

D. DAY LANDINGS AND THE BATTERS OF NORMANDY AND FRANCE

AT 10AM ON JUNE WE EMBARKED NEAR PORTSMOUTH READY AND AWAITING "THE OFF" FOR SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE. BUT WHERE? THE WEATHER TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE AND DEPARTURE WAS DELAYED FOR 24 HOURS ON THE MORNING OF JUNE THE 4TH

THE WEATHER DID NOT SEEM TO GET ANY BETTER BUT DISPIE THIS DISRUPTION TO HIGHER PEOPLES PLANS MIDDAY ON JUNE THE 5TH DISITIONS WERE MADE TO MOVE OFF.

SHIPS ENGINES STARTED TO THROB AND WE WERE OFF TO SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE.

THIS WAS THE MOMENT, WE THE SPECIALIST UNITS HAD BEEN TRAINING 2 YEARS FOR.

MOST OUR REGIMENT THE 13/18 HUSSARS WERE ABOUT TO FACE UP ENEMY ACTION FOR OUR FIRST TIME. SURROUNDED BY OUR TANKS ON BOARD THE TANK LANDING CRAFT L.C.T.

THE CROSSING WAS ROUGH AND WE SAW PICTURES AND PHOTOGRAPHERS OF OUR OBJECTIVES. IT WAS NORMANDY AT ABOUT 7 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING WE WERE NOW ABOARD OUR TANKS AND WARMING UP THE ENGINES AT 7 O'CLOCK ~~WE~~ WE LAUNCHED OUR TANKS AT 5000 YDS FROM THE BEACHES. OUR TANKS WHICH WERE AMPHIBEOUS WE NOW HEADING FOR THE UNKNOWING PART OF NORMANDY. BECAUSE WE HAD DONE OUR TRAINING IN THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND WE WERE ^{NOT} OVERAWED BY THE ROUGH SEA. WHICH WE HAD EXPERIENCED ON 'NORTH WATERS OF THE MOREY FORTH AND THIS RESULTED IN OUR REGIMENT WE THE ONLY ONE TO LAUNCHED AT SEA

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IT TOOK APPROX. 30 MINS. TO REACH THE BEACH
AT WHICH POINT WE NOW FIRING AT SELECTED TARGETS FOR
EACH TANK. AT THIS POINT THE TANK I WAS ON WAS
SWAMPED BY THE VERY FAST INCOMING TIDE. I SWAM THE
200/300 YARDS TO THE SHORE AND SAT AGAINST THE SAND
WHICH WAS NEAR THE PROMANADE NEAR HERMANVILLE,
AND OUISTREHAM.
IT WAS NOT VERY LONG I SAW ONE OF OUR RECOVERY TANKS
COMING UP THE BEACH AND CLAMPERED ON BOARD AND WAS
GIVING A LIFT INTO HERMANVILLE AND WAS DROPPED OFF
THE CHURCH. THERE I MET 2 OTHER MEMBERS OF OUR CREW
AND WE DUG A TRENCH FOR THE 3 OF US WERE SETTLED INTO
UNTIL WE ACQUIRED SOME SORT OF WEAPONS. AFTER WE GOT
3 STEN GUNS WE NOW GOT OUT INTO HERMANVILLE AND FIND
OUT WAS HAPPENING. IT WAS NOT VERY LONG BEFORE WE DISCOVERED
THERE WAS A SNIPER FROM SOMEWHERE WAS SHOOTING OTHER
SOLDIERS IN THE VILLAGE.
IT WAS NOT VERY LONG BEFORE SOMEONE THOUGHT IT WAS COMING
FROM THE TOP OF THE CHURCH. SOMEONE GOT THE HOLD OF
PIAT RIFLE (BAZOOKA) TOOK AIM AT THE CHURCH TOWER (YOU CAN
STILL SEE NEW STONES) AND IN WE WENT AND FOUND OUT
THAT OUR SNIPER FRIEND HAD BEEN KILLED BY THE EXPLOSION.
WHILST WE WERE AWAITING A REPLACEMENT TANK WE DISCOVERED
ONE OF OUR CREW HAD BEEN DROWNED BURIED IN HERMANVILLE
CEMETRY WHICH I VISIT ANY TIME I AM IN NORMANDY
HIS NAME IS JOHN HUGHES AGE 26 YEARS.
BY THE END OF WEEK WE HAD A NEW TANK PLUS 2 NEW CREW
MEMBERS. WE JOINED 'A' SQUADRON AND NOW BACK
IN ACTION. WE SWEEP ROUND INTO LION SUR MERE
AND DID A BIT OF TIDYING UP ALONG THE BIT OF COASTLINE
STILL HELD BY THE GERMANS. WHILE THIS WAS GOING
ON SHELLS FROM THE BATTLESHIPS WERE ADDING TO
THE EXPLODING FROM TANKS AND THE ENEMY AND
AT THE END OF THIS EXERCISE A FAIR NUMBER OF GUN
ENPLACEMENTS WE DISTROYED AND A LARGE NO OF THE
ENEMY CAPTURED. AFTER IMMEDIATE FIGHTING AROUND
HERMANVILLE WE MOVED IN THE DIRECTION OF LION SUR MERE
TO TIDY UP POCKET OF RESISTANCE IN AROUND THAT AREA

3 WE MOVED ON TO BENOUVILLE TO STIFFEN UP THE AIRBOURNE TROOPS WHO HAD BEEN HOLDING UP GERMAN ATTACKS ON THE BRIDGE (PELASUS) WHICH WAS VITAL IN ATTACKS ON STOPPING UP THE SUPPLIES ON THE BEACHES. AFTER THIS WE MOVED ON TO RANVILLE AND HELPED ANOTHER UNIT OF THE AIRBOURNE WHO WERE TRYING TO FIGHT OFF THE GERMANS IN THAT AREA. WE WENT INTO RESERVE WHILST B SQUADRON ATTACKED TOWARDS LA BISUDE AND ON TO AUBERGE AND MOVING TOWARDS CAEN WHICH THE GERMANS WERE HOLDING ON TENACIOUSLY WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN IN THE FIRST WEEK AFTER 'D' DAY. THE REASON FOR THE HOLD UP WAS THE VITAL ROAD JUNCTION WAS DEFENDED BY THE GERMANS WHO COULD PICK THEIR HIDDEN GUNS AND TANKS WHEREAS THE ATTACKERS WERE DRIVING INTO UNSEEN ENEMY WHO WERE WAITING FOR THEIR ATTACKER. BOMBERS WERE CALLED INTO ATTACK THESE DIFFICULT DEFENDERS AND CAEN WAS BOMBED TO THE DEATH OF MANY OF THE CIVILIANS. THIS GAVE NO SATISFACTION TO BRITISH TROOPS BUT THEY WERE ALSO DYING FOR THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE. MEANTIME THE 13/18 HUSSARS WERE FIGHTING TOWARDS VILLERS BOCCAGE AND ON TO AUNAY SUR ODON WITH A VIEW TO GETTING NEAR TO MONT PINCON. AFTER DAYS OF FIGHTING WE ARRIVED AT CHANTPIE. AHEAD WAS THE FORMIDABLE 'MONT'. AFTER 4 DAYS TRYING TO CAPTURE THIS DIFFICULT OBJECTIVE AND SUFFERING A NUMBER OF CASUALTYS AND GETTING NOWHERE LADY LUCK CAME TO OUR AID. AN EARLY EVENING MIST SETTLED DOWN OVER THE AREA CAPTAIN DENNY AND EIGHT OTHER TANKS FOUND A WAY TO THE TOP OF MONT PINCON. FROM THIS POSITION WE COULD HEAR THE ENEMY WHO COULD HEAR US BUT COULD NOT SEE US. WE FIRED A NUMBER OF SHELLS IN THEIR DIRECTION AND CONTINUED DURING THE NIGHT CAUSING THE GERMANS TO PULL OUT OF THIS DIFFICULT OBJECTIVE. THE SUPPORTING INFANTRY ARRIVED TO JOIN US AND 'MONT' WAS OURS. THE CAPTURE OF MONT PINCON WAS THE TURNING OF THE WAR IN NORANDY WITH THE BOCCAGE COUNTRY AND OPEN PLAINS WHICH LED TO THE BIG RETREAT OF THE GERMANS. NOW WERE ON THE ROAD TO FALAISE WHERE THE LOSS OF EQUIPMENT ETCETRA

4 WAS TREMENDOUS. WE PUSHED ON TO PUTANGES FOLLOWED BY ARGENTAN WHERE WE CLEANED UP A CERTAIN DEFENSIVE POCKET WHICH DID NOT HAVE THE HEART TO DEFEND.

AFTER THIS WE RODE ON TO LAIGLE ON TO EVREUX FOLLOWED BY VERNON WHICH WAS CROSSED BY A BAILEY BRIDGE CONSTRUCTED BY OUR ENGINEERS WHICH WE CROSSED ON THE 28TH OF AUGUST. AND AFTER WHICH WE MOVED ON TO GISORS. IN DESCRIBING THESE PLACES I HAVE NOT SPOKEN ABOUT THE CASUALTIES WE SUFFERED FIGHTING THROUGH THE REARGUARDS OF THE GERMANS WHO WERE TRYING TO DELAY US

WE WERE NOT BE STOPPED. IT WAS ON TO BEAUVAIS, AMIENS ARRAS - AMIENS AND ON TO THE BRIDGE. MEANWHILE 'A' AND 'B'

SQUADRONS WENT TO THE RIGHT FLANK TO STOP THE ENEMY FROM WITHDRAWING FROM DOULLENS BUT WHEN THEY GOT THERE THEY SAW THAT SPITFIRES HAD GOT THERE FIRST AND HAD MESSED UP THE GERMANS, LEAVING A MESS OF DEAD, WOUNDED AND LOTS OF EQUIPMENT. THE REGIMENT HAD DRIVEN 100 MILES SINCE NORMANDY AND CROSSING THE SEINE. IT WAS NOW ON TO BELGIUM. WE CROSSED THE BORDER AT BAISIEUX AND ON TO BRUSSELS ~~WHERE~~ WHERE THE POPULATION WERE OUT IN THEIR THOUSANDS GIVING THE TROOPS A GREAT WELCOME.

THIS COVERS MOST OF THE BATTLES IN FRANCE AND THE MAIN MEMORIES, ARE MONT PINCON NOT FORGETTING THE LANDINGS ON THE BEACHES. WHICH I HOPE TO RETURN ABOUT 6TH OF JUNE 2004

YOU WILL FIND THE MORIAL MOUNDMENT AT THE TOP OF THE 'MONT,' AND IN THE SMALL MUSEUM BETWEEN OUISTREHAM AND HERMANVILLE WHO HAVE MODELS OF THE SWIMMING TANKS WHICH WE USED FOR THE LANDINGS

P.S. I HOPE THIS MAY BE WHAT YOU ARE WANTING

JOE COLLIER'S 13/18 ROYAL HUSSARS