

June 1983.

Well, here it is at last! The long awaited issue of R and F. It's been a tidy while since the last issue came out, September last year to be exact. The long delay being no fault of the Editors by the way, it was due to lack of articles. But now at last some members have bothered to put pen to paper and...Well read on.

But more articles are still required if we are to have continuing issues of the newsletter, so please keep them coming.

Editor.

NEXT CLUB MEETINGS

S unday, June 5th (1st Sunday of each month): 2.15pm at St Thomas's Hall, Vale Avenue, Southborough.

Tuesday, 21st and 28th (3rd and 4th Tuesday of each month): 7pm at The Imperial, London Road, Southborough.

RECENT MEETINGS

FEB 1983:

Very poor attendance of only 29. The six games in progress were a 25mm Ancient between Indians and Successors, AWI in 25mm also, and a 25mm Napoleonic. Micro Naval and a WW2 game were also being fought, and to round things off, a Boardgame called Dragon Pass.

Unfortunately I've lost the Competition results.

MARCH 1983:

Better turnout of 34 this month and very much a micro size meeting, including 3 Naval games and a 1/300th Modern between Jerry and Ivan. The two 25mm battles were once again a Napoleonic and a 16th Century. The usual Boardgame was in evidence, this time being Squad Leader.

Comp Winners: Unit; Irish Musketeers - R.Allan.
Others; Samurai - R.Allan.

APRIL 1983:

37 present this month and a grand total of 11 War-games, no less than 5 being in the Napoleonic period, two being in 25mm, one in 15mm and two in 1/300th, (good old French being beaten all round). A Vietnam 25mm skirmish looked very interesting as did a 25mm Romans v Macedonians Ancient battle. Other games included a Medieval, a 1/300th WW2 and a Boardgame called Divine Right.

MAY 1983:

About the same number present this month, but only 5 Wargames and one Boardgame in action. Three of the battles being 25mm WW2, two set in Europe, the other in the Desert. There was however, a refight of Gettysburg in 5mm and a 25mm AWI game to watch over as well.

Comp Winners: Unit; Roman Cavalry - S.Churchill.
figure; Flat Sassanid - H.Taylor.
Vehicle; Tank Transporter - L.Thompson.

THE BATTLE OF HOLLY GROVE 1644

By Dennis Redhead.

Dear Diary,

Today will be a great day for England. Before our host stands that of the Man of Blood: but our trust is in the Lord and in Cromwell, on whose personal staff I humbly serve.

Set against us in great array; some 1800 or more horsemen, 1500 men of pikes, and, I would hazard nigh on 2500 musketeers, with much cannon besides. Halbardiermen, and primitives with saythes and long-bows are also to be seen amongst their number: and with the Man of Blood, two of his most Satanic henchmen: the wild young Prinz Terenz of Brandenburg, and brutal Colonel Gush.

I have no fear of them however. The good Lord has gathered about us some of Englands stoutest hearts this day (and one or two not so stout - but more of him later).

I would venture our assembled might in the region of some 1400 horse, including bold Hazellrigg's troop: a great stand of pike, in all 2800 strong, and perhaps 1600 musketmen. Withall we too have guns, great and small, and bands of new recruits to our army: poorly armed be it admitted and as yet of no great enthusiasm, but still serving to stop bulletts otherwise destined for the bodies of better men.....

Bold Cromwell himself leads our host: but the Lord, in his wisdom has seen fit to cause Cromwell to entrust part of our array to a timid, Covenanting Scotchman - one Coln. Mack Loud: in whom neither Cromwell nor my humble self can find either valour nor fire....

3 hours after noon.

It is begun! A great cannonade from Man of Blood's (M.o.B's) guns, assembled in a fearsome battery on a small rise some half mile distant from where I stand: and the enemy horse are seen to be on the move.

To my left, the greater part of our horsemen, our great guns, and perhaps two fifths or thereabouts of our foot. The land there is dominated by long hill, which runs full from our positions to theirs: and beyond that, farm lands, with a leafy lane winding through.

Before me, a great plain, sweeping away to where atop a little hill, stand all thrie artillerie, both great and small: and about me our reserve horsemen, 500 in number, and our lesser cannons.

To my right, steep hills and wooded cliffs plunge in confusion: narrow gorges, ridges and ravines abound, though they run to where farmsteads and fields lie, closer to the enemy lines. Atop these rocky eries crouches this Coln. Mack Loud, with a great part of our foot tight about him, and a Regiment of Horse. The hills bristle with our pikemen like a vast hedgehog: and from them, above the roar of cannon, a voice faintly carries to Cromwell, and me. It is Coln. Mack Loud....

"You've deployed all wrong....."

"They've outmanouvred us....."

"I said this wouldn't work....."

"We're doomed, I tell you: doomed...."

"Help...! Help...! Help...!"

The men about me look ill at ease. Rumour sweeps our ranks - it is a moment of crisis.

But the hour finds the man. Calm and still, bold Cromwell quells the rising fear amongst the men: replaces dread and panic with his own steel and resolution. Battle is joined.

Five hours after noon

I must confess, Diary, it goes hard for us. To our left, the enemy shot, swarming like flies, are sore pressing our bold lads all about Long Hill, atop it, and in the valley beyond it too.

Our centre, where stand I with Cromwell, is grievous hit too by their bulletts and cannonballs. Their men, shot and pikemen together, are pushing ever closer to our sore tried ranks.

In the impregnable fastnesses to my right, Coln. Mack Loud's positions have come under enemy fire as the enemy musketeers and dragoons seize farm buildings and outlying walls. Their horse, great in number, and with the brutal Colonel Gush amongst them have chased our dragoons back to the hills: and others of their horse, and foot beside, scenting growing success, are pressing Coln. Mack Loud all along his line.

A horseman gallops in, from these hills.
A messenger from Mack Loud.

"Help, help, help..!"

"They're coming to get me..!"

"It's a disaster - I said this would happen..!"

"Throw in the reserves..!"

"Abandon ship..!"

His proud lip curled to a contemptuous sneer, Cromwell dashes the craven misgiving to the dust at his feet.... and waits.

Six hours after noon

The time is come. Cromwell has sensed, with that resolve and perception which has made him a legend amongst our men, that the M.o.B's first cruel onslaughts are waning. Colonel Gush's proud and undisciplined horsemen are now scattered all about the field: some in pursuit of our first lines of horse, others rallying as best they can. Still others are themselves fleeing, in disorder, whilst some still battle unavailingly amidst the rocks and hilly crags. On their right, the horsemen of Prinz Terenz are breaking formation and riding through their own foot, eager to join in an onslaught that is, in truth, already past it's height.

Our reserves of horse, uncommitted save for one or two isolated brushes, awaits the command.

Cromwell's hand falls - we charge.

Side by side, stirrup to stirrup, troop after troop gallop at the swirling seething throng of enemy horse: I, a young cornet of horse, alongside Cromwell himself, as we burst into and destroy enemy horse in disarray, in the little valley beyond Long Hill. Beside us, other troops of Ironside horse send more of Prinz Terenz's men to their maker, as we whirl past a surviving stand of their pikes, Prinz Terenz himself, ashen faced with fear, rides his horse into their midst, seeking safety from the fury of our charge.

Across the wide valley too, our reserve troops of horse there, at Cromwell's command and impatient for the fray, surge forward at last engaging and shattering the horse of the brutal Colonel Gush himself. Fierce the fighting there as our brave men, lead by bold Hazellrigg's troop engage twice, or even thrice their number: but valour and the right will ever prevail, and do so there, for all our losses.

Even in the craggy defiles from whence snipe the shot of Coln. Mack Loud, indications of new found resolution and valour are emerging. Regiments of his pikemen are actually on their feet again, instead of their faces, and the bolder amongst them are descending to again confront their foes. Indeed, the farms from which his men were earlier driven are again being contested by an especially embolded regiment. The wind is blowing strongly: and our way. Atop the wind Coln. Mack Loud's voice carries, more firmly now.

"Perhaps it will work out, after all..!"

"I think I may just be able to hang on..!"

"Their scythe and bow armed levy aren't looking too clever now..!"

"We could actually win this battle, I think, with luck..!"

Cromwell and I exchange glances - but say nothing.

Eight hours after noon

The shadows lengthen across the field now, Diary: and as the Man of Blood looks down across the valley he sees only looming defeat, a lost battle and a lost crown.

His army still has it's strengths: he has stands of pikemen still fighting in the little valley; heroically, atop and around Long Hill; and all about the farms in the big valley. There is still a troop of Prinz Terenz's horse fighting - and defeating, some of our number. Brutal Colonel Gush too, for all his losses, still has many horsemen still in the field against us. Their guns still rain their deadly load about us, and bring good men low.

Yet withall they are beat, and well so. Our men, so long pent up by Coln. Mack Loud in their rocky lair, surge amongst and beyond the farms to our right. Our centre, hard hit by artillerie and muskets, none the less holds fast; and across long Hill and in the little valley our brave men, foot and horse together, rally for one great attack against Prinz Terenz's last redoubts. Cromwell and I are together still, with a rallying troop of horse: we have fought our way clear through a pikeblock and out the other side.

Nine hours after noon

We know now that we are close to total victorie. Few indeed are the troops that rally still to the standards of the M.o.B. Of Colonel Gush's great array, scarce but some surviving horse are formed: much of his foot is routed, or dead. The best are no more.

In their centre their guns still fire, and wreak their toll: and atop Long Hill, and about it, stand still small bands of their foot, pikemen and muskets together for a last stand, with a solitary troop of horse.

Beyond, in the little valley, they are all slain, or captured. Our foot and horse together have overwhelmed such as were left there, and we have the field utterly.

A messenger is spied, coming to where Cromwell's standard flutters, hard by our great guns at our end of Long Hill. No, two messengers I see. One from the enemy - and one from Coln. Mack Loud.

I will write their content as I read them to Cromwell.

I. Sire,

You have defeated us this day, and we are beat. Yours is the field and the glory. Pray accept our surrender and that of all our men.

signed Col. (Brutal) Gush

Prinz Terenz of Brandenburg.

II. Sire,

I never doubted for a moment that we would win a totally boundless, overwhelming and majestic victorie, and would like to be the first to congratulate you for the small part you played in what you will no doubt agree was a masterly triumph for my tactics and strategy in general, and for me in particular.

signed Coln. Mack Loud.

I propose that the next A.G.M. takes place in the back room. This would enable those that wish to take part could join in. Those that don't could carry on playing in the main hall.

It should be pointed out that those who do not take part in the A.G.M. can hardly criticise or complain about decisions reached at the A.G.M.

Ian Foster.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

By A.Gent.

As 15mm figures seem to be appearing more and more on the tables of this wargames club I felt that an interview with the clubs leading exponent of this size would explain its new found success. Consequently at one of the clubs sunday meetings I found MARVIN LOVE holding an animated conversation with the gas water heater in the corner of the kitchen. I introduced myself and announced my intention of writing an article on 15mm figures, and upon hearing this I could just see his eyes light up behind the inch thick pebble glasses. Taking his elbow I steared him to a seat, sat him down and proceeded with the article below.

"What first made you move into this scale?"

"I happened to read an article in the 'Opticians Gazette' about these 15mm figures, saying how good they were for business, so I ordered a few thousand to start with, you buy them by the pound, by the way."

"What was wrong with your 25mm range?"

"Weight for one thing, I had to have the floor reinforced in my wargaming room, cost, obviously, the time spent painting and building terrain the list is endless to such an enlightened person as myself."

"What then, are the advantages of your 15mm figures?"

"To start with, the saving on the cost of paint, a line of 20 figures, one long stroke with the brush, three times with different colours and they are painted to immaculate competition standard. Scenery is no problem, heaps of dust swept off the floor to make hills, and at a pinch the fluff from the corners of trouser pockets can be utilised as trees and bushes."

"Of course the main advantage is the gain in space, a normal game can be played on a beer mat, and a really big game can be played on a teatray."

"Are there any disadvantages to this scale that you can think of?"

"None really, mind you there is a rumour going round that the painting of, and the playing with this size of figure is bad for the eyesight, but I believe this is totally unproven."

There I had to close the interview as Marvin had to leave, I helped him to his feet as he picked up his white stick, called for Tarquin his guide dog, waved me goodbye and walked into the wall by the door.

THE ARDENNES MATCH

By Russell Hanson.

Extract from the memoirs of General Ballsaker (of Tobruk fame).

I had the honour to command the British forces in the Ardennes sector at the time of the Hun breakthrough in 1944 near the end of the great war to save freedom from democracy. Historians will recall that, after the innings in North Africa and Italy, I was appointed captain of the touring team for the last of the 'away' matches. Our American allies were supposed to be in the same team, but I saw little of them in the Ardennes and perhaps I did not miss much as they do not understand cricket and are thus unsuited to war. Suffice to say that, as my Operation Order indicated, the Gallant allies got hit to the boundry by the sudden enemy attack and the Brits had to rush to their rescue and put in some pretty nifty fielding to save the side.

As a glance at the map will show it was obvious that the German armoured columns would make a bee line for the Northern bridges across the River Mouse in front of DEUX PONTS and at NOISANT. These were their nearest crossing points for a drive West and were furtherst from the mass of the American Army in the far South West. They would have to take these bridges before the Americans could counter-attack in force, holding them off meanwhile with a screen South West of FESTOGNE.

The German armour was distinctly formidable and would have had all the advantages in an encounter battle with our own. Bad weather had grounded our air force, so this means of arresting their advance was unavailable. We should have to use our massed artillery as a substitute for air power. Artillery, of course, does not have the flexibility of air power which can, theoretically, strike anywhere at the drop of a hat. What we required was prepared positions and a killing ground where the enemy armour was bound to appear.

My plan wrote itself really. It was obvious that the place to deal with the enemy was at the Northern bridges and if we moved fast enough we should just about have time to create bridgeheads on the East bank and dig in before their columns appeared. Allied forces East of the River Mouse could best help by causing the enemy delay. It would have, of course, been easier to have just blown the bridges and sat in defensive positions on the West bank, but this would have deprived us of the possibility of counter attack and might have encouraged the Germans to ignore us and, with secure flanks to have launched an annihilating attack on the Americans.

As my Operation Order indicates I moved my entire force East by road towards DEUX PONTS, the bridgehead troops who had furthest to go (2nd Bn the Colebrook Fusiliers) moving first, with my Tac HQ and the Divisional Artillery close behind and the armoured cars and light tanks of the Southborough Hussars providing a screen for the bridgeheads and reporting Allied and enemy activity East of the river.

The Southborough Hussars under their gallant commander (LT-Colonel K. St. J de F. Ffolkes-Wutherspoon - known as 'Bimbo' to his intimates and a scion of a famous Southborough family) performed their function admirably and pressed their reconnaissance regardless of cost to themselves. In particular they located what were thought to be petrol dumps just West of VOLTEVE and adjacent to the bridgehead at map square B5. I ordered their immediate destruction to deny them to the enemy, but, in spite of heavy shelling and tracer from the armoured cars, they failed to ignite. Subsequent analysis by the 'boffins' revealed that these were not petrol but Coca-Cola dumps, this curious liquid apparently forming the principal means of sustenance of our American Allies! German scientists had adapted their tanks to run on this fuel, which shows to what straights they were reduced in the final phase of the war.

The only alteration in my deployment as laid down in my Operation Order occurred when reconnaissance indicated that the enemy was likely to heavily attack the bridge at A6 first and I ordered the Colebrook Fusiliers to reverse their dispositions for the bridgeheads to ensure that the strongest force was at A6.

The Colebrook Fusiliers dug in and wired their two bridgeheads in the nick of time and the Southborough Hussars fell back through their positions with the enemy armoured columns close behind. One group of the enemy, disguised as Americans in an American half track, attempted to bluff their way through the A6 bridgehead but, as I had anticipated such tactics they were immediately fired upon and killed. Subsequent examination of the bodies showed that some had actually been chewing gum and wearing American underwear which shows just how thorough the Germans can be.

The battle developed just as I had anticipated, with the enemy armoured columns beating their heads against the Bridgeheads at A6 and B5. The Divisional Artillery at A5 was able to engage targets in both of these map squares and to switch fire from one square to the other as necessary. The approaches to the bridgehead at A6 were soon littered with knocked out and burning German armoured vehicles and the Colebrook Fusiliers were doing fine execution with their anti-tank guns.

The B5 bridgehead caused me some anxiety. Because of the nature of the ground the enemy was able to approach close to the bridge unseen with the result that defensive artillery fire arrived late as Tiger tanks attempted to rush the bridge. Some enemy armoured elements reached the far bank and our artillery fire three quarters destroyed the bridge. The bridgehead company of the Colebrook Fusiliers on the far bank was lost, but, because of the precarious state of the bridge, the enemy was unable to make up his mind whether to try to send more armour across and risk it being cut off or stick to the ~~East~~ bank. His dithering was distinctly to our advantage for, if the bridge had collapsed, he would have been free to send his armour to attack us elsewhere, whereas as things stood we could cope with a further advance of the armour that had crossed the river with the support group digging in to protect the Divisional Artillery and all our armour close at hand and uncommitted.

The Groombridge Rifles had time not only to dig in and wire their bridgehead at NOISANT but to lay mines and produce a really formidable defensive position before the enemy appeared. As the enemy was firmly held at A6 and B5 I sent the heavy Armoured Force through NOISANT on a raid against the 'petrol' dump at D4 where I hoped it might catch enemy armour refuelling. Strict instructions were issued to withdraw if heavily opposed which proved to be the case and they extricated themselves without loss and took post behind NOISANT as a reserve for that bridgehead.

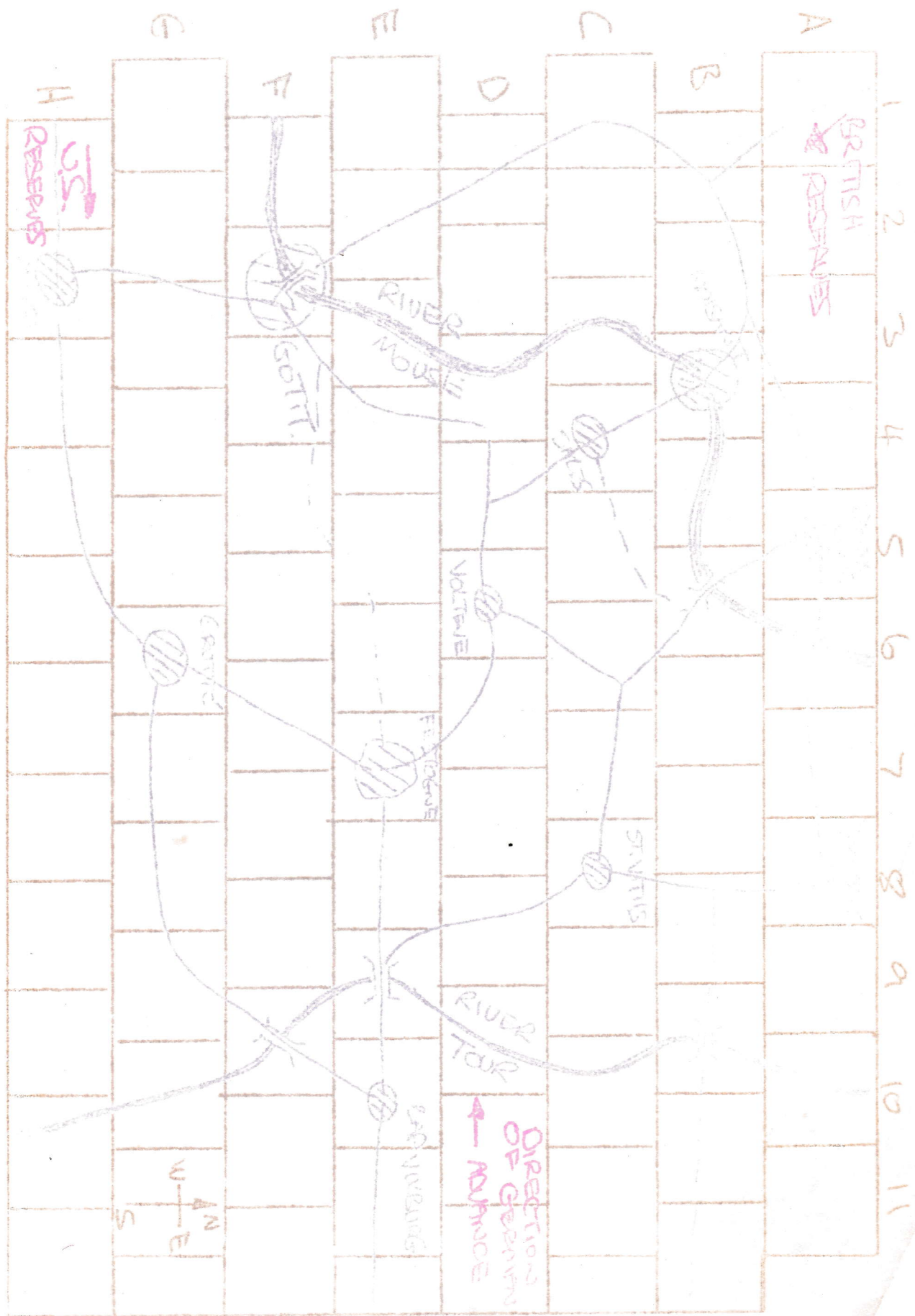
Our batting holding up well and the enemy bowling decidedly losing steam the time had come to counter attack. I had held 22 Armoured Brigade in reserve at DEUX PONTS for this purpose. As a glance at the map will show, a breakout South East from the A6 bridge would have the effect of both outflanking the enemy in the North and threatening the encirclement of his forces in the loop of the river at NOISANT. Such an attack offered the best chance of dealing the enemy a decisive blow and ending the match in our favour. I accordingly ordered 22 Armoured Brigade to advance across the bridge at A6 and commence the breakout.

Observers will bear witness to the terrific battering our artillery had given the bridge without destroying it. My CRA (Commander Royal Artillery) was convinced that there was something wrong with the fuses of our shells and I understand this is still being investigated by a Whitehall committee. The German shell fuses were clearly excellent for, before 22 Armoured Bde had got more than its leading elements across the bridge at A6 it was destroyed, the enemy having learned from us the value of concentrated artillery fire.

Darkness was now upon us and, having arrived on the West bank of the Mouse shortly before the bridge was destroyed I was able to instantly respond to the situation which had arisen with my customary decision. Throughout my life I have practiced clean living, total abstinence and have regularly taken cold baths and gone on cross country runs. I was thus able to issue orders for that night and the following day and go to bed for my customary ten hours sleep.

THE ARDENNES MATCH

BATTLE MAP



Although our counter attack at A6 had been frustrated for the time being the situation at dusk was by no means unfavourable. I had had the foresight to equip my force with amphibious elements (DUKW'S and Buffaloes) which could re-supply the A6 bridgehead during the night while pontoon bridges were erected there, for I was determined that 22 Armoured Bde should resume its attack at first light. The remnants of the Southborough Hussars were ordered to patrol the West bank of the river at NOISANT during the night and the Heavy Armoured Force to cross the river at night and launch a holding attack at dawn. With the sound of heavy traffic on the DEUX PONTS - NOISANT road the enemy would not know where our armour would appear at dawn. He would have to contain all three of the bridgeheads. The initiative had clearly passed to us, the match was within our grasp and I considered the operation so far to have been ninety five percent successful.

Operational Order - British Forces

Information

1. German armoured columns have attacked Westwards across the RIVER Tour, surprising and disorganising American forces as far West as The RIVER MOUSE. The situation between the two rivers is fluid and confused.
2. Our Armoured Recce. Regiment (SH) is based at NOISANT (B3) and DEUX PONTS (A5). Remaining British forces are in the far North-West (A1).
3. American reserves are in the far South-West (H1) and can be expected to counter-attack in a North-Easterly direction towards FESTOGNE (E7).

Intention

4. British forces will seize and hold bridgeheads on the East bank of the RIVER MOUSE at NOISANT (B3) and DEUX PONTS (A6 and B5) where the enemy armour and supporting infantry will be destroyed on ground of our own choosing.

Method

5. SH will patrol East of the RIVER MOUSE by troops in an Easterly and South-Easterly direction and report enemy and allied strengths and movements. They will withdraw when seriously opposed and establish a screen for the bridgeheads at A7, B6, C6 and C4.
6. Remaining British Forces will move East by road in the following order :
 - (1) 2CF in transport and attached artillery to DEUX PONTS. Two rifle coys. and support coy. and one field bty. to establish bridgehead at B5 and one coy. and one field bty. at A6. All troops will immediately dig in and wire their front. Field artillery to remain on the West bank within effective direct fire range of the bridges. Unloaded transport will withdraw into echelon at DEUX PONTS (A5).
 - (2) Tac HQ and Support Group to DEUX PONTS (A5).

- (3) Divisional Artillery to DEUX PONTS (A5) where they will take post to cover the bridgeheads at A6 and B5.
- (4) 27 Armored Brigade to DEUX PONTS (A5) - force reserve.
- (5) 3GR will march to NOISANT (B3) and establish a bridgehead. All troops will immediately dig in and wire and mine their front. Field artillery to remain on the West bank within effective direct fire range of the bridges.
- (6) Heavy Armoured Force to DEUX PONTS (A5) - force reserve.
- (7) Main HQ and amphibious and administrative elements to DEUX PONTS.

7. Adinistration

No Allied troops will be permitted to pass through our positions. They must stand and fight where they are and delay the enemy.

Command and Control

8. I will control the battle from my Tac HQ/Command Post Vehicle which will be in direct radio communication with all subordinate commanders who will keep me fully informed of all significant developments on their front.

Ballsaker, General.

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