

fell on "D" Coy Alq R., which was placed under Lt-Col Coffin's command. By noon the infantry firmly held the road leading into Osterscheps (1402) and the two main crossroads in the village each with one company. Later, a third sub-unit ("D" Coy) was moved into Osterscheps, while "A" Coy remained in rear to secure the line of communication to the bridge. Patrolling increased as the day went on; although little reconnaissance was possible to the west and north, the battalion's scouts did manage to contact Linc & Welld R. on the right and look over the ground to the east. The first bridge between Osterscheps and the railway was found undamaged but the main crossing place over the Aue stream was demolished, although it was reported that infantry would be able to cross. This, in itself, was important news, and it all made considerable difference to 10 Brigade's plans. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, A. & S.H. of C., 22 Apr 45)

448. Linc & Welld R. spent the first half of 22 Apr patrolling, probing the enemy's line and getting "C" Coy across the large crater which blocked the road ahead of it. Then, at 1100 hours, the commanding officer received orders from Brigadier Jefferson to attack and capture the high ground at Sud (1502). The battalion at once began preparations for this task, which was due to start at 1655 hours. At H hour, the divisional artillery opened up together with the machine guns and heavy mortars of 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, and "A" Coy moved eastwards from "C" Coy's positions towards the Vehne river. Immediately the infantry got into the open it came under a terrific volume of fire; a thick smoke screen was put down in the hope that it might ease things but it proved useless and "A" Coy suffered very heavily. "B" Coy was then sent in on the right to take out the offending opposition but was itself pinned to the ground. A serious situation now developed, both sub-units were completely neutralized and no further movement either back to the shelter of the railway line or forward was possible until after dark. The enemy stepped up his fire fight as night descended and then launched a fierce counter-attack. This was dealt with favourably by artillery and the medium machine guns of the New Brunswick Rangers, but it became clear that operations on that particular flank would not be at all easy. Lt-Col Coleman therefore ordered "A" and "B" Coys to withdraw back to the railroad tracks. (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R.; H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Apr 45; also Operations of Linc & Welld R., 31 Mar - 6 May 1945, op cit, para 20)

449. An extensive patrol programme was laid on for the next day and long before first light contact with the enemy was established at several points across the front. As the hours passed, however, it became apparent that the Germans were thinning out their line, for "B" Coy found the road and railway crossing (151021) undefended. This fact urged Lt-Col Coleman to attempt a crossing of the stream on the main axis and at about 1620 hours a platoon of "B" Coy dashed over the obstacle against light opposition, taking 27 prisoners. A small bridgehead was quickly formed and engineer parties were rushed up to clear the many obstacles on the route. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 23 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 22 Apr 45, serials 16, 57, 60, 66, 69, 70, 81, 85; 23 Apr 45, serial 2)

450. Meanwhile, over on the left flank, A. & S.H. of C., though depleted in numbers (after the heavy casualties suffered during the past two days) had held its ground around Osterscheps and probed out from its firm base to the west, east and north. The Alq R. company under Lt-Col Coffin's command was brought up and pushed eastwards from the main Argyle positions to seize the demolished but still usable bridge. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 23 Apr 45). Luck was on the Canadians' side, for "D" Coy Alq R.

managed to cross the partly broken bridge and firm up on the east side. (W.D., Alq R., 23 Apr 45). The time had arrived for a readjustment of plans and at a brigade orders group later that evening Brigadier Jefferson told his battalion commanders what was required of them. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 23 Apr 45). The Argyles were to strike to the north to capture two road junctions (142037 and 145036) approximately 1000 yards above Osterscheps (1402). The Algonquins, having moved up into the eastern end of Osterscheps, were to drive through "D" Coy's present bridgehead and head eastwards. Simultaneously Lt-Col Coleman's troops would continue to exert pressure up their original axis and against the right flank. Each thrust would have the support of the tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt besides a goodly portion of the divisional artillery. (Ibid, and W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C., Alq R., 23 Apr 45; 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 23 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 23 Apr 45, serial 56)

451. Shortly before midnight 23/24 Apr Alq R. and Linc & Welld R. moved in to attack. The Algonquins were not particularly lucky at first for they ran into their own artillery fire and suffered 12 casualties. This caused a great deal of confusion but by first light the attack proper got under way. In short order the men from Northern Ontario had secured the bridge, the road and rail crossing east of the river, a second bridge over a smaller stream east of the railway, and the houses in Edeweicht beyond the next road fork (1502). (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., 24 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 4, 5, 8, 9, 10; AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II, Folio 4, "The Final Punch", Ops Apr-May 1945, Alq R. by Maj L.C. Monk, para 25). Without trouble Linc & Welld R. was able to contact Alq R. before 0600 hours. Thereafter "B" Coy went about consolidating its new gains along the main axis on the Algonquin's southern flank. At this stage a strong force of Linc & Welld R. was sent to tap out the right flank but to no good purpose; the enemy again brought down a hail of fire to halt any further advance in this direction. Lt-Col Coleman's next step was to order "A" Coy to pass through as soon as "B" Coy had formed a solid front. During the afternoon the Typhoons took advantage of the clear weather and added their weight to our side of the battle. Excellent results were obtained, two German self-propelled guns being knocked out. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 24 Apr 45). A fierce exchange of shell and mortar fire continued well into the late evening. By that time "B" Coy had swung to the south-east along the northern bank of the Vehne stream and, with the help of a tank which Alq R. had available, managed to drive the Germans from their positions in the houses (155020) along the banks of the obstacle. (Ibid). There now followed a series of patrols to probe the routes to the north and east. This programme terminated at about midnight when "A" Coy was thrust forward to reach its objective (158025) on the high ground at Sud (1502) by 0100 hours 25 Apr (ibid). The infantry rested here and at first light, 25 Apr, a section of carriers was sent up for exploitation along the right of the main road (ibid).

452. By far the sternest opposition on this day was encountered by A. & S.H. of C. Lt-Col Coffin's troops ("B" Coy) experienced a fairly heavy counter-attack shortly after dawn on 24 Apr when the enemy, taking full advantage of the thick mist, infiltrated into "B" Coy's position. For a while the situation appeared grim, but steadily the "Jocks" cleared out the intruders and restored peace within the area. The enemy, however, was loth to let our troops off so easily and proceeded to drench the battalion sector with shell and mortar fire, using, among other

missiles, 21-cm shells. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 24 Apr 45). Nevertheless, despite this retaliation "B" Coy began its advance northwards at 1015 hours, supported by a troops of Sherman tanks. The regiment's War Diary tells us that progress was very slow due to consistent machine gun fire, but by 1420 hours the leading troops were some 800 yards up the east road parallel to the Aue river. Here the infantry was subjected to a very severe bombardment and Lt-Col Coffin ordered his men to pull back slightly rather than accept too many casualties. Meanwhile "A" Coy had sallied out from Osterscheps (1402) towards the first crossroads west of the village. They too ran into terrific opposition and were forced to dig in and hold around the first bend (136030) in the main west road. "D" Coy, under continuous fire for most of the day, also tried to leave the village, but it too was stopped while only a short distance along the road to Danikhorst (1305), (ibid, also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 24 Apr 45, serials 25, 66)

453. It must be noted that for the past few days the enemy's shelling and mortaring had generally been out of all proportion to the strength of his infantry on the ground. There is, of course, a natural explanation for this, and Major G.L. Cassidy, D.S.O., gives a very fair account of it in his history of the Algonquins.

As he fell back on his supply dumps his ammunition was ample, and rather than lose it, he kept up a ceaseless rain of shells and bombs. Mines of a new type made their first appearance, taken from the naval arsenals around Wilhelmshaven, the port we were by now gravely threatening. These mines consisted either of the warheads of torpedoes or of the large-calibre naval shells, deeply buried in the soft shoulders of the roads, and exploded by the customary pressure devices. The same mechanisms were used for cratering roads, and a real crater they made indeed. As we advanced, one noticed that almost every roadside tree had been prepared for demolition, with a deep notch already cut. In some instances, the gun-cotton packages were already wired near the notch, ready to explode and bring the trees crashing down over the roadway.

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p. 322)

454. But apart from these nuisances, the enemy was handling his self-propelled guns with diabolic skill.

In the close country, these creatures could be manoeuvred quite close up to our forward troops. Surprise fire from an 88-mm. gun at short range inevitably halted the unprotected infantry and caused some disorganization. Our tanks fell constant victims to mines, bazookas and ubiquitous 88s. Flank manoeuvre was still badly restricted, so that piece-meal slogging was still the only tactics available.

(Ibid)

455. The Canadians were fortunate in possessing several weapons ideally suited to the type of fighting now taking place. Each battalion used its "Wasps" with the greatest confidence and daily found new value in these terrifying equipments. There was also the everlasting "cab rank" of Typhoons on call at any time

*Had purely
neutralizing
effect.*

to shake up the German resistance. Lastly, but certainly not of least importance, there was the Land Mattress, that awesome contraption which frightened the life out of friend and foe alike. With it any large target was crushed by an overwhelming blanket of hellish fire. Its fire effect was equal to the power of twelve medium artillery regiments and it invariably left the enemy upon whose area it had descended, in a dazed condition, ripe for capture. Unfortunately it was not a tremendously accurate weapon and could only be used well in front of the forward positions. (W.D., 1 Cdn Rocket Bty, R.C.A., 23-25 Apr 45; also Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p. 322; also W.Ds., 10 Cdn Inf Bde and units, 23-25 Apr 45)

456. The situation on 4 Cdn Armd Div's front took on a changed appearance on the morning of 25 Apr. Maj-Gen Vokes, having kept a keen eye on the developments of the past five days, decided that there were now sufficient exits from the bridgehead to attempt a breakout with his armoured brigade. Therefore on the previous evening he had ordered Brigadier Moncel to take A. & S.H. of C. under his command, move into the Osterscheps sector, and thrust northwards. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 24 Apr 45). As has been previously mentioned, the bulk of the armour (21 and 22 Cdn Armd Regts) had been employed in supporting the bridgehead operations with gun fire from their tanks. Lake Sup R. (Mot), had also been well occupied. It had, since 22 Apr, been clearing a way eastward along the banks of the Kusten Canal. The Superiors met some opposition and considerable shellfire but by the evening of 23 Apr were at the road junction (172990) 1200 yards south of Sud Edewechtermoor (1600-1700). Certain divisional troops were then settled in this area and "C" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) was able to swing north on the following morning. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot), 22-24 Apr 45). The road to Sud Edewechtermoor was not an inviting one, being thickly sown with mines and well covered by small arms fire. The mines prevented any supporting vehicles from venturing forward to help the infantry and the small arms fire greatly hindered the troops. Therefore it was not with any feeling of regret that Lake Sup R. (Mot) received its movement orders. At Osterscheps the Argyles would continue to exert pressure and thus screen the concentration of the armoured brigade. Eventually Lake Sup R. (Mot) would relieve A. & S.H. of C. and take over the main attack to the north itself. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot), A. & S.H. of C., 24 Apr 45). The area vacated by the Lake Superiors along the canal was taken over by 70 L.A.A. Bty (8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt), which came under command of 10 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 22-28 Apr 45, para 8; also W.D., 8 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 24 Apr 45)

29 CDN ARMD RECCE REGT'S INDEPENDENT ROLE, 19-25 APR 45*

457. Although 10 Cdn Inf Bde's main drive was directed to the north, it would not do to lose sight of the very valuable contribution made by Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon, D.S.O., and his 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt. Together with "D" Coy Linc & Welld R., elements of the British S.A.S., "A" Sqn, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt,

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2914 - Little, 3013 - Markhausen, 3015 - Dotlingen, 2915 - Wardenburg, 3014 - Garrel, 3016 - Grossenkneten; also Appx "D".

and a troop of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt, the South Albertas had been pounding the enemy from pillar to post all the way from Friesoythe to Garrel, then on towards the road Oldenburg-Cloppenburg along which 2 Cdn Inf Div was operating. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 19-20 Apr 45; also AEF: 45/4 Cdn Armd Div/C/D, Docket II, Folio 3, Memorandum of Interview given by Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon, 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt). With its main base at Garrel (1984), Lt-Col Wotherspoon's unit, by 20 Apr, occupied Haast (3184) and Bissel (2984) with "A" and "B" Squadrons. "C" Sqn was settled in harbour between these two places while "D" Coy of Linc & Welld R. occupied a defended locality west of Bissel on the right bank of the river Lethe which cut the road Garrel (1984) - Bissel (2984) (ibid).

458. The seizure of the positions on which this force rested at present had involved much complicated manoeuvre and constant cooperation with the engineers responsible for the maintenance of the numerous small bridges over which the troops had passed on their way eastwards. Bissel, Haast and Sage all fell on the morning of 19 Apr, and "A" Sqn continued on as far as Dohlen (3486) to shoot up this village. The fact that the regiment was literally out on a long limb made strenuous and lengthy patrols necessary, and good use made of the nobility of "A" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and the fast-moving S.A.S. jeeps. During the night 19/20 Apr the main body of 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt had little to do, but the elements of A2 echelon, comfortably situated near Garrel, were severely tested when a strong German patrol attacked it. However, the members of the echelon acquitted themselves nobly, and an official account states:

The attempt was a costly one for the enemy as he was driven off with the loss of eight bazookas, two schmeissers, and a great deal of blood.

(Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon, op cit, para 21)

459. The day of 20 Apr passed without any unusual occurrences; patrolling continued and was particularly successful, contact being established with several enemy groups along the roads leading north from Sage (3283) and Bissel (2894). On the southern flank, the S.A.S. under Lt-Col Wotherspoon's command roamed over a wide area to reach the road Cloppenburg-Bremen, picking up some fifteen prisoners en route. As the day ended however the red-bereted paratroops departed to other employment elsewhere (ibid). The reconnaissance to the north was resumed on the following day. "A" Sqn and "D" Coy Linc & Welld R. supported by fire from "C" Sqn's tanks travelled up the west side of the Lethe stream to reach and clear the area of the main crossroads (2588) near Nicolausdorf (2388). At the same time "B" Sqn attempted to enter the village of Littel (2892) but met with serious opposition and was ordered to turn back. By last light all the patrolling forces were withdrawn into a tight regimental area around Bissel and Sage. (Ibid, para 23; also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 21 Apr 45)

460. The operational programme was to be livened considerably on 22 Apr, for on that day 2 Cdn Inf Div commenced its drive northwards to Oldenburg. 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt was now in a good position on the left flank of Maj-Gen Matthews' troops to assist in this attack and Lt-Col Wotherspoon was given a task to be carried out as part of 2 Cdn Inf Div's main effort. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 21 Apr 45, serial 48). "C" Sqn, teamed

up with "D" Coy Line & Welld R., was directed on the crossroads (313872) south of Hengstlage (3188).

The sqn-coy gp encountered some opposition some 1000 yds south of its objective, dealt with it satisfactorily, by-passed several large craters and had secured the objective by 1200 hrs. "B" Sqn, plus a coy of R. de Mais. which had been borrowed for the occasion, then passed through according to plan, and seized its objective, the village of Hengstlage 3188, at approx 1500 hours.

(Memorandum of Interview,
Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon,
op cit, para 24)

Strong patrols were quickly sent out and contacted the enemy along the ditch line south of Westerborg (3292). Progress in this direction stopped but "A" Sqn was pushed on to the west of the road where it made little headway and took fourteen more prisoners. Content with these limited gains, the unit once again withdrew out of contact for the night (ibid, also W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 22 Apr 45)

461. The enemy was quite active during the hours of darkness and boasted fair strength along the obstacle ahead of the South Albertas. Nevertheless, "B" Sqn and the sub-unit of R. de Mais attacked straight up the road during 23 Apr and, after a long drawn out battle (lasting all afternoon), seized the road at the point where it crosses the ditch, capturing thirty prisoners from 61 Para Regt and the Gross Deutschland Div. Having successfully aided 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt in gaining a considerable amount of ground, the Line & Welld R. and R. de Mais' companies received a warning order that night that both would soon be withdrawn to join their parent units. "B" and "C" Sqs concentrated in squadron harbours for the night and "A" Sqn was given several harassing fire tasks. For these the armoured cars of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt acted as forward observation posts, in addition to keeping the left flank along the road Garrel - Beverbrok (2690) secure. The right flank, for which the Manitoba Dragoons were also normally responsible, was further strengthened by the arrival of a battery of 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt (ibid, 23 Apr 45).

462. Contact was maintained all across the front on the following day, especially over on the left flank, where "C" Sqn fought an all day battle just south of Beverbrok (2690) and bagged 35 prisoners.

In the course of this battle an interesting incident occurred while one tp of "C" Sqn was engaged in shooting up an enemy coy area. One enemy BAZOOKA team had been "bothering" the Tp Sgt during the greater part of the afternoon. Due to the close proximity of the enemy it was impossible for him to posn his tk to deal with this particular opposition so the Sgt half-filled an empty 75 shell casing with petrol, climbed out of his tk and crawled to the enemy slit trench, dropped the shell casing into the trench and fired a Verey pistol into the petrol. The BAZOOKA team promptly surrendered. This started a "rot" in the enemy pl and its remaining str soon surrendered.

(Memorandum of interview,
Lt-Col G.D. deS. Wotherspoon,
op cit, para 26)

463. The orders for 25 and 26 Apr were to keep contact, patrol, fill the craters, lift the mines, and adjust the bridging requirements within the regimental sector. These tasks took up most of the time, although some of the squadrons carried out some very effective harassing shoots. "C" Sqn alone enjoyed a brief encounter with a party of Germans. In its wanderings the squadron found itself suddenly in the midst of one of the enemy's company localities; a vigorous "shoot" followed from which the Canadians emerged happily, having routed the major part of the German company and taken another thirty prisoners (*ibid*). That evening "D" Coy Line & Welld R. and "A" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt received instructions to report back to their respective headquarters. Their departure was to curtail offensive action to some extent, although, as 2 Cdn Inf Div's attack on Oldenburg progressed, Lt-Col Wotherspoon took advantage of every opportunity to keep abreast of Maj-Gen Matthew's troops on his right. (*Ibid*, and W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 25-26 Apr 45)

4 CDN ARMD BDE TAKES THE LEAD, 25 APR 45*

464. Brigadier Moncel's formation took over control of 4 Cdn Armd Div's main drive at 0700 hours 25 Apr. At that time "A" and "B" Coys Lake Sup R. (Mot), each supported by a troop of tanks from 22 Cdn Armd Regt, passed through the forward defended localities of A. & S.H. of C. In addition to the armour, each sub-unit had with it two flame throwing sections and a section of engineers. The first objective was the main crossroads (131031) some 1500 yards west of Oosterscheps (1402). Contact with the enemy was established in short order; a hail of small arms fire greeted Lt-Col Keane's men and for a time the Canadians and Germans at the crossroads exchanged volleys. The Wasps and Badgers** were then brought into play; the flame turned the scales quickly and the first objective was occupied by 1100 hours. Before the advance could continue, however, the engineer section was forced to clear the roadblock which barred the route to the north. Once this was done, the infantry started off again. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde and Lake Sup R. (Mot), 25 Apr 45)

465. During this next stage of the journey the men received most valuable aid from Typhoon rocket-firing aircraft answering the call of "Longbow Nan", the armoured brigade's now famous contact tank. From a position with the forward company headquarters, the R.A.F. officer in charge of the vehicle kept the fighter-bombers circling like hungry buzzards overhead. Aided by the O.C. "A" Coy, the artillery F.O.O. and a liaison officer from brigade headquarters, he formed an ad hoc air support element which according to the armoured brigade's war diary

proved its worth NOT only by successfully engaging targets within 300 yds of fwd tps but also by imbuing those fwd tps with a much stronger faith in the efficiency of aircraft as a wpn.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 25 Apr 45)

* Reference maps as for para 438; also Appx "E".

** Badger: A flame throwing equipment mounted on a Ram tank chassis. It has no turret.

466. Early in the afternoon "B" Coy, attended by a troop of 2 Sqn 22 Cdn Armd Regt, some Wasps and engineers, passed through "A" Coy.

Rd blocks and mines slowed up progress considerably, all rd blocks were covered by enemy fire in most cases mortar fire as well...

(W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot),
25 Apr 45)

No organized line of resistance was encountered until just before dark; at that time the infantry ran into a German defended locality, the approaches to which were well mined. The attack that followed was quite successful and the troops dug in around the road junction (136054) at Danikhorst (1305). Owing to the mines and road blocks, it was not practical to continue the advance during the hours of darkness; patrols therefore were ordered out. Meanwhile, in preparation for the morrow, Lt-Col Keane instructed "C" Coy to move out at 0530 hours 26 Apr from "B" Coy's present position to seize the T road junction (147073) north-east of the woods (1406) beyond Danikhorst (1305). The day had been a busy one for the battalion's support company, the mortars, medium machine guns and "flame" all having made fair contribution to the success of the motor battalion's advances. (Ibid). All through the day A. & S.H. of C. remained in Osterscheps enjoying relative comfort but always ensuring the security of the firm base by patrolling. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 25 Apr 45)

467. 10 Cdn Inf Bde was also able to report limited success. On the eastern flank (see para 459) Alq R. and Linc & Welld R. had made contact along the brigade's axis during the morning. They reported light resistance only, but that the road blocks and craters were still mainly responsible for the slowness of the advance. During the afternoon some readjustment took place within the brigade's area to allow the two infantry battalions greater freedom for the move north. A section of medium machine guns (10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy) and elements of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt were brought up to fill in certain gaps on the flanks which the forward troops had been forced to watch. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Alq R., Linc & Welld R., 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy, 25 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serials 19, 32, 45, 49, 66)

468. Opposition stiffened greatly as the day closed. Nevertheless the troops forged ahead, the Linc & Welld R. patrolling vigorously to the east of the right axis while Alq R. controlled the main thrust along the road. By midnight 25/26 Apr the Algonquins had companies firmly settled on the main route west of Vor dem Moor (1703). Shortly after the positions were expanded eastwards and to the north but progress was slow due to the heavy small arms and mortar fire which hampered every movement. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 25 Apr 45, serial 87; 26 Apr 45, serials 1, 3, 6)

469. Further changes in command were announced by Maj-Gen Vokes on the evening of 25 Apr. Brigadier Moncel's effort on the left was to be carried out along two axes and for this reason he directed that Linc & Welld R. go under command of the armoured brigade. The infantry brigade, consisting of Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 10 Cdn Indep M.G. Coy and assorted anti-tank and light anti-aircraft detachments, was to assume control of the divisional firm base (Osterscheps-Edeweicht), paying particular

attention to the right flank. The necessary reinforcement for Brigadier Jefferson's formation was provided by the arrival of 27 R.M. battalion. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 25-26 Apr 45)

470. In addition, the full resources of 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt were now available to Maj-Gen Vokes for his renewed attack. This was made possible by the fact that "A" Sqn had been taken away from 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt and "D" Sqn was freed of its commitment along the western end of the Kusten (1 Pol Armd Div having taken over that responsibility). The Manitoba Dragoons were thus given the task of providing reconnaissance for the left and right flanks of 4 Cdn Armd Div's thrust northwards. In his orders Lt-Col P.C.R. Black explained that "D" Sqn was to operate on the right towards Oldenburg and that "C" Sqn would be on the left working in the direction of Bad Zwischenahn (0609). "A" and "B" Sqns, having no tasks at present, were to remain in reserve.* (W.D., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 25-26 Apr 45)

471. Breakout operations were resumed with the first streaks of daylight on 26 Apr when "C" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot) took up the task of pushing along the centre line, which in this area was bounded on either side by wooded land. It was at the edge of these woods that the infantry first came under fire. Mortars and "Moaning Minnie" rained down, causing several casualties.

The task of clearing the woods was a slow and tedious job and the Coy was subjected to constant enemy fire. When the adv reached MR 142067 they found a large crater in the rd. The carriers and tks could not be taken any further until such time as the crater could be bridged. It was decided to use the diversion from rd and track junc MR 142067 EAST through the woods, again this was impossible as the enemy had cut the trees on either side and dropped them on the rd.

(W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot)
26 Apr 45)

Once the various obstructions were cleared the tanks of 22 Cdn Armd Regt moved on. But, as this force nosed its way out of the wood's northern edge, the enemy's self-propelled guns opened up. Two of these vehicles were observed sitting menacingly at the road junction (147073) some 800 yards north-east of the woods. This in itself was most discouraging as the junction represented the company's objective. The combination of heavy fire and lack of suitable covered approach made further move from the wooded areas impossible, and for a time "B" Coy's offensive bogged down. (Ibid: also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 16, 21, 32)

472. This show of force by the Germans came at a time when it was imperative to retain the momentum of the advance and unless quick action was taken it seemed probable that the attack would be stopped altogether. Lt-Col Keane realized this and decided to reinforce his drive to the north, at the same time he reorganized his tactical plan. At 1700 hours he ordered "A" Coy forward. "A" Coy's task was to swing to the east, seize the bridge (151064), clear the small wood (146068) astride the

* Positions of Squadrons as of 260600, R.H.Q. 148991, "A" Sqn 022902, "B" Sqn 152021, "C" Sqn 153991, "D" Sqn 109038.

road on the north-west of it, and finally establish a strong company position on the curved road (152063) west of Querenstede (1506). While "A" Coy set about this work, "B" Coy was to follow the dirt track eastwards through the woods and pass through the area cleared by "A" Coy, thereby attacking the company's final objective from the south-east. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 26 Apr 45). "A" Coy approached the bridge by sending its scout platoon along the main road. Meanwhile the motor platoons crossed the soggy fields and came in from the west. The enemy repeated his favourite performance of blowing the bridge just as our troops came within sight of it, and Lt-Col Keane's men had to be content with a few prisoners - a poor substitute for a bridge which, if intact, would have aided the advance of tanks considerably. Over on the left "C" Coy had by this time experienced some success. Led by Capt H. Bird, M.C., the attack was pressed home against terribly heavy fire which caused many casualties before the road junction (146073) was secure. The company had lost so many men in its latest effort that the commanding officer ordered the greater part of "A" Coy to move into "C" Coy's area and assist it to consolidate. (Ibid)

473. Before following the activities of the motor battalion any further it is necessary to examine the situation in the centre and along the right flank. A. & S.H. of C. had little to do apart from moving some of its troops ("D" Coy) up to take over the crossroads area (129039) from Lake Sup R. (Mot) and establishing standing infantry and armoured patrols on the roads leading to Hemeler (143039), Schmaars (152042) and the lateral road north of Auf den Linden (1304). The western route from Osterscheps (1402) to Westerscheps (1103) was turned over to "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, which had its instructions to probe westwards. The Staghounds had great success and by the end of the day were firmly established along the road west of Westerscheps (1103). (W.Ds., A. & S.H. of C., 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 26 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 24, 27, 30, 43, 49, 50, 55, 65, 75, 85)

474. Line & Welld R. (under command 4 Cdn Armd Bde since 0800 hours that morning) turned over its positions to 27 R.M. Bn shortly after dawn on 26 Apr and prepared itself for new adventure. Lt-Col Coleman's men now had a squadron from 21 Cdn Armd Regt to support them. The intention was to push company groups of Line & Welld R. through the Algonquin's forward localities. (Ibid, 25 Apr 45, serial 78, also W.D., Line & Welld R., 25 and 26 Apr 45). Line & Welld R. was not able to do much until 1000 hours. At that time however Alq R. reported that it was in possession of its objective south-east of the small wood (166043), and this indicated that Lt-Col Coleman's "B" Coy could move on. Line & Welld R., now free of its rear commitments (having handed over to 27 R.M. Bn), moved its "A" & "C" Coys up nearer the front line; "D" Coy, which had to date been under command 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, had returned and stood ready to take its part in the battalion's main effort. (Ibid)

475. "B" Coy's attack was well supported by a rocket battery, 4.2 mortars and medium mortars in addition to the usually heavy assistance from the field and medium guns. Yet, despite all the high explosive which showered him, the enemy put up a very hard fight, using self-propelled guns to advantage. Every building along the route was well defended and the Canadians found their task far from easy. Not only were they heavily engaged from the front, they were also subjected to fierce and terribly effective fire from the railway on the left. This necessitated the employment of one of "A" Coy's platoons to

neutralize it. Once this was done the slow advance continued. "B" Coy got over the stream (168047) by 1630 hours, but here a short halt was called so that the engineers could bridge the obstacle. Meanwhile, along the railway, the flanking force (platoon of "A" Coy now relieved by platoon of "C" Coy) observed and harassed the line of the tracks with mortar fire and blinded the enemy posts with thick layers of smoke. Throughout the evening "B" Coy pressed on and at 2200 hours was at the road junction (170050) north-west of Laje (170046). Engineer work on the craters and at the stream to the rear was now completed and "A" Coy was passed on through. (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 26 Apr 45, serials 28, 40, 46, 50, 60, 78, 89)

476. The active role of 10 Cdn Inf Bde on 26 Apr fell largely on Alq R., supported by the tanks of 28 Cdn Armd Regt. Naturally enough, after Linc & Wellid R.'s push up the axis of the road east of the railway had got under way, some effort had to be made to the east to secure that flank. This was the task assigned to Brigadier Jefferson, and it involved the clearing of the large woods between Vor dem Moor (1703) and Portsloge (1805). With "C" Coy (Alq R.) firm on the crossroads (174035) at Vor dem Moor (1703), "D" Coy was sent in to follow the narrow road north. The move began late that evening but little progress was possible. The enemy's self-propelled guns raked every inch of the path and, coupled with his mortars and small arms fire, made the going hazardous. It was not until 0400 hours 27 Apr that "D" Coy was able to report itself at the southern tip of the large woods selected for the forthcoming clearing operations. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., 26 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 6, 11)

4 CDN ARMD DIV REGROUPS, 26/27 APR 45*

477. Meanwhile, in order to employ the full resources of his armoured division and to protect his rapidly lengthening lines of communication, Maj-Gen Vokes had carried out an important regrouping. First he assigned to 27 R.M. Bn the responsibility of making the rear of the right flank secure and of garrisoning the Osterscheps base. Secondly, he ordered 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt to assume a full role in the breakout to the north.

"B", "C" and "D" Sqns 18 Cdn Armd C Regt were then directed, "B" to the RIGHT along the rd JEDDELOH - FRIEDRICHSPFEHN, "C" and "D" to the LEFT along the rds WESTERSCHEPS - GODENSHOLT and DANIKHORST - OLLENHARDE. RIGHT and LEFT flank protection in the immediate area of the crossing was provided by 5 Cdn A Tk and 8 Cdn IAA Regts.

(Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 22-28 Apr 45, para 13)

478. The above-mentioned additions were, however, but a small portion of the powerful allotment made to the "Green Patch" division. On 27 Apr, so the G.O.C. was informed, H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde with 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt and 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt under command, would be at his

* Reference map: G.S.G.S 4414, Eastern Holland - Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2813 - Edewecht, 2812 - Barssel, 2814 - Bad Zwischenahn, 2712 - Apen; also Appx "E".

disposal. This force, together with 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 27 R.M. Bn, 19 Cdn Armd Fd Regt (S.P.), and an extra medium regiment, a battery of 7.2 heavy guns, 2 Cdn H.A.A. Regt and 1 Cdn Rocket Bty, R.C.A., created an order of battle that was both orthodox and complex. An extremely powerful array to be sure but with a dangerous weakness in that its engineering resources were drastically limited to the armoured division's normal R.C.E. components. (Ops & Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 30 Mar - 5 May, Lt-Col W.G.M. Robinson, op cit: Part III, para 1)

479. The 2 Cdn Armd Bde Gp was to develop operations between Maj-Gen Vokes' formation and the Polish armour on the left. It was allotted the following tasks:

- (a) to establish a firm base at GODENSHOLT 0509, (b) to patrol vigorously to OCHOLT 1012, APEN 0413, and BARSEL 0008, (c) to seize and hold BARSEL and to make contact with 1 Pol Armd Div at BOLLINGEN 9604, (d) to create a firm base in the triangle GODENSHOLT - OCHOLT - APEN, and (e) to patrol to MANSIE 1415, TORSHOLT 1312 and ROSTRUP 1611.

(Weekly Summary Ops Log
& Activities 4 Cdn Armd
Div, op cit: 22-28 Apr 45,
para 13)

THE ADVANCE CONTINUES, 27 APR 45*

480. 4 Cdn Armd Bde continued its advance slowly during the night 26/27 Apr. To quote the War Diary of that formation:

"...there was no rest for either bn. The Line & Welld R. in particular had to deal with every type of enemy fire, mines, rd blocks and craters, and also experienced comn difficulties between tks and pls due to the thick hedges resembling those found in the bocage country in Normandy..."

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd
Bde, 27 Apr 45)

One by one these nuisances were overcome and by 0900 hours (27 Apr) "A" Coy (Line & Welld R.) had reached the bend in the road (176064) 800 yards west of the hamlet of Eschhorn (1806). Further progress from this point was hampered severely by snipers covering a roadblock of felled trees, and so "A" Coy dug in and held. Meanwhile, "C" Coy continued patrolling the line of the railway on the left. Lt-Col Coleman next sent "D" Coy forward 1030 hours; it by-passed the obstacle facing "A" Coy, leaving with the latter a group of engineers to clear the route. Then, as "D" Coy forged its way ahead, the sappers began to work and "A" Coy sent out strong patrols to the flanks. The enemy made numerous attempts to interfere with the advance by counter-patrolling, but to no good effect; Line & Welld R.'s mortars engaged him furiously whenever he was observed. (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 10, 14, 15, 21, 31, 34, 38)

* Reference maps as for para 478.

481. As the day closed "D" Coy was reported in possession of the rail and road crossing (175070), but here again the ingenious foe had cratered the road to such an extent that Lt-Col Coleman had to establish a bridgehead beyond the obstacle deep enough so that his engineers could repair the damage. "D" Coy was now given the task of journeying further up the axis. "C" Coy was to position itself in rear of "D" Coy by 2300 hours and then swing left to move towards the hamlet of Ekern (1607). At H hour (2300 hours) both sub-units went forward, supported by the fire of tanks from 21 Cdn Armd Regt in addition to the battalion's mortars and a generous portion of Maj-Gen Vokes' artillery. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 27 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serial 75). It was slow business for the infantry groping their way in the darkness, but within three hours both companies were on their objectives and hastily consolidating behind a patrol screen. Work on the craters was completed by 0430 hours, thus enabling the tank squadron of 21 Cdn Armd Regt to move forward. (Ibid, 28 Apr 45, serials 5, 13, 20; also W.Ds., 21 Cdn Armd Regt; Linc & Welld R., 28 Apr 45)

482. On the left the rate of progress by the motor battalion was, by force of local circumstances and the heavy casualties suffered so far, not spectacular. Nevertheless, sufficient pressure was exerted on this flank to keep the enemy moving back steadily. Throughout the day "A" Coy held its ground south-east of the woods (1507) below Ohrwege (1508), patrolling constantly forward and to its flanks, while to the rear "C" and "B" Coys reorganized. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 27 Apr 45). Lt-Col Keane made his next major move shortly after 2000 hours. "B" Coy was passed through "A", being given the road junction (154086) between Ohrwege (1508) and Ohrwegerfeld (1509) as its objective. (Ibid)

483. This infantry group, commanded by Maj T.H. Murray, D.S.O., crossed the recently-completed bridge over the crater behind "A" Coys line and commenced the tedious job of clearing every building along the route. There was little active resistance and before midnight 27/28 Apr the motor battalion reported that "B" Coy was starting its consolidation. Hoping that the decreasing opposition meant a withdrawal by the enemy, the motor battalion quickly dispatched "A" Coy to exploit what appeared to be a favourable situation. The time was 0130 hours 28 Apr (ibid). Before long, however, the fresh troops made contact. The rumble of German tanks was clearly heard and almost immediately the leading tank of the supporting Canadian Grenadier Guards received a direct hit and was set afire. As if on a signal, the entire locality suddenly became alive with flying shot and shell as a terrific fire fight ensued between the Grenadiers' tanks and the German's self-propelled guns. But it did not last long; as usual the enemy pulled back once more and the Canadian infantry settled in to firm up on the southern edges of the triangular wood (1609) south of Altenkamp (162098). (Ibid; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 80, 83)

484. But what of the centre of Brigadier Moncel's sector - that portion of ground between the left and right arms of his thrust for which the Argyles were responsible? In order to get a full, clear picture of 4 Cdn Armd Bde's situation it is necessary to explain what had befallen Lt-Col Coffin's troops. The order to move came from the Brigadier at midmorning. "B" and "C" Coys were sent off up along the left axis to the bridge-site over the Aue River (previously reached by "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot)), with the object of crossing the stream and driving

eastwards to clear the woods (1506-1606) between the Superiors and Linc & Welld R. At the same time "D" Coy was moved to a new location north of Hemeler (1403). By late afternoon both "B" and "C" Coys, having crossed the Aue River in boats, were not only holding the western and southern edges of the wood but had strong patrols well into the cover. Meanwhile "D" Coy had again shifted its location, this time to the road junction (142069) area at the base of Lt-Col Keane's sector, where it assumed responsibility for the security of the flank left open by the motor battalion's recent advance northward. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 27 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 27 Apr 45, serials 50, 53, 60, 64, 83)

485. 10 Cdn Inf Bde's activities on Maj-Gen Vokes' right flank were limited to clearing through the large wooded area between Vor dem Moor (1703) and Portsloge (1805). In order to simplify this task, the objective was divided into five parts.

The woods themselves, now given the code name "Mattress", and divided into numbered squares for methodical clearing, were attacked first by "B" Company on the 27th. It was necessary to cross a wide open space before the wood fringe was hit, and enemy fire slackened the advance. Two "Wasps" were rapidly briefed, moved up under cover of some buildings, and then made a mad dash across the open field. Just short of the wood fringe they stopped dead and proceeded to spray the edge of the wood for several hundreds of yards with searing, semi-liquid flame. The infantry followed in close behind, and in a moment the first bite of the wood was ours.

(Cassidy, War Path,
op cit, p. 323)

The operation which had begun at 1430 hours continued throughout the afternoon and evening until a halt had to be called. Woods fighting is not, even in broad daylight, a profitable occupation; at night it becomes an open invitation to disaster. (W.D., Alq R., 27 Apr 45)

486. In the dull light of a cold and wet morning, 4 Cdn Armd Div's front line troops once more moved out of their cover to resume the advance on 28 Apr. On the right 10 Cdn Inf Bde wasted no time in setting about its business in the wooded area. Lt-Col J.F.R. Akehurst D.S.O., (Lt-Col Bradburn had returned to England) kept leapfrogging his Algonquin companies one through the other until by mid-afternoon his men had swept all his sector south of Portsloge (1805). "C" Coy was then relieved of its responsibilities east of Vor dem Moor by part of 27 R.M. Bn and ordered to complete the regiment's task by securing the remaining woods to the north. However, "A" Coy, at present fighting along the north-eastern edges of the woods south-west of Portsloge, were being bothered so greatly from German posts along the lateral road (west of Portsloge) that "C" Coy's task was changed to that of clearing this route across the entire battalion front. At about the same time "D" Coy, supported by a troop of tanks from 28 Cdn Armd Regt, was shifted westwards to straddle the main road, thus sealing the western end of "C" Coy's new objective. The road was reported clear of enemy forces by nightfall and "C" Coy consolidated along it, facing north in readiness to take out the northern woods on the following day. (W.D., Alq R., 28 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 29, 47, 57)

487. Whereas the opposition encountered by Brigadier Jefferson's troops had begun to slacken, the enemy's reaction to the armoured brigade's thrust was most violent. Linc & Welld R.'s "B" Coy (without the benefit of close armoured support) had a difficult time getting on to its objective (172081), a piece of high ground just north of Ekern (1707). Once this left flank position was in our hands, Lt-Col Coleman ordered "D" Coy to go on up the main axis and relieve some of the pressure the enemy was exerting against "B" Coy. The new advance was so bitterly opposed by well-directed mortar fire and the fire of several German tanks that a heavy artillery programme had to be carried out before the Canadians were able to move on. It was, as one officer related later, "very rough going". However, shortly after noon the engineers completed work on all craters leading up to the forward area, and the tanks (21 Cdn Armd Regt) and anti-tank guns, together with a section of carriers, were sent in to help the hard-pressed infantrymen. (Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col Coleman, op cit, para 25; W.D., Linc & Welld R., 28 Apr 45)

488. "D" Coy's main difficulty was in getting past the windmill (177078). This was an enemy strong point where even the tanks could not make the Germans give ground. Such fanatical resistance met our troops all across the battalion front that a full-scale battalion attack was organized. The divisional artillery again was the saving factor. The guns opened up at 2215 hours; following this 1 Cdn Rocket Bty poured its lethal loads on the German positions while 3" mortars pounded all other suspected defensive points. By 2340 hours "B" Coy had consolidated the first objective on the north-eastern slope of the high ground overlooking the left side of the main axis, but "D" Coy could not break the enemy's hold at the windmill (177078). Lt-Col Coleman now decided to reinforce his success on the left, and at 0230 hours 29 Apr he launched "A" Coy on to the high feature above Speckenerfeld (1709 - 1808). Its route, which cut the main axis and led towards the railway, was not a good one; mines lay everywhere, but the task on hand was so important (it would cut off the enemy facing "D" Coy at the windmill (177078)) that the company commander decided to continue his advance without the tanks of the Footguards. "A" Coy firmed up at the Specken feature at 0415 hours, having captured five prisoners. No time was wasted in hurling "C" Coy through to the east with the object of securing a defensive position astride the road and railway beyond the higher ground. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 28-29 Apr 45; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials 13, 20, 42, 51, 66, 75; 29 Apr 45, serials 5, 14, 26, 28; also Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col R.C. Coleman, op cit, para 27)

489. The motor battalion did not gain any ground on 28 Apr. "A" and "B" Coys spent the day patrolling and tank hunting with PIAT teams in the hope of bagging some of the enemy's self-propelled guns. This venture did not, however, meet with any success. "C" Coy, still recovering from the battering received two days before, had filled in the day completing its reorganization, then at night sent some of its men up to strengthen the forward positions. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 28 Apr 45). In the centre A. & S.H. of C. had been quite equally inactive. During the day Lt-Col Coffin's "A" and "B" Coys, presently stationed along the left axis behind Lake Sup R. (Mot), were relieved by elements of 5 Cdn A.Tk Regt and joined the balance of the battalion on the northern edges of the woods above Querenstede (1506). From these positions contact was established with Linc & Welld R. on the right. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 28 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serials

34, 42, 45). Darkness found the Argyles firm along the road Aschwege (160070) - Ekern (170073) with three companies ("A", "B", "D") while the fourth ("C") remained at the south-western tip of the woods just north of Brokhorst (1505). (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, April 1945, Appx 8, Ops Log, 28 Apr 45, serials 50, 53)

490. Resistance, equal to that met during the past day by Maj-Gen Vokes' frontal effort, was also being maintained by the enemy on the left flank, between 4 Cdn and 1 Pol Armd Divs. This, in itself, was rather surprising, because both armoured divisions were likely at any time to turn their attacks inward to cut off the few resolute who remained in that area. The remaining Germans, however, must have been imbued with a high standard of discipline, for when 2 Cdn Armd Bde began to advance early on 28 Apr it discovered that in addition to the mines, craters and road blocks the enemy also had left a fair number of well-armed groups to discourage any curiosity. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 28 Apr 45). "Frank force", as the newly-formed group was called, had started off at 0700 hours (28 Apr) from Westerscheps (1103). This force consisted of elements of the following units: 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, and 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serial 24; also Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities; 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 22-28 Apr 45 para 13)

491. As was expected, no sooner had our troops begun the journey up the road to Godensholt (0905) than extensive cratering and demolitions stopped the advance and it was some time before the brigade's bulldozer tanks were able to make a passage. Meanwhile the odd German infantry group, supported by the ever present self-propelled guns, harassed the column as it waited to clear the obstacles. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 28 Apr 45). Shortly after noon one of the tanks from 6 Cdn Armd Regt got in a lucky shot at one of these offending vehicles and set it afire, but not before the German gunners had scored a hit on a Sherman and disabled it. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 28 Apr 45, serial 56). The land bordering the road offered no chance for manoeuvre and getting ahead was a slow business. By 2230 hours the armoured force reported that it had almost reached Rothenmethen (0807) but that no further progress would be possible until a large crater on the road had been bridged. The engineers were at that time working on the project and it was hoped that the move might be resumed at 2400 hours (28/29 Apr). As it was, fifty men from 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt were beyond the crater, forming a small bridgehead through which elements of 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt and other squadrons of 1 Cdn Armd Regt would pass on the morrow. (Ibid, serials 84, 85)

492. It must be noted here that as the week 22-28 Apr 45 ended Maj-Gen Vokes had every fighting unit under his command fully employed in the breakout operations. Even his miscellaneous supporting units such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery were all being kept busy filling in the gaps that appeared daily in the lengthening lines of communications. The advance, however, was being continually complicated by demolitions which, covered as they invariably were by well-sited self-propelled guns, represented formidable obstacles. Moreover, the weather had not been totally favourable to the Canadians. There had been a liberal rainfall during the past few days to further hamper the movement off the roads, and the air support which had dealt out so many telling blows previously had not been available. Thankfully enough the bolstering of the division's artillery resources had offset this discrepancy of air support to some extent. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 24-28 Apr 45;

also Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 22-28 Apr 45, op cit, para 15)

493. As for the enemy, there had been no important changes in his order of battle.

...although the appearance of a cavalry sqn, the only one of its kind known to have operated on the WESTERN FRONT, aroused some interest. At the end of the week we were opposed by: on the RIGHT, 2 bns of 19 Para Regt; in the CENTRE 2 bns and 62 Flak Bn, 20 Para Regt, and 2 Bns of 21 Para Regt; and on the LEFT by Bn JUNGWIRT (21 Para Regt) and 3 bns of Marine R West 2.

(Ibid, para 17)

The German losses in prisoners alone between 22-28 Apr were 10 officers and 909 other ranks mainly from 7 Para Div. His dead and wounded were estimated at about 1000 all told. The armoured division's own losses for the same period were, in proportion quite heavy, numbering 414. (Ibid)

THE FINAL STAGES, 29 APR - 5 MAY 45*

494. The assortment of prisoners questioned by Maj-Gen Vokes' intelligence officers had not given out sufficient information to establish the enemy's real intentions. It seemed still that the main object of the Germans was merely to delay in the dismal and desperate hope that someone either in Berlin or in more intimate command of forces facing 21 Army Group would produce some fantastic plan or some secret weapon to turn the tide of events. This belief was not so much expressed in words as by the expressions on the faces of the prisoners. According to them, all available odd units were being hurled into the fray with whatever equipment could be mustered. To quote the War Diary of 4 Cdn Armd Div;

Several new units have been identified in today's fighting, of which the most formidable is 556 GHQ Tk Bn. A PW from 3 Coy, taken at OHRWEGE 1508, credits his coy with 10 JAGDPANTHERS, each having in addition to its crew an escort of 6 men on the ground. 1 and 2 Coys, still uncommitted in the area of TORSCHOLT 1312, are said to have a number of Mk IV eqpts mounting the long barrel 7-5 cm. The unit came a week ago from KIRCHATTEN 4191 on 2 Cdn Inf Div's front and spent the interval refitting. 5 Tp Para Flak Bn was identified at 173072, under comd of 1 Bn 20 Para Regt and fighting as inf; it was evidently made up of men surplus-to-guns personnel in the Bn. The remainder of the bn can muster two tractor-drawn, 8.8 cm dual-purpose guns and three 3.7 cm, now reported in the BAD ZWISCHENAHN area. There was also a 62 Flak Bn, totally de-gunned and amounting to 120 bodies.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 28 Apr 45)

Such then was the opposition against which the advance was resumed on 29 Apr.

* Reference maps: G.S.G.S. 4414, Western Germany 1:25,000 Sheets 2813 - Edewecht, 2814 - Bad Zwischenahn, 2714 - Wiefelstede, 2715 - Rastede; also Appx "E".

495. By 1000 hours Linc & Welld R. was in full possession of the high feature at Specken (1808) with three rifle companies supported by the Shermans of 21 Cdn Armd Regt. Shortly after this "D" Coy smashed through the opposition at the windmill (176078) and consolidated there. Patrolling was then ordered all across the battalion front. Lt-Col Coleman's troops were now within full view of Bad Zwischenahn, whence came a large quantity of small arms and 88-mm gun fire. (W.Ds., Linc & Welld R., 29 Apr 45; H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 29 Apr 45). Meanwhile, Brigadier Moncel's sapper in the centre had opened the lateral route along which the Argyles faced northwards, waiting for another order to push on. (Ibid; W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 29 Apr 45)

496. Over on the left flank the motor battalion had a more active time. Having discovered that no enemy occupied the triangular wood (1609), "A" Coy led by Major R. Middleditch was ordered to go on to the line of the railway. This effort began in a steady downpour of rain at about midday. No sooner had the attack started than the German defenders opened up with every type of fire imaginable. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 54, 50, 74). Momentum was lost for the time but, seeing that his troops were already at the railway, Lt-Col Keane dispatched strong patrols to tap the German positions beyond. Within a short time reports came back to confirm the presence of enemy around the road junction (167103), also that all approaches to this area were under well-directed and very heavy fire. The patrols then returned to join "A" Coy along the railway track. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 29 Apr 45)

497. Meanwhile "C" Coy had taken over "A" Coy's former position near the triangular wood. "B" Coy had also gone into action. Commanded by Maj T.H. Murray, D.S.O., this company had journeyed north-westwards from the main axis to firm up about 300 yards south of the tracks north of Ohrwegerfeld (1409). Consolidation here was completed by 1900 hours. The plan was to proceed north, cross the railway, and capture the factory (161003) beyond it. At about 2300 hours Maj Murray pulled his troops back a short distance to allow the artillery to carry out the necessary bombardment. For a few minutes the earth shook as the high explosive shells descended; then as the firing line lifted the assault went in, supported by Wasp flame-throwers. It was soon over; six prisoners were taken and the position, though still under small arms and mortar fire, was consolidated. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 29 Apr 45)

498. Mention must be made here of the rôle played by 22 Cdn Armd Regt (Canadian Grenadier Guards). The "Guards'" task had not been an enviable one. Ever since the advance began on 25 Apr the tanks had been more or less roadbound. The ground away from the surfaced routes being quite useless for tank manoeuvre. Wherever the enemy had blown his demolitions the armour was forced to stop until the way was cleared again. Thus it had been difficult for Lt-Col Amy's Shermans to give Lake Sup R. (Mot) the usual type of support. Nevertheless, whenever the chance arose the Grenadiers rolled forward, shooting up the opposition. On 29 Apr much valuable close support was given to "A" Coy early in the day. Later, as Major Murray's forces worked their way towards the factory, the "Guards'" light tanks swung left from the main axis and followed the road to Ohrwegerfeld (1409). The Grenadiers met some very heavy fire, both anti-tank and small arms, but used their own fire power to great effect and managed to secure the road junction (146098). Beyond this point movement was restricted due to the shortage of

infantry. This problem, however, was solved by sending back (to "A" Echelon) for a group of odd riflemen and bren gunners to supplement the section of the motor battalion in the area. Having been reinforced in this manner, the armour ventured on towards the railway line to take up a defensive position at the next crossroads (148101). Here a short fire fight took place during which 17 pounders gave covering fire to allow the soldiers to form a defensive strongpoint. (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 86, 88)

499. 4 Cdn Armd Bde was now in a favourable position to commence the attack on Bad Zwischenahn. The Brigade commander therefore ordered A. & S.H. of C., with under command a squadron of the Grenadier Guards, to prepare to pass through Lake Sup R. (Mot) with the object of creating a wedge between the town and the airfield to the north-west. The time of the attack was set at 0600 hours 30 Apr. (W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 29 Apr 45; A. & S.H. of C., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45). Prior to this, starting at 2200 hours 29 Apr, Line & Welld R. was to carry out a series of company moves calculated to seal off the eastern end of Bad Zwischenahn. (W.D., Line & Welld R., 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serial 91)

500. Throughout 29 Apr 10 Cdn Inf Bde pursued its task of flank protection. From the well-established line north of Portsloge, Lt-Col Akehurst (Alq R.) sent "B" Coy straight through the woods (1806) to secure the road running along the northern fringe. This operation was completed by 1130 hours. While it progressed, "C" Coy dispatched a small force of infantry with two tanks (28 Cdn Armd Regt) to picquet the right flank from a position on the road north-west of Portsloge. The north - south road west of Ekerntermoor (1807) was the next objective. This was the responsibility of "A" Coy. The task did not take long; by 1330 hours its platoons were digging in near the crossroads (187073). Also in this area were some armoured cars of "C" Sqn, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt. Since the enemy so far had not shown much sign of earnest opposition, "C" Coy was ordered to hand over its flank outposts to the Royal Marines at 1800 hours and then to strike north to seize the peat farm (192087) just above Speck-enermoor (1808). This move, when completed, would place the Algonquins on the immediate right of Line & Welld R.'s troops. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde; Alq R., 28 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 53, 69, 78, 81)

501. "C" Coy Alq R. began its advance after dark on 29 Apr. The company passed through "A" Coy's position on the road west of Ekerntermoor and struck eastwards, the plan being to cover approximately 1100 yards of their route before turning north. But fortune was not with the Canadians on this venture and shortly after 0230 hours, 30 Apr, the soldiers found themselves pinned to the ground by devastating fire from German small arms. (Ibid, 29 Apr 45, serial 100, 30 Apr 45, Serial 6, 10). The company headquarters group (Capt D. Dymond) decided to reconnoitre the situation and perhaps find a way around the opposition, but this effort too had a disastrous ending.

By extreme bad luck, this small group ran head-on into what later turned out to be a German battalion reconnaissance party, reconnoitring to take up a position along the flank we were threatening. Both sides hit the ditch simultaneously, and a fierce firefight broke out. Capt Dymond hit the same ditch as the Germans

and was our only casualty, being killed instantly. All the Germans were killed or wounded, the senior officer, a captain, among them.

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit,
p. 324; W.D., Alq R., 30
Apr 45)

In the confusion following this incident command of the company was taken over by the artillery F.O.O., who ordered the infantry to consolidate around the road junction (194073) east of the Ekertermoor. This order was carried out by first light. (W.D., Alq R., 30 Apr 45)

502. There was little other action for the rest of the day. The main issue depended upon 4 Cdn Armd Bde's actions which, having begun at 2200 hours on the previous night, were aimed at cutting off Bad Zwischenahn and enveloping the lake above it in a wide, pincer movement. The order issued to 10 Cdn Inf Bde at 2000 hours 30 Apr decreed that Alq R. should clear all the ground between it and Linc & Welld R. on its left and probe eastwards. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serial 75). In order to sum up the furious battles fought during the last twelve days, it is well to quote the Algonquin historian.

It had taken our infantry brigade, liberally supported with tanks and other weapons, fourteen days to fight up a matter of 12000 yards. The enemy's fanatic resistance had cost him sorely. Observers later said that the first three hundred yards north from the Kusten canal had been the bloodiest sight they had seen anywhere, Falaise Gap included. There was little doubt that the German Command felt that the holding of this flank was vital to their whole plans at the moment, plans which, of course, were shortly to go up in smoke. Whether the whole bloodbath was an attempt to gain time to extricate the top men, the S.S. and the Gestapo, and tuck them away somewhere in the Kiel Peninsula, we do not know, but the fact remains that he threw in with utter coldbloodedness the Marine forces drawn from the Wilhelmshaven area. None too well trained, and probably with no battle experience to speak of, they had only numbers in their favour, and these were expended ruthlessly.

(Cassidy, Warpath, op cit, p. 324)

503. While 10 Cdn Inf Bde had been bringing up the extreme right, the armoured brigade had made good progress since 2200 hours 29 Apr. At that time, Linc & Welld R. went forward slowly with "C" Coy leading. Some opposition was encountered but this eased off, and "D" Coy was ordered up on the right of "C" Coy, which was operating west of the railway. By 0300 hours both sub-units were on the lateral tracks, but at this stage Lt-Col Coleman's troops had to withdraw a short distance to enable the artillery to deal with four German tanks which, supported by some infantry, were lurking north of the railway line. The order was to dig in, hold, and allow the bombardment to proceed while the plan of attack to deal with the opposition was readjusted. While the guns showered the approaches to the objective with tons of high explosive, it was decided that "D" Coy should feed its platoons across the tracks to form up at the

small wood (193099) west of Kayhausen (1909). After this "A" Coy would pass through to the main road junction (198097) at Kayhausen (1909) while "B" Coy settled at the rail and road crossing (189097), thus setting the seal on the one good route out of Bad Zwischenahn to the east. (Memorandum of Interview, Lt-Col Coleman, op cit, para 29; also W.D., Linc & Welld R., 29-30 Apr 45)

504. The attack was resumed at 1150 hours against stubborn resistance. Nevertheless, all companies gained ground steadily. Craters were by-passed, houses were cleared one by one, and the German defenders continually harassed by our artillery, mortars, and flamethrowers. Against this combination the enemy could do little else but give up - or die where he stood. The Canadian infantryman, a resolute fighter, did not let any chance slip by; whenever the enemy wavered the full fury of the attack fell upon him and drove him back. Throughout the evening and the following night Lt-Col Coleman kept up the pressure. By 0315 hours 1 May he had "D" Coy firmly astride the main axis east of Kayhausen, with "C" Coy (which had been pulled off its original axis further west) in the act of passing through to swing in on the eastern end of the town, while "B" Coy moved in from the south. "A" Coy at the same time was pressing on to the Kayhausen crossing against moderate opposition. By 0700 hours the situation for Linc & Welld R. was favourable indeed, for the engineers by opening the routes northward over or around the various craters had allowed the tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt to join in the fray and the battalion's own supporting anti-tank guns to come forward. (Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col Coleman, op cit, para 30; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 8, 56, 68, 79, 80)

505. On Brigadier Moncel's left success had also crowned our endeavours. A. & S.H. of C., having passed through Lake Sup R. (Mot) at first light, made good progress. The battalion was not hindered much, thanks to very effective artillery support (given out by 19 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.)), which was itself preceded by a bombardment from 1 Cdn Rocket Bty (R.C.A.). (Regimental History, 19 Cdn Army Fd Regt (S.P.), R.C.A., p. 115). The village of Rostrup fell to "A" Coy before noon, then "D" Coy went on towards the airport. Meanwhile at the base of the Argyles' position, 65 Cdn A.Tk Bty filled in the gaps along the line of the railway left vacant by the infantry's advance. The southern fringe of the airport was reached by 1615 hours (30 Apr) but at this time Lt-Col Coffin's battalion was so stretched out that he ordered a slight withdrawal in order to tighten its position. (W.D., A. & S.H. of C., 30 Apr 45). The remainder of the day was spent in "tidying up" the lines of communication from the railway to the forward positions. This was done with the aid of "A" Coy Lake Sup R. (Mot), which, together with another squadron of the Grenadiers, screened the left flank closely from the railroad to the north where it joined A. & S.H. of C. south of Rostrup (1611). (W.D., 22 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Apr 45)

506. Now that both ends of Bad Zwischenahn were virtually sealed, the brigade commander decided that he would try to capture the town intact, for the famed summer resort offered great possibilities as a headquarters area. The services of the intelligence officers were therefore enlisted and they produced the terms of an ultimatum which was to be delivered to the mayor of Bad Zwischenahn by a local priest.

The time for del of the ultimatum was set at 1930 hrs and at that time the B.M. took the priest to the fwd pl of the Lake Sup R. (Mot) whence a patrol took him to the edge of the town...he was to return in two hours.

(W.D., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 30 Apr 45)

There was several hours delay in the proceedings, but in due course the German Commander replied:

- (i) That he would not surrender the town or his tps
- (ii) that he guaranteed to have no tps in the town by the time his msg reached our H.Q., and
- (iii) that he would give no guarantee not to shell the town if our tps moved in.

(Memorandum of Interviews, Brigadier R.W. Moncel, op cit, para 14)

These terms were accepted, but with a stern warning that for every shell the enemy dropped on Bad Zwischenahn, we would respond with a hundred: Bad Zwischenahn surrendered at 0730 hours 1 May 45. (Ibid, also Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 29 Apr - 5 May 45, op cit, para 3)

507. The past 36 hours had also seen the situation of 2 Cdn Armd Bde greatly improved. Once the bridge (086063) halfway between Westerscheps and Godensholt was completed early on 29 Apr, the tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt crossed the stream and in company with men of the S.A.S. began the journey to the north-west. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 29 Apr 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 19 Apr 45, serials 4, 16, 27). As the advance up the main road to Godensholt progressed, "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt and another troop of 6 Cdn Armd Regt's tanks swung off to the right of the axis to determine the resistance on that flank. (Ibid, serial 29). "B" Sqn (of the Manitobas) was at this time attempting to find a route to the north from Danikhorst (1305) along the western side of 4 Cdn Armd Bde's main axis. (Ibid, serial 40). On all routes of exploration the story was the same - roadblocks and craters barred the way. (Ibid, serial 43). Shortly after midday 1 Brit S.A.S. Regt and another squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt arrived to relieve the Belgian Paratroops, and the advance continued against varied resistance. A few prisoners, mostly very young specimens, were taken, and the armour accounted for one of the enemy's self-propelled guns. (Ibid, serial 49, 63, 77). The troops pushed on slowly all afternoon, reaching another demolished bridge (072080) just beyond Rothenmethen (0807), but here again engineer work was necessary before any more ground could be covered. While the sappers plied their trade, "D" Sqn's Staghounds out on the right persisted in the effort to reach the road Godensholt-Ocholt (0912). The road to Godensholt was reported open once more at about 2040 hours. Elements of 1 Brit S.A.S. then pressed on with the tanks to secure the bridgehead while plans were being drawn up for the assault on Godensholt itself. (Ibid, serials 87, 93, 94)

508. The heavy mist which hung over the new bridgehead on the morning of 30 Apr made any immediate resumption of the advance impractical, good visibility being essential for 2 Cdn Armd Bde's movement along this narrow axis. The enemy decided

to take advantage of the mist however, and launched a short though spirited counter-attack against the small bridgehead. There ensued a fierce fire fight in which as usual the combined fire power of the Shermans and the S.A.S. drove the attackers off. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, April 1945, Appx 1, Ops Log, 30 Apr 45, message L.O. 4, 0700 hours). Patrolling took up the rest of the morning while the final touches were put to the next plan of attack. One squadron Belg S.A.S., together with a squadron of its British counterpart and elements of 6 Cdn Armd Regt, struck out to the north-west at about 1330 hours. By that time "D" Sqn 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt accompanied by some tanks had already cut the road Godensholt-Ocholt at a point south-west of Ocholt (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, serials 42, 43, 45)

509. The bridges leading into Ocholt from the south being demolished, the force turned its attention to the main road running south-west to Godensholt and to the railway line parallel to it. (Ibid, serial 43). Meanwhile, the southern force of the S.A.S. having reached Godensholt and finding the opposition light, entered the place and swung west and north. (Ibid, serials 49, 51). Back at Westerscheps the Royal Canadian Dragoons had also begun offensive patrolling to the south-west and were standing guard at the bridge areas near Harkebrugger Mark (0903) and Langer (0805). (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 30 Apr 45; also 2 Cdn Armd Bde Ops Log, op cit, 30 Apr 45, message 1 CACR Ops, 1400 hours)

INTENTIONS 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 1 MAY 45*

510. Now that Bad Zwischenahn had fallen, plans were put into effect for a business-like take over of the resort by provost, military government and its associated technical experts. The armoured division, however, was not to be allowed to rest on its laurels, for on this first day of May Lt-Gen Simonds decided that Maj-Gen Vokes' troops must reach out even further north to seize Varel (2361). On the left and right, 1 Pol Armd Div and 2 Cdn Inf Div were to occupy themselves with the tasks of capturing Wilhelmshaven and Oldenburg respectively. (Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col W.G.M. Robinson, O.B.E., G.S.O. I, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, para 15). It was the G.O.C's plan to move against Varel on two axes with 10 Cdn Inf Bde going directly north and the armoured brigade striking first east, then north when it reached the road Oldenburg - Varel. (Ibid)

OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 1-4 MAY 45**

511. The switch in direction called for in the new Corps plans demanded certain readjustments within 4 Cdn Armd Div's dispositions. These were settled at the Divisional commander's conference at 0900 hours 1 May and divulged to the units in the following message:

* Reference maps as for para 494.

** Reference maps as for para 494; also Sheets 2815 - Oldenburg, 2614 - Varel, 2615 - Jaderberg; also Appx "E".

- ... (3) 4 Cdn Armd Div is directed on VAREL 2733;
- (4) Objectives - 4 Cdn Armd Bde
- (a) WESTERSTEDE 1218; (b) SPOHLE 1223; HEUBULT 2826; (d) SEGHOEN 2132; (e) VAREL 2733;
- (5) Objectives - 2 Cdn Armd Bde, (a) APEN 0413; (b) WESTERSTEDE 1218; (c) NEUENBURG 1432; (d) BOCKHORN 1833; (e) Open rd GODENSHOLT 0509-OCHOLT 1012;
- (6) Objectives - 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, Sweep RIGHT flank up to WESER opposite BREMERHAVEN;
- (7) Objectives - 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, Op on LEFT flank 2 Cdn Armd Bde.
- (8) (a) Grouping - Initial Phase - Area ZWISCHENAHNER MEER upon a time to be arranged between bde comds (i) LINC & WELLD R reverts to comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde and (ii) ALQ R comes under comd 4 Cdn Armd Bde; (b) Bds - LEFT side of lake - 4 Cdn Armd Bde and RIGHT side of lake 10 Cdn Inf Bde.
- (9) Later Phases - (a) 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt will revert to comd 4 Cdn Armd Bde; (b) 4 Cdn Armd Bde leading - 10 Cdn Inf Bde to take over and relieve behind; (c) After capture of ELMENDORF A & S H of C revert to comd 10 Cdn Inf Bde.
- (10) Adv will re-commence first lt 2 May 45.

(AEF: 45/4 CDN ARMD DIV/C/H,
Docket I, May 1945, Ops Log,
1 May 45, serial 34)

512. Pending the completion of the regrouping for the next phase of the attack, pressure was kept up all across the divisional front. Opposition continued heavy in the region of Kayhausen (1909) as well as on the west side of the lake, where A. & S.H. of C. were threatening the area of the airport. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, 29 Apr - 5 May 45, op cit, para 3). Our patrol actions retained contact throughout the day. (Ibid). Linc & Welld R. returned to Brigadier Jefferson's command at 1630 hours 1 May, at the same time Alq R. passed to under command 4 Cdn Armd Bde. The infantry brigade commander's orders were for A. & S.H. of C. to keep moving along the west side of the lake; simultaneously Linc & Welld R. was to skirt around the eastern shore with the object of meeting Lt-Col Coffin's troops somewhere along the northern shore. (W.D., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, A. & S.H. of C., Linc & Welld R., 1 May 45)

513. Linc & Welld R.'s operation was timed to begin at 0700 hours 2 May and Lt-Col Coleman's men spent a greater part of 1 May patrolling out of the battalion position, filling the craters within the perimeter, and harassing the suspected enemy posts with artillery and mortar fire. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 1 May 45). Then, shortly after midnight, 1/2 May, "C" Coy set out along the road leading north from Kayhausen (1909) with the task of crossing the stream between that place and Aschhauserfeld (2010). At the same time "A" Coy ventured directly eastwards (on the main route). The northern effort was not able to make much headway; the enemy seemingly had the area "taped" with his mortars and it took a good deal of counter-bombardment before the situation permitted any advance. By 0600 hours "C" Coy was on its objective north-east of the water obstacle but under such heavy small arms and self-propelled gun fire that Lt-Col Coleman ordered a slight withdrawal to allow the artillery to "plaster" the opposition. The shells came down and the infantry went on

again to resume the advance, enclosed in a half circle of artillery and mortar fire which cleared the way ahead and swept the flanks tightly. As the infantry pushed on the engineers worked on the road to the rear, and at about 1000 hours a troop of tanks from 28 Cdn Armd Regt arrived at the forward positions to give support. (Ibid, 2 May 45)

514. Meanwhile "A" Coy had reached the road junction (204096) east of Kayhausen, but only to find its path blocked by felled trees. However, enough ground had been gained in this direction and a company of Alq R. was dispatched by 4 Cdn Armd Bde to take over from "A" Coy Linc & Welld R. so as to form a base from which Brigadier Moncel's effort could be launched. (This attack incidentally was supposed to have begun at 0700 hours). When in due course the Algonquins arrived on the scene the position was being so heavily shelled that the turn-over had to be postponed. (Ibid, also W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 2 May 45)

515. The next phase of the advance northwards commenced at 1530 hours when "B" Coy (Linc & Welld R.) swung through "C" Coy's tiny bridgehead with the crossroads (205108) as its objective. (W.D., Linc & Welld R., 2 May 45). Success here was mainly due to the magnificent artillery support. According to the history of 15 Cdn Fd Regt:

[This] ...was one of the last of the campaign and one of the most successful. It was planned by the CO who came to the battalion orders group to pass the details to the company commander, and targets were registered by the air OP. The fire came down exactly as wanted. The infantry commander led his men onto the objective close behind the fire and thus they had little fighting to do. So swift was their advance that they literally raced to the objective.

(Spencer - Fifteenth Canadian Field Regt,
op cit, p. 266)

"B" Coy (Linc & Welld R.) took 39 prisoners in this attack. (Ibid)

516. The next few hours were taken up in the adjusting of positions and patrolling. The left flank was turned over to an "ad hoc" group consisting of scouts, drivers and batmen ordered to insure that "B" Coy was not interfered with from the direction of the lake. On the right "A" Coy was eventually relieved by Alq R. All this time the road into "B" Coy's area hummed with activity as Lake Sup R. (Mot) wended its way to a forming up place, whence it would strike east along the narrow road south of Aschhauserfeld (2010). The motor battalion's leading troops turned to the east at 2230 hours; once they were off his axis, Lt-Col Coleman quickly passed his own "D" Coy on to the north. (Ibid)

517. On the other side of the lake A. & S.H. of C. had also made good progress. In the late morning of 1 May "D" Coy had begun to cross the airfield under heavy shell and mortar fire.

The airfield itself paid glowing tribute to the thorough work done by the Allied Air Force. It was literally sprinkled with bomb craters, all its hangars

were 100% destroyed as were the few German planes and 2-man submarines that were housed therein.

(W.D., A. & S.H. of C.,
1 May 45)

Then, after a quiet day and night (1/2 May), A. & S.H. of C. reverted to under command of its parent formation at 0700 hours 2 May. During the day no major move took place but shortly after dark "C" Coy went forward to occupy the woods (184130) south of Elmendorf (1813). Since the enemy did not venture to oppose this gain, "A" Coy was sent on to capture the cross-roads (183135) in Elmendorf itself. Resistance remained weak and the Argyles, whose line of communication to the south had been strengthened by the arrival of 3 and 14 Cdn A.Tk Btys, had no trouble in consolidating early on 3 May. After this a programme of patrolling was ordered; "B" Coy was sent westwards, "D" Coy was sent north as far as Helle (1814), while "C" Coy had the task of swinging to the east along the road bordering the northern shore of the lake. (Ibid, 3 May 45; 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 50, 52, 70, 82, 85; 3 May 45, serials 6, 14, 39)

518. Meanwhile Linc & Welld R. had rolled on to the north; "D" Coy established a bridgehead over the Halfsteder stream north-west of Aschhauserfeld (2010) through which Lt-Col Coleman passed "A" Coy with instructions to seize the next road junction (203125) some 1200 yards further up the axis. The Canadian mortar and artillery kept up a continuous bombardment all along the route and by 1000 hours 3 May "A" Coy reported its objective secure. From here the company commander dispatched a fast patrol towards the Argyles. "C" Coy A. & S.H. of C. and the patrol from Linc & Welld R. joined hands on the road south of Meyerhausen (1913) at about 1030 hours. (W.Ds., H.Q. 10 Cdn Inf Bde, Linc & Welld R., 3 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 7, 19, 35, 48). From the south-western flank still more good news came from the Marines, who had struck out from Vor dem Moor to clear Sandberg (1803) and occupy Jeddelloh (1903). (Ibid, serials 15, 23)

4 CDN ARMD BDE TURNS EAST, 2 MAY 45*

519. At the same time as the infantry brigade was encircling the lake, 4 Cdn Armd Bde turned its attention eastwards. It has already been mentioned how this armoured attack was delayed because of the opposition encountered by Linc & Welld R. in the region of Kayhausen. By the early morning of 3 May however, Brigadier Moncel had Lake Sup R. (Mot) firmly settled astride the road north of Richt Moor (2312) and half-way between Gristede (2114) and Neuenkrug (2512), all this after a hectic cross-country trek from Lt-Col Coleman's positions west of Aschhauserfeld (2010). Success here may be attributed to a small-scale deception programme carried out by the artillery during the previous night. The guns had been purposely laid to engage the area north of Linc & Welld R; the searchlights also had been turned to illuminate the northern route towards Gristede (2114). The ruse had worked to perfection, for while the enemy focused his attention towards the artillery's target areas the men of the motor battalion had crept across the fields with great

* Reference maps as for para 511; also Appx "E".

stealth to reach their present position. (W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot) 2 and 3 Apr 45)

520. The route across the soggy fields was not a perfect choice for the Grenadier Guard's Shermans, and neither "C" nor "B" Coy, which followed up, was able to retain its tank support; the mud claimed most of the vehicles of 22 Cdn Armd Regt and they had to be left behind. Nevertheless, the infantry forged ahead and by mid-morning was at the village of Neuenkrug (2511-2611). "A" Coy then went through and, still keeping to the main road, got into Borbeck (2712) without any trouble whatever. (Ibid, also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 18, 21, 23, 38)

521. Good results were similarly obtained along the armoured brigade's southern axis from Kayhausen - Hartenstroth (2209) - Wehnen (2608) - Ofen (2708), where Lt-Col Akehurst's battle group had been gaining ground steadily since the evening of 2 May. By midnight 2/3 May the Algonquins were in possession of over 2000 yards of the road east of Kayhausen and from first light on the advance progressed without interference. (W.D., Alq R., 2-3 May 45). In the words of Brigadier Moncel's War Diary:

Thus began the last "mad rush" the bde gps carried out. Pts were reported clear in bewildering rapidity...

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

As time passed it became evident that the enemy had made some sort of withdrawal from the area Bad Zwischenahn - Oldenburg (soon to surrender to 2 Cdn Inf Div) - Rastede. The operations which later developed showed that the Germans were in fact attempting to screen the town of Varel - probably with the idea of pivoting on it since that place straddled the direct approach to Wilhelmshaven. (Weekly Summary of Ops and Activities, 4 Cdn Armd Div, op cit, 29 Apr - 5 May 45)

2 CDN ARMD BDE BREAKS AWAY TO THE NORTH, 1-3 MAY 45*

522. The enemy's decision to try to re-establish another co-ordinated defensive line may be attributed in part to the recent activities of Brigadier G.W. Robinson's flying columns of tanks, armoured cars, and the fast-moving S.A.S. These various mobile groups had already accounted for a fair number of mutually-supporting defended localities wedged in between the Polish thrust on Maj-Gen Vokes' left and the Canadian armoured push to Bad Zwischenahn. On 1 May, while the main body of Brigadier Robinson's troops probed the routes out of Godensholt, the Royal Canadian Dragoons first patrolled west from Westerscheps to report Harkebrugge (0502) clear, then south to the area of Kampe (0699) situated on the northern bank of the Kusten Canal. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 1-2 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 1 May 45, serial 65, 2 May 45 serial 71). On the following day "B", "C" and "D" Sqns were warned of the impending move to Rostrup (which had been already cleared by A. & S.H. of C.). That day however, only "B" Sqn

* Reference maps: 1:25,000 Sheets 2613 - Neuenburg, 2614 - Varel, 2713 - Westerstede, 2714 - Wiefelstede; also Appx "F".

actually reached the new area, where it prepared for the next task - a dash through to Westerstede (1218). Here it was hoped that the staghounds would contact 1 Pol Armd Div. For this job Lt-Col K. Landell had one squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt and part of the Belgian S.A.S. allotted to him. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 2 May 45). "A" Sqn remained around Westerscheps and extended its patrols to cover the east bank of the Elisabethfehn Canal west of Kampe. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 2 May 45, serials 79, 81)

523. Early on 3 May the dragoons began their journey to Westerstede accompanied by Sherman tanks (of 6 Cdn Armd Regt), elements of 1 Belg S.A.S. Regt, and some engineers to deal with any obstacles which might be barring the way. (W.D., 1 Cdn Armd C. Regt, 3 May 45). At the same time to the north and east of the Zwischensahner Meer, 18 Cdn Armd C. Regt, (under orders to sweep on from the Lake and pace Maj-Gen Vokes' advancing brigades), was concentrating its squadrons for the work ahead. This concentration was not easily arranged, for the routes to the forward areas were cluttered with all sorts of traffic and fighting equipment following in the wake of the armoured division's spearheads.

THE SOUTHERN FLANK, 25 APR - 3 MAY 45*

524. Before continuing the story of the final punch which was soon to end the war in north-west Europe, some mention must be made of the operations south-east of the Kusten Canal by 4 Cdn Armd Div's armoured reconnaissance unit. In this section, mainly due to the fact that the enemy force deployed against 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt now appeared to consist of a full German parachute brigade (Gross Deutschland Div had, so prisoners stated, been withdrawn), and since it was not possible or practical for the regiment to carry out offensive operations without infantry support, Lt-Col Wotherspoon's task was given over to maintaining contact and at the same time trying to keep pace with 2 Cdn Inf Div's advance on his right:

From 27 Apr until...contact was maintained wherever possible. When the GERMANS pulled out, the Regt advanced against a mass of mines, booby-traps, and craters. "A" Sqn advanced to Wardenburg 3096 and OBERLETHE 2997, which it reported clear, during the morning of 1 May.

(Memorandum of Interview,
Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon,
op cit, para 27)

Road blocks and craters again stopped the advance however, at the main road junction (307967) in Wardenburg (3096). On the same day "B" Sqn, tailing the leading squadron but on the left of the main road, was at that time still 1500 yards short of the line Oberlethe (2997) - Wardenburg (3096). Meanwhile "C" Sqn remained near Halenherst (2888), unable to reach Littel (2892) because of the wide craters and other obstacles across the route. (Ibid)

* Reference maps: 1:25,000 Sheets 2814 - Bad Zwischenahn, 2815 - Oldenburg, 2914 - Littel, 2915 - Wardenburg, 3015 - Grossenkneten; also Appx "E" and "F".

525. Early on the evening of 1 May the leading tanks of "A" Sqn were at Zwischenlethe (3099) but came under such heavy shellfire from the north banks of the Kusten Canal that the troops were pulled back into Wardenburg (3096). On the following morning another attempt to move up was successful and the tanks worked their way through Zwischenlethe (3099) to Hundsmuhlen (3001). Contact with the enemy vanished at this point and civilians reported that all German troops had gone north. Over on the left flank "C" Sqn's advance also made fair headway on 2 May. The tanks moved without much interference through Littel (2892), went on up to Oberlethe (2897), constructed a bridge there, and continued on to the north. There was little fighting to be done, for Oldenburg surrendered to Maj-Gen Matthews' troops on 3 May. At that time Lt-Col Wotherspoon had his squadrons deployed as follows: "A" Sqn near Hengstlagerweg (3090), "C" Sqn at Westerholt (2797), and "B" Sqn south at Wardenburg (3095). Elements of 3 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, working under command of the South Albertas, were at the time holding the hamlet of Tungeln (3099). (Ibid)

526. Patrolling continued and during the afternoon an extensive reconnaissance was made of the south bank of the Kusten Canal. The enemy had done a good job in his withdrawal. All the roads leading north were badly cratered and not one single bridge remained intact. Normally the situation might have proved discouraging, but events all across the allied front had taken such a turn for the best that the South Albertas were content to hold what gains they had and wait for the order which would soon send them north again to join their own formation in the last battle. (W.D., 29 Cdn Armd Recce Regt, 27-30 Apr 45, 1-2 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div, Ops Log, op cit, 29 Apr 45, serials 79, 84, 92, 102; 30 Apr 45, serials 29, 38, 50, 53, 65; also Memorandum of Interview Lt-Col G.D. de S. Wotherspoon, op cit, para 26-27)

CONCLUDING OPERATIONS OF 4 CDN ARMD DIV, 3-4 MAY 45*

527. The morning of 3 May will long be remembered by Maj-Gen Vokes' troops. With the encirclement of Zwischenahner Meer completed, the armoured brigade away to a good start in the direction of Oldenburg, and 2 Cdn Armd Bde's forces heading for Westerstede to meet the Poles, the staff at divisional headquarters anticipated that it might well be a day of notable achievement. Actually it turned out to be much more than that. As the morning hours passed so many things happened with such amazing rapidity that soon, to quote the War Diary of 4 Cdn Armd Bde, "Everyone could now see the handwriting of the wall". (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, 3 May 45)

528. Once the fall of Oldenburg was announced, the pace of 4 Cdn Armd Bde's advance was stepped up in order to join hands with Maj-Gen Matthews' troops now picquetting the northern exits from that city. Contact with 2 Cdn Inf Div was made at about noon 3 May. (W.Ds., G.S., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Div, 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Lake Sup R. (Mot), 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.), 3 May 45). This contact was actually made by the Commander of 4 Cdn Armd Bde accompanied by Lt-Col Amy of the Grenadiers and Lt-Col Hogarth of 23 Cdn Fd Regt (S.P.). These officers with

* Reference maps as for para 494; also Appx "E".

an escort of carriers of Lake Sup R. (Mot) made the hazardous journey south-eastwards from the armoured division's forward areas to meet troops of Maj-Gen Matthews' formation. Thereafter the battle groups lost little time. "C" Coy group of Lake Sup R. (Mot) passed through "A" Coy at Borbeck (2712), dashed past Borbeckerfeld (2913) and consolidated the crossroads area south of Leuchtenburg (2914). Within a short time "B" Coy was brought up to push on to the north and at 1510 hours settled at Hostemost (2916), a small farm community west of the railway flanking the town of Rastede (3117). From here strong armoured patrols were sent to the railway. Meanwhile Lt-Col Keane had his other companies mobile and ready to press on. "A" Coy swung to the west of "B" to secure Nuttel (2716), then at 1900 hours "C" Coy followed up and, having reached Nuttel (2716), struck northwards to the woods north of Wemkendorf (2718). Here the infantry met a little resistance at a road block, but after a short fight took 20 prisoners and dug in around the obstacle. As darkness fell, "B" Coy shifted its position once more. From Hostemost (2916) Maj T.H. Murray ("B" Coy) was instructed to side-step to the west, follow the secondary road leading north from Bokelerburg, and capture the high feature astride the railway south of Rehorn (2919). At 2155 hours the attack went in; 43 prisoners were taken and the objective secured. The entire advance on 3 May had been a fine example of speed and mobility hindered solely by craters, mines, and roadblocks. But, as already shown, these obstacles caused only the slightest delay to the enthusiastic Canadian soldier. (W.D., Lake Sup R. (Mot), 3 May 45; also 4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 72, 73, 79, 101, 104, 111)

529. The advance of Alq R. on 4 Cdn Armd Bde's southern axis was equally spectacular. The villages of Ofen (2708) and Metjendorf (2910) and the area of Neu Sudende (3013) all fell in quick succession. There was little of the enemy to be seen. Leaving "A" Coy at the airfield, the other sub-units with tanks of 21 Cdn Armd Regt in close attendance moved on steadily in battle formation and by last light were situated as follows: "C" Coy had a strong position at the southern tip of the Park Hagen (the woods south of Rastede), "B" Coy was consolidated on the eastern edge of Rastede, "D" Coy remained between Metjendorf (2910) and Ofenerfeld (3011) on short notice to follow the main thrust north. (4 Cdn Armd Div Ops Log, op cit, 3 May 45, serials 78, 111; W.Ds., H.Q. 4 Cdn Armd Bde, Alq R., 3 May 45). In dealing with the operations of 3 May the unit War Diary states:

In the past 24 hrs the unit has advanced about 12 miles, picking up the defeated Jerries in their stride. Jerry is to all appearances, completely beaten in this area. All sign of any further organized resistance has vanished. Our men are quite elated at the turn the battle has taken - and why not? To-day's 12 mile advance represents a larger territorial gain than the combined work of the previous 16 days.

(Ibid)

530. In the meantime, while Brigadier Moncel's infantry and tank columns had been reaching out towards Rastede, 10 Cdn Inf Bde had complied with the divisional commander's instructions to swing east and follow the main effort. After the encirclement of the lake, A. & S.H. of C. back-tracked through Bad Zwischenahn and came up through Linc & Wellld R. to advance on Gristede (2114). As darkness fell Lt-Col Coffin's leading troops entered Gristede, meeting no active opposition but finding that the enemy had mined