220), 500 yards south-west of Wartumerklap. The enemy were occupying positions dug in behind wire obstacles which had not shown up on the air photographs. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serials 12 and 18, 28 Apr 45). In fact, the opinion of Ir R.C. was that the Germans had allowed "A" Coy to come in close, and had then sprung a prepared trap. One platoon escaped the encirclement and fought its way back to the original company position, but it was apparently unable to give any coherent picture of what was happening. (W.D., Ir R.C., 28 Apr 45). By 0800 hours there began to come in reports which indicated that "A" Coy had run into the main German defensive line. It was engaged by mortar and heavy machine gun fire, as well as the smaller infantry weapons, from the vicinity of the canal at Wartumerklap (524226). Enemy light machine guns were active on both sides of the canal, and "A" Coy could make no further headway. Meanwhile, "C" Coy had firmed up and reported a large crater in the road at De Pomperij (487225), on which the pioneer platoon got busy. "A" Coy was finally located at (522225), 200 yards south-west of Wartumerklap at noon, but communications were unsatisfactory due to wireless batteries running down. In the afternoon a patrol with new batteries was sent forward. Due to the heavy machine gun fire, it could not make contact, indicating that the company was still surrounded. A feasible route for tanks having been

discovered, 8 N.B.H. prepared to go forward to support "C" Coy. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Lof, op cit, serials 24, 41, 63, 70, 28 Apr 45)

697. At the Brigade morning conference Ir R.C. was told to get assistance to its "A" Coy and to organize a reserve. (Ibid, serial 30). In consequence of these instructions Lt-Col Payne ordered "A" Coy to remain where it was and "B" Coy to pass through and go on to Borgsweer (5123). The platoon which had got back from "A" Coy was to go along with "B" Coy and drop off at its own sub-unit on reaching that area. (Ibid, serial 69). "B" Coy got ready to make its advance and was to move off sometime between 2300 hours and midnight. However, news of counter-attacks against "A" Coy came in as the day ended, and since the situation was not cleared up until later, it became necessary for the Irish to make a new plan and regroup. (Ibid, serials 83 and 86)

698. In the early hours of 28 Apr, the two Westmr R. (Mot) companies had joined in Woldendorp (5220), "C" reaching "A" at 0600 hours. Together they began the task of clearing the town. This was delayed by a counter-attack, which was beaten off with heavy casualties to the enemy in killed, wounded and prisoners. The job of clearing the town went on all morning and was not complete until 1200 hours. (W.D., Westmr R., (Mot) 27 and 28 Apr 45). Once again, the nearness of the enemy guns and lack of cover postponed movement until after last light. Shelling was severe in Woldendorp (5220), many houses being completely razed. At 2115 hours "B" Coy left its old location and began the task of outflanking Woldendorp. The troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks and the Wasp flame-throwers accompanying the infantry found the muddy tracks very difficult to move over. Craters and blows caused considerable delay, holding up the advance until they could be filled or by-passed. "A" Coy had been ordered to strike out north of Woldendorp to take buildings and the road junction at (536217). It tried to do this, but every attempt was blocked by extremely accurate fire from the heavy flak guns on Reider spit. Because they were beyond the range of 17 Cdn Fd Regt's 25-pounders, nothing much could be done to neutralize them and the only guns capable of reaching them were the six 105-mm tanks of 8 N.B.H. These weapons were unable to fire rapidly enough to produce a concentration sufficiently heavy to prevent the German gunners from working their pieces. 28 Apr came to a close with "B" Coy pushing on slowly, and "A" Coy pinned down at the North edge of Woldendorp. (W.D., Westmr R., 28 Apr 45; 5 Cdn Armd Div/RCA, Report on Ops, op cit, 17 Cdn Fd Regt)

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CLEARING THE DELFZIJL POCKET: PHASE II, 29 APR 45

699. At the morning conference of 29 Apr 45 the unit representatives received from Brigadier Johnston orders to begin Phase II of the Delfzijl operations. Perth R. was to continue its job of consolidating the line from Holwierde to Nansum. C.B. Highrs were told to stand by, ready to relieve the Perth R. as soon as the latter had completed its task. When this relief had been carried out, the Cape Bretons were instructed to launch an attack to seize Uitwierde (4427) as a jumping off place for their assault

* Reference maps as for para 659; also Appx "H".

on Delfzijl. This assault was to take place on the night following the fall of Uitwierde. B.C.D. were ordered to capture Marsum in order to allow the sappers to conduct bridging operations at Holwierde. The timing of this attack, like that of C.B.H., was to depend on the Perths' seizure of their objectives. There was no change in plans for Ir R.C. or the Westmr R. (Mot). The Squadron of 8 N.B.H., now with Perth R. was to continue with C.B. Highrs when they began their attack. Finally, G.G.H.G's 105-mm tanks were instructed to carry out neutralizing shoots against the flak guns on Reider spit. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Op Log, op cit, serial 36, 29 Apr 45)

700. The morning of the 29th dawned fair and the Perths continued on towards Nansum (4329). At 0145 hours "A" Coy was engaged about 800 yards ahead of "D" Coy's position, by small arms fire from north of the town. But reported that it would deal with this and get on. During this, the company reached Bosch (433300) and took 70 prisoners. At this point, however, ammunition ran low, whereupon the company commander decided to hold his present position until stocks could be replenished. About 15 minutes after this decision had been made there developed an enemy counter-attack which, under the circumstances, could have been very serious. In spite of these difficulties, the company held its ground by the use of captured enemy weapons and the help of close support fire by 8 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). At 0145 hours a large number of Germans were sighted on the Nansum - Holwierde road and "A" Coy, remaining alert and aggressive, called down artillery fire on them with good results. After 0900 hours, "A" Coy went off the air and its situation became obscure. In order to maintain contact, a patrol was sent from "D" Coy to find out what was happening. Around midday "C" Coy observed enemy south of Nansum and along the coast north-east of Uitwierde and asked for air burst. This was brought down effectively. By 1430 hours, a new supply of ammunition had been got forward to "A" Coy, which pushed on again. Aided by artillery fire on Nansum, it entered the village against some opposition. In the meantime, "D" Coy, with tank support, began the job of clearing the area between Nansum and Holwierde. The day's action came swiftly to a close. "D" Coy completed its task and by 1700 hours contacted "A" Coy in Nansum the latter being firm by this time. Starting around 2145 hours, C.B. Highrs began their relief of the Perth R. with the two "C" Cos exchanging positions. Perth R. withdrew into brigade reserve, carried out a regrouping, and ended the day with the companies as follows: "C" Coy at Bierum, "A" Coy at Losdorp, "D" Coy at Holwierde, and "B" Coy at Spijk. (W.D., Perth R., 29 Apr 45)

701. B.C.D. in Appingedam received their usual amount of shelling during the day. At 2015 hours they left their area to take Marsum (4227). For this job they formed a small battle group composed of the reconnaissance troop supported by two troops of tanks from "C" Sqn. After shelling the village liberally with tank guns, the group entered Marsum and discovered that it was already clear of enemy. As the attackers began to dig in about the perimeter, the enemy started to shell them quite heavily. This continued, and at 2100 hours the open-topped light tanks were sent back to Oosterwijtwerd (3827) in order to preserve them from possible damage. Later, dismounted personnel from "A" and "B" Sqns were sent to Marsum to help the reconnaissance troop firm up. A troop of tanks from "C" Sqn proceeded to Holwierde and contacted the company of the Perth R. at 2157 hours, remaining there with the infantry during the night to strengthen their defences. Although enemy harassing fire continued until midnight,

no further action was reported for the day. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45)

702. By midnight on 29 Apr Ir R.C.'s situation had cleared up somewhat. "A" Coy, after two enemy counter-attacks, had withdrawn to its former area at Zomerdijk (491200). Lt-Col Payne made a new plan, which was as follows: "B" Coy was directed to take the Wartumerklap area (524226) followed by "D" Coy, which would then pass through to seize Borgsweer (5122) and (518233), and "A" Coy was to take over "D" Coy's position. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 6, 29 Apr 45). By 0700 hours, "B" Coy had reached (522224), without casualties and took 12 prisoners. (W.D. Ir R.C., 29 Apr 45). At 0630 hours the Westminsters reported contact with the Irish at (524229), and soon after the Irish stated that they were sending a platoon forward to (522224). (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serials 26, 27, 29 Apr 45). At 1050 hours "D" Coy reported a body of enemy troops about 300 strong moving on the Weiwerd (4724) - Heveskes (4824) road. The Germans were engaged by artillery and machine gun fire with some results. (Ibid, serial 46). In the early afternoon civilians reported that Oterdum (5024) had been abandoned and that the garrison had gone to Termunterzijl (5323) to wait evacuation to Emden (6530). Consequently, fire was brought down on both of these places and "C" Coy despatched a platoon to investigate Oterdum. (Ibid, serials 52, 53 and 63). In the meantime, "A" Coy had moved off to relieve "D" Coy in accordance with the battalion plan as detailed earlier in this paragraph. (Ibid, serial 46). Due to the opposition being less than expected, "B" Coy with one platoon of "D" Coy under command was ordered to take Borgsweer (5122). The last report from the Irish on 29 came in at 2400 hours and stated that "D" Coy had begun moving at 2230 hours to follow up behind "B" Coy. (Ibid, serials 63 and 81).

703. During the early morning hours of 29 Apr, "B" Coy (Westminsters) kept moving slowly, taking 42 prisoners and a number of enemy weapons (W.D., Westmr R. (Mot) 29 Apr 45). By 0100 hours it had reached a point 500 yards south of Botterij (516205); there a tank, a flame thrower and a carrier bogged down, causing further delay. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log op cit, serial 5, 29 Apr 45). "A" Coy was still pinned down at the northern edge of Woldendorp (5320), the 105-millimetre tanks being unable to neutralize the flak guns on the spit. By 0410 hours "B" Coy had passed through a wire obstacle at (518213) and firmed up just south of Wartumerklap, whence it contacted "B" Coy of the Irish at 0630 hours. (Ibid, serials 17 and 26). The Commanding Officer made a new plan entailing a two-company attack with "A" Coy on the right and "B" Coy on the left. "A" Coy was to pass through "B" Coy, swing right to (536218) and on to Termunterzijl (5422). "B" Coy, meanwhile, was to capture Termunterzijl (5323), and "C" Coy was to remain firm in Woldendorp and patrol to the east as far as possible. (Ibid, serial 82; W.D., Westmr R. (Mot) 29 Apr 45). By midnight, "A" Coy had passed through "B" Coy and was well on its way. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 82)

704. During the night of 29 Apr C.B. Highrs completed their relief of Perth R. and prepared to launch their attack on Delfzijl. "A" Coy was the first to move and took up position at (423309) at 0245 hours. The day was quiet but the pioneers were kept busy clearing mines and doing general road repair in the vicinity of "A" Coy. (W.D. C.B. Highrs, 29 Apr 45). By 2300 hours the remainder of the battalion came into the line. "C" Coy took over at (439302), and "D" Coy at Holwierde, while "B" Coy remained in Bierum (4132). (Ibid, Apr 9, 28 and 29 Apr 45).

In his plan for the battalion attack Lt-Col R.B. Somerville had divided the operation into four phases. Phase I was to consist of an advance, with "A" and "B" Cosys up, to seize the dyke area at (445282) and Uitwierde (4427) respectively. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit, Docket III, C.B. Highrs; W.D. C.B. Highrs, Appx 9, 30 Apr 45). In Phase II, "C" Coy was to pass through "A" and "B" Cosys and capture the gun positions at (455279). When this was completed, Phase III was to consist of "D" Coy going through "C" Coy and taking more guns at Delfzijl harbour (463270). In Phase IV, the railway station (549270) was to be taken and the town mopped up. The start line was detailed as the road running from Holwierde to Nanum in square (4329); H hour was to depend on the completion of the Perth's relief. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Report on Ops, op cit)

705. At 0110 hours 30 Apr the attack began, "A" and "B" Cosys passing through "D" Coy. "B" Coy reported slight opposition at 0200, hours shortly afterwards taking approximately 200 prisoners. At 0245 hours, it arrived on its objective (445282) without much trouble. "A" Coy had an equally easy time; it reached Uitwierde (4427) at 0300 hours, capturing 40 prisoners on the way. The total morning count was about 400. The Commanding Officer then proceeded with the consolidation by sending two guns from the anti-tank platoon to each of the forward companies and ordering 8 N.B.H. tanks forward. No. 3 Tp from "A" Sqn arrived at Uitwierde in time to be of assistance to the infantry. The following excerpt from an 8 N.B.H. report on operations, describing an engagement involving No. 3 Tp, serves to illustrate the strength of the German positions.

During the firming up a large pill box was engaged by a 17 pr tank. Though many hits were scored by AP the firing continued. After one round of SABOT ammunition was used, the white flag was shown and no further firing was observed to come from the pill box. Subsequent examination showed the AP rounds had penetrated a distance of $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet and still had not broken through the reinforced concrete walls. The SABOT round had hit high on the pill box and had caused the concrete to break loose on the inside of the 7 foot thick walls.

(AEF: 45/5 Cdn Armd Bde/C/D, Folio 5, Report on Ops 5 Cdn Armd Regt, 25 Apr 45 to 5 May 45)

"A" and "B" Cosys were instructed to patrol forward to try to regain contact. Two patrols came back in at 0600 hours, reporting that they had gone some distance without being able to find any enemy. Word was received from Brigade headquarters that the C.B. Highrs were to wait until dark before beginning the remaining phases of the operation. During the morning the Pioneer Pl, supported by the carriers, set out to sweep the road to "B" Coy but mistook the route and found themselves in Biesum (4427), being somewhat disturbed to discover that it abounded with grey-clad soldiery. They recovered quickly, however, and, after an exchange of unpleasantness, withdrew in triumph with 23 prisoners for the loss of one killed and two wounded. Phase II began at 2200 hours, when "C" Coy crossed the start line. It very shortly ran into a mine field and the pioneers got to work immediately to clear a path. This was a tedious task, and some shells began to fall in the area. At 2300 hours contact was again made with the enemy. A quick attack resulted in 49 more prisoners being added to the Cape Breton's bag. At midnight 30 Apr "C" Coy was still advancing slowly. (W.D., C.B. Highrs, 30 Apr 45)

706. On 30 Apr B.C.D. were ordered to extend right and left of their present position and to hold the line from a point (425244), on the Eemskanaal south of Opwierde, through (423262), Marsum (4227), to the road junction (423292), 500 yards south of Holwierde. They were also instructed to clear the part of Appingedam south of the Damster river. The starting time for this task not being given, it did not take place until 31 Apr. As shelling in Appingedam continued "B" Sqn's dismounted troops were moved to try to avoid it. There was nothing else of importance to report for the day. (W.D., 9 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Apr 45)

707. At dawn on 30 Apr "B" Coy Ir R.C. went into Borgsweer (5123) against no opposition. "D" Coy then passed through and occupied Oterdum (5024) by noon, again finding that the enemy had withdrawn. At 1630 hours "C" Coy struck out for Heveskes (4824) and by 1800 hours established itself in the village, still without enemy reaction. The Germans were moving as quickly as they could towards Delfzijl, and the pocket was rapidly shrinking in area. "A" Coy having been reorganized joined "C" Coy in Heveskes (4824), and both were consolidated by last light. So ended the day's activities for the Irish. (W.D., Ir R.C., 30 Apr 45)

708. In the early hours of 30 Apr "B" Coy Westminsters set out into wild rainy darkness towards the port of Ternunterzijl (5323). As the fields had become very marshy, the going was not easy, and in the first light of dawn "B" Coy found itself about 1000 yards from its objective. A determined dash across the open ended with the company quickly establishing itself in the town and sending patrols forward to the beach. "A" Coy had somewhat more trouble, running into a strong enemy position at (536217). It quickly dealt with this, however, and reached Ternunten (5422) shortly after "B" Coy had got on to its objective. By 0600 hours a troop of 8 N.B.H. tanks had made its way forward to the leading troops and the task of mopping up began. Ternunterzijl (5323) yielded a large haul of enemy troops and equipment. It had been set up as an evacuation point, and small boats had been gathered for that purpose. There was no fighting and the Germans surrendered in groups of 30 or more. By noon the town was clear, as was also Ternunten (5422). The day's bag amounted to over 500. Meanwhile, "C" Coy had started its patrolling activity. A carrier patrol was sent to investigate the Johannes Kerkhoven Polder (5520) and then work north on foot towards Reider Spit. Foot patrols left Woldendorp at the same time to follow a parallel axis to the same objective. By 1600 hours "C" Coy had moved up to area (555224) and was preparing to advance against Reider Spit. (11 Cdn Inf Bde Ops Log, op cit, serial 59, 30 Apr 45). It took six prisoners but it soon became apparent that one company could not take the spit unaided. From its positions "C" Coy was practically peering down the muzzles of the 12.8 centimetre flak guns, being within 1000 yards of them. The only approach was narrow, well wired, and mined. In the words of the Westminster's diary:

In these positions the troops were less than 1000 yards from the German guns and were even able to watch the gunners loading and firing.

(W.D., Westmr R., 30 Apr 45)

Artillery support was limited to the six 105-mm tanks and one 7.2-in howitzer. These guns were insufficient to put down enough neutralizing fire. In view of this and the exposed position now occupied by "C" Coy, Lt-Col Corbould decided to cancel its attack and withdrew it to the line of the canal and dyke in (5521).