

W A R D I A R Y.

In lieu A.F. C.2118

Unit. 279, Fd. Coy. RE

Comdg. Offr: Maj. W.M. INGLIS, R.E.

Month. & Year: March 45.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events & Infm	Refs to Appendices
S'Hertogenbosch	1		Coy billeted in 3 schools resting after Siegfried Line battles. Checking stores and issuing replacements. Half Coy bathed.	
	2		Half Coy bathed. Liberty trucks to TILBURG - EINDHOVEN.	
	3		2 60 to BRUSSELS for 48 hrs. Intention to get through whole Div during rest period. This was all but done.	
GEET-BETZ	6		Coy moved with Bde Gp into BELGIUM to GEET-BETZ. First Troops to be quartered there. Most of Coy found private billets with welcoming inhabitants.	
	7-8		Continued sorting out and re-equipping.	
	9		Training started for river crossing operation. Mock up close sp rafts made for Bns.	
	10		Training with stormboat engines.	
	11		Drivers practiced driving onto rafts on R. MAAS. O.C. to bed with tonsillitis. Coy held dance in village.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
GEET-BETZ	12		Capt. BLOCKLEY M.C. to Bde conference. Briefed for Op TORCHLIGHT. Begin planning.	
	13		Planning continued. Pl commanders told Bde plan but not place. Capt. BLOCKLEY M.C. to Bde conference on tomorrow's exercise.	
	14		Exercise BUFFALO on R. Maas. Most of those who will be on operation went down but the R.E. side was only done on skeleton and most of Coy were spectators. See App.2 for first plan. Lt. Du Vivier loaned to 11 AGRE for period of operation.	App (1) App (2)
	15		Conference at Bde to discuss day Exercise. Night exercise at full scale. Went with a swing and was instructive. Slight changes in plans.	
	16		Day off.	
065410	17		Coy moved in independent blocks of 5 vehicles up to marshalling area for operation. All arrived by last light. Mostly sleeping in dugouts and bivouacs. Fine spring weather.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
065410	18		Began working under CRE 52 Div. Job to make up LVT track for right battalion. All Pls deployed on this.	

	19		Completed LVT track.	
	20		1 Pln strengthened small bridge. 2 Pln widened crossroads. 3 Pln day off. Capt. BLOCKLEY M.C. & Lt. BOARDMAN studied far bank of river from excellent O.P. at XANTEN church tower. Impressions very favourable. Weather still dry and warm. Lt. Black posted to 53 DIV. O.C. back and took over again.	
	21		OC & 2ic to fwd O.P. but too much smoke to see much. Final coordinating conference with CRE 15 GHQ Tps who commands us for initial phases of operation. Coy told RE plan in detail.	
	22		Plans crystallised - App. (3). 4 prs. trackways collected.	App.(3)
	23		Final check up. Wireless operators briefed. Drivers briefed. All necessary stores distributed and loaded. All preparations are complete.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
BISLICH 138430	24	0200 0245 0400 0530 0715 0900 1200 1230 1800 2130	H Hour. For Company plan see appendix. First serial of vehicles called to waiting area. Message received 3 Pln married up with rafting Coys. Maj. INGLIS wounded on thigh (our only casualty). Set on far bank opened up. Reception poor. 3 Pln relaying messages. All Plns landed - things quiet now - 2i.c. to be ready to come over at short notice. 2i.c. called across. 2ic. landed. Work had gone as planned. No difficulty over buffalo landing places or over ways over bund. Our 3 preselected routes all o.k. Some hastily laid SCHU & T.M. 35 on Right cleared by 2 Pln. Rafting beginning. All 3 exits open. Lt. HERBERT started bulldozing way down from Bund on east side. D4 worked skilfully on awkward cut. Our work on beaches virtually finished. 3 Pln laid some chesspale at raft landing sites. Laterals marked between all 3 routes out. Pl of 202 Coy took over from us. Our vehicles began to arrive and CSM began concentrating Coy in RE rally area. Moved into houses 138430. 50% vehicles arrived. Conference at Bde. Plan for 44 Bde to move out of bridgehead at first light and capture br over R. ISSEL at 203530. Lt. HAINES & Sec 3 Pl briefed for this. To remove leads from charges and then to prepare Br for demolition by us.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	25		All Pls on rd opening for CRE. 30' crater 17441-8 deviation made. 3 Pl followed 44 Bde improving their axis. Culverting put down 167493. Much information about roads and tracks passed back to CRE mainly by OC. Wireless net worked well and saved a lot of time. We have not hitherto used it as much as we might have done.	App.(4) JP Blockley Maj. R.E.

			<p>6 KOSB leading Bde advance had trouble clearing through woods and the final attack on the bridge failed.</p> <p>During this period Spr. ANGEL in the scout car put up a very fine performance using his Bren to good effect and being largely instrumental in halting the enemy close on the heels of C Coy's withdrawal.</p>	O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	26	<p>0900 OC to meet CRE. Coy to bridge at 203530 when possible. Bridging allotted for this not yet across RHINE. Lt. SCANLON appointed Bridge Commander with orders to get a look at site as soon as situation allowed. 6 RSF made small bridgehead during the day but recce of site not possible.</p> <p>Lt. BOARDMAN to recce new Harbour area, about 1849.</p> <p>3 Pl to work on new Bde axis.</p> <p>1400 O.C. visits CRE 53 Div whose bridging we were to use. CRE had heard gap was a culvert & bulldozer job. Armd D7 and culvert lorry ordered up.</p> <p>1430 Coy moved to 187497.</p> <p>1600 OC met CRE at Div.</p> <p>In view of CRE 53 Div report that bridging would not start to cross RHINE until midnight and that anyhow the gap was small it was decided to allot 279 ½ the Bailey Platoon allotted to 20 Fd Coy who had another bridge to do upstream.</p> <p>2i/c informed by wireless and lorries collected.</p> <p>1800 O.C. at Bde. Bridge urgently required. O.Cs wireless broke down. Half way up to site car bogged so O.C. proceeded on foot considering that it would be quicker to do recce himself than to get his subalterns onto it.</p> <p>2000 O.C. reached RSF Bn HQ. With 3 sniper guides proceeded across country on to site. All quiet. Bridgehead 400 yards deep. Measured gap with fence wire. 70 foot Bailey needed. All previous reports hopelessly misleading. Lesson - you must have an RE officer to see it himself.</p> <p>2245 OC at Bde. All routes up to bridge impassable except main rd from HAMMINKELN. G3 laying this on while O.C. returned to Coy, having ordered stand by over the air.</p> <p>2315 OC at Coy. All pls to go up and to unload and build as quickly as possible. If not finished by first light smoke to be fixed. Lorries to be back down main road anyhow before first light. Lt. SCANLON to tie up at Bde with KOSB patrol.</p>	<p>JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p> <p>JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p>	
	27	<p>0015 Convoy moved off. Got split immediately through insufficient controlling. Married up eventually after much hard work.</p> <p>0230 KOSB reported to Bde rd clear. Convoy darted through.</p>		

		0245	Work began.	
		0545	Bridge complete. A first class bit of work though not technically perfect. All trucks had left by first light.	
		1000	Coy congratulated by G.O.C. Brig. & C.R.E. Lt. to Bde and then to see if bridge was all right. Unable to get up to bridge as an S.P. was knocking out each truck as it passed up the road. But R.S.F. on the spot reported it was all right.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	28	1000	Lt. Herbert and sec 1 Pl to bridge. Found that 53 (W) Div had taken over maint and were repacking far end. It seemed foolish for 53 Div to take over a bridge in our area as they were advancing, so O.C. asked CRE if we should continue to maintain it. This was approved.	
		1630	Lt. BOARDMAN with Sec 2 Pl to KOSB to lift R and SCHU mines. 20 R mines lifted. One casualty on SCHU mine when a spr was carrying R mines into a field to destroy them. We are still too casual in areas known to be mined.	
	29		Bridge & Road maintenance.	
	30		Capt. BLOCKLEY M.C. & Lt. Du Vivier with small party to BEST where Army Commander formally opened the all weather BAILEY and thanked all RE units involved in the Rhine crossings. Lt. Haines reced 4 sites for waterpoints. Coy on rd maint and salvaging own & enemy equipment.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	31		Water point set up 203529. Rd maint & salvage continued.	JP Blockley Maj. R.E. O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.