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ARMY FORM C.2118

**WAR DIARY**

or

Unit 278 Field Coy RE

**~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~**

(Delete heading not required).

Month and Year SEPT 1944

Commanding Officer Major C.R. NICHOLLS RE

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
MUIDS	1 SEP	0800 1800	1 Pl take over maint of class 40 br at LES ANDELYS and hand it over again to 6 A Tps at 1900 hrs. 2 & 3 Pls hand over maint of Class 9 FBE br to 6 A Tps. Weather:- Fair.	Ref Map Series-FRANCE Scale :- 1 :50,000 Sheet :- 9F/1 Str :- 6 & 241
"	2 SEP		Coy moved to GOURNAY-EN-BRAY. 2 and 3 Pls employed on maint of route from LES ANDELYS to CAMPEAUX 3 Pl double up Bailey br at 577678. Lt Allan carried out rd recce as far as R. Somme. Weather-Fair	Ref Map Series:- FRANCE Scale :- 1:50,000 Sheet :- 9E/6 & 9F/1 Str :- 6 & 242
GOURNAY	3 SEP		Coy takes over rd maint from GOURNAY to POIX. <u>No 1 Pl</u> Mine clearing of verges and rds on BOTTLE route. One sec worked from Campeaux to Fuquieres, one sec from Fuquieres to Bazancourt, one sec from Fuquieres to near Gournay. The remaining sec kept up steady flow of hardcore from Gournay for improving the rd between Gournay and Bazancourt. <u>No 2 Pl</u> Employed on route maint between a/n villages. Weather - Sunny.	Ref Map Series:- FRANCE Scale :- 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 Sheet :- 9E/6, 9E/4, 4 Str :- 6 & 242
GOURNAY	4 Sep	0830	Coy moved to BELLOY-SUR-SOMME, nr PICQUIGNY (MR 983645) - arrived approx. 1400 hrs. 2 Pl moved at 0820 hrs on rd maint task as MR 9059 past Picquigny and harboured temporarily at MOLLIENS VIDAME; moved on to BELLOY-SUR-SOMME and arrived at approx 2000 hrs. Lt Haig's CSM with a sec from 1 Pl took 2 German prisoners in Belloy-sur-Somme. Suspected collaborator taken to HQ FFI at CONDE FOLIE. Weather - Fair. 3 Pl br maint of brs 9964 & 0859	Ref Map Series:- FRANCE Scale :- 1:250,000 Sheet :- 4 Str :- 6 & 242.
BELLOY-SUR-SOMME	5 SEP	0745	Coy moved to LIGNY SUR CONCHES 1001 and arrived at 1500 hrs approx. 3 Pl hand over br maint to 6 Army Tps at 0800 hrs. Weather:- Dull. (9964 and 0859)	Ref Map Series:- FRANCE Scale:- 1:250,000 Sheet:- 2 Str :- 6 & 240

LIGNY SUR CONCHES	6 SEP	1800	<p>Coy moves to BELLENGHEM 8552, nr COURTRAI. Originally move should have been to THIELT but enemy still in occupation. Coy hindered on move by cheering crowds.</p> <p>OC travelled independently. On reaching Bde was told that all brs in COURTRAI were blown but br at BISSEGHEM 830560 was intact. Asked to investigate. Found all brs in COURTRAI blown. On arrival at BISSEGHEM found Royals pulling back last tp over the river followed by enemy. OC asked for protection from Royals to do quick recce of br. Br classified as class 9. Some five minutes later enemy on far bank opened fire and at same time Royals received orders to prepare br for demolition. Only 20 lbs 808 available. OC organises demolitions party from Royals and placed charges under decking at top of first pier. Enemy watch the operation with interest from range of some 500 yds but apart from a burst of fire over the br do not interfere. Orders to fire demolition were <u>not</u> received.</p> <p>Recce parties from 2 Pl &amp; 3 Pl were sent out to get exact dimensional sketches of the demolished brs in COURTRAI.</p>	<p>Ref Map Series:-LILLE- GHENT</p> <p>Scale:- 1:250,000</p> <p>Sheet:- 2</p> <p>Str :- 6 &amp; 242</p>
BELLENGHEM (8552)	7 SEP		<p>Large number of recce parties formed to carry out br classification of brs on COURTRAI CANAL. Just before they were due to leave (1000 hrs) CRE arrived and stated that an emergency had arisen and coy must occupy def posn from canal junc 9547 to excl br 9253. Coy took up posns with right 1 Pl from incl br 952477 to incl rly br 945459, Centre 2 Pl from excl rly br to excl br 930510, left 3 Pl from incl br 930510 to excl br 9253 making contact with RSF on left. Coy was in final posn by 1200 hrs.</p> <p>No attack developed.</p> <p>227 Bde arrived in middle of night at br 952477 but after much discussion did NOT take over def.</p> <p>Weather :- Wet.</p>	<p>Ref Map Series:-LILLE- GHENT</p> <p>Scale:- 1:250,000</p> <p>Sheet:- 2</p> <p>Str :- 6 &amp; 241</p>
"	8 SEP		<p>Coy told to stand down from def at 1000 hrs and move to area OUDENARDE at 1230 hrs. Coy arrived at new location (MR 1057) nr Oudenarde at approx 1900 hrs.</p> <p>Weather :- Fair.</p>	<p>Ref Map Series:-LILLE- GHENT</p> <p>Scale:- 1:250,000</p> <p>Sheet:- 2</p> <p>Str :- 6 &amp; 241.</p>
OUDENARDE (1057)	9 SEP		<p>No 1 Pl - No 3 Sec left coy harbour during the evening and proceeded to MR 0251 to maintain br at KHERKOVE on River Scheldt.</p> <p>Two recce parties sent off at 1600 hrs on div route recce - protection party in half track provided to go with them.</p> <p>Weather :- Wet.</p>	<p>Ref Map Series:-LILLE- GHENT</p> <p>Scale:- 1:250,000</p> <p>Sheet:- 2</p> <p>Str :- 6 &amp; 239</p>

<p>OUDENARDE (1057)</p>	<p>10 SEP</p>	<p>1300 1330  1700 1830</p>	<p>Coy moves to MR 5877 (LIPPELOO) OC meets Bde Comd and is told to produce two RE recce parties to recce line of Albert Canal with infantry escort. OC to meet Bde Comd for recce at LIERRE 7786 OC Carries out recce of canal with Bde Comd. RE recce parties from 1 Pl report to LIERRE and briefed. Sent to BOERCHEM (MR 8092) to see the ground. Weather :- Dull.</p>	<p>Map ref series:- as for 9 Sep. Str :- 6 &amp; 239.</p>
<p>LIPPELOO (5877)</p>	<p>11 SEP</p>	<p>0200  0700  0930  1330  1345</p>	<p>RE Recce parties recce ALBERT CANAL from incl canal junc 8791 to incl lock 7995. RE recce parties return and are questioned by Recce Offr (Lt Allan) OC attends O Gp at 46 Bde HQ and is told of complete change of plan. OC meets Bde Comd at WESTERLOO (MR 0381) and is informed that the coy is reverting to Comd CRE. OC meets CRE in WESTERLOO and visits cl 40 br at 0485 with OC 2 Pl. OC told that coy will take on maint of this br sometime 12 Sep. Weather : Sunny, Warm. No 1 Pl :- One sec sweeping for mines at MECHELIN (6977). Mines reported under paving of road. No mines found. Sec returned to coy harbour in the evening.</p>	<p>Map Ref Series: BRUSSELS -LIEGE  Scale: 1:250,000 Sheet: 3 Str :- 6 &amp; 239</p>
<p>LIPPELOO (5877)</p>	<p>12 SEP</p>	<p>1200  2200</p>	<p>Coy moves to WESTERLOO and arrives at new location (0381) at 1700 hrs. Ground very wet. No 1 Pl Nos 1 &amp; 4 Secs left harbour area to take up def posns on br over ALBERT CANAL (0485). No 3 Pl Br maint (cl 40 br) at 0485 and def posns at br. Weather :- Sunny.</p>	<p>Map Ref Series: Brussels -Liege.  Scale 1:250,000 Sheet 3. Str : 6 &amp; 239</p>
<p>WESTERLOO (0381)</p>	<p>13 SEP</p>		<p>No 1 Pl Two secs take up defensive posns on br 0485, to relieve Nos 1 &amp; 4 secs who returned to harbour area at 1800 hrs. No 2 Pl Maint cl 9 br over ALBERT CANAL 073842. At dusk enemy aircraft overhead but bombs dropped down river from br. No 3 Pl Cl 40 br maint and def of same at ALBERT CANAL 0485.</p>	<p>Map ref series as for 12th Str : 6 &amp; 239.</p>
<p>WESTERLOO (0381)</p>	<p>14 SEP</p>	<p> 0700  1900</p>	<p>Coy moves at 1800 hrs to MR 113883 nr GHEEL. Arrived approx 1930 hrs. No 1 Pl recce party left harbour to recce Albert Canal for possible br crossing N of VIERLE <del>7786</del>0579. Returned 1330 hrs. Pl told to stand by for constr of cl 9 shore loading raft on ESCAUT CANAL (079928) under comd 279 Fd Coy. OC and OC 1 Pl go fwd to do recce of site. One cl 9 raft constr. Second is reqd to assist in ferrying vehs into GHEEL bridgehead.</p>	<p>Ref map series :- As for 12th. Str : 6 &amp; 239</p>

WESTERLOO (0381)		2300	Pl leaves to construct raft. No 2 Pl handed over maint of cl 9 br to 280 Fd Coy. No 3 Pl handed over cl 40 br at 0800 hrs to 280 Fd Coy. Filled crater in rd at MR 108885 and built improvised br at 135892 over crater and demolished br. Weather : Wet.	
GHEEL (113883)	15 SEP	0030  0545  1200	No 1 Pl - constr of raft proceeds. Great noise of firing from far bank and a few indiscriminate shots overhead. Heavy spandau fire from three directions stops work on raft. OC orders pl to take up def posns. Def posn held until BM 44 Bde arrives and states that R Scots will take over. Pl is then withdrawn just as heavy mortar fire is brought down on canal bank. Pl unable to move for 30 mins. 1 Offr and 3 ORs wounded (Lt D.D. MURRAY). Counter attack put in across river by R Scots Fus and 1 Pl then assists 279 to form the two rafts into one larger raft. Pl reverts to comd coy at 1800 hrs. During this time 3 Pl complete improvised br at 2000 hrs, span 25'. Trees cut down and used as bank seats. Tel poles found on GHEEL sta used as rd bearers and local timber used as decking. Filling of crater completed (55 tipper loads of hard core). Weather :- am Warm pm wet.	Ref Map Series - same as for 12th. Str :- 5 & 235
GHEEL (113883)	16 SEP	0700  1000  1100  1600	3 Pl moves to MOLL (017092) and RV with one coy East Lancs Regt who are to give protection for crossing to be made over CANAL d'EMBRANCHEMENT VERS LE CAMP de BEVERLOO at 253947. (50,000 sheet 25 & 35). Inf reach STEVENSON and debus and take up def posn. The br site is overlooked by an enemy strongpoint at 247964 reported by civilians to contain two guns. RE recce carried out. No signs of interference from strong point and bridging starts. Cl 9 FBE 100 ft with trestle on near bank and half floating bay on far bank. Br complete. One sec from 3 Pl left to carry out maint. Coy put under comd of 44 Bde to maintain ferry over ESCAUT CANAL. 1 Pl takes over from pl of 279 Fd Coy at 1800 hrs. 4 Assault boat ferries are maintained and operated throughout the night under heavy enemy fire. Weather : Sunny.	Ref Map Series - as for 12th. Str : 5 & 235
"	17 SEP		2 Pl takes over assault boat ferries at 0800 hrs. At 1100 hrs OC is informed that one class 5 raft and one class 7 raft are to be constructed to allow relief of 44 Bde by 227 Bde. At 1500 hrs cl 5 lorry is moved close to site. Shelling which	Ref Map Series - as for 12th. Str 6 & 234

GHEEL (113883)			<p>has been intermittent for most of the day now becomes very heavy and almost continuous. Bde Comd who is on the site rules that construction of raft is out of the question and states that 5 assault boat ferries is all that is required.</p> <p>These ferries are operated throughout the night. Five are sunk and cables of two are cut but KOSB are ferried across during the night.</p> <p>During the heavy shelling in the afternoon CSM was wounded and Pl Sgt 2 Pl evacuated suffering from blast.</p> <p>Weather: Sunny.</p>	
"	18 SEP		<p>2 Pl relieved by 3 Pl at 0800 hrs.</p> <p>3 Pl operates for 24 hrs under very trying conditions and considerable shelling. 1 OR wounded. Weather- Wet.</p>	Map ref series - as for 12th. Str 6 & 235.
"	19 SEP		<p>3 Pl hand over ferries to 20 Fd Coy at 0800 hrs.</p> <p>Weather - Wet.</p>	-do-
"	20 SEP		3 Pl on rd maint at GHEEL.	Str 6 & 234.
"	21 SEP	0830	<p>Coy moves to MEERVELDHOVEN (392146). Arr 1600 hrs. Ground very unreliable.</p> <p>No 1 Pl - recce party left harbour at 1700 hrs for EINDHOVEN, where, in cooperation with the 7th Seaforths, they found a suitable site for rafting over WILHELMINA canal. Recce party returned at 2000 hrs. Work on cl 5 raft site started at 2300 hrs. Inf working party did not arrive until 0030. 20 ft steep banks were cut through and raft operating by 0340. Twenty five carriers crossed before FBE br opened.</p> <p>No 3 Pl with under comd two secs 2 Pl went out to build cl 9 FBE across WILHELMINA canal at 390251.</p> <p>Br eqpt arrived 0200 hrs. Br (100 ft FBE with two half floating bays) open at 0915 hrs 22 Sep. Five camouflnets have to be blown in banks to enable ramp down to be made. Intermittent sniping during night.</p> <p>Weather - Sunshine.</p>	Map ref series - as for 12th. Str 6 & 234.
MEERVELDHOVEN (392146)	22 SEP		<p>No 1 Pl - secs returned to harbour area without incident. Left harbour at 1800 hrs to assist 280 Fd Coy to construct Double Bailey Br. Work was completed by daylight 23rd.</p> <p>No 2 Pl - 1 &amp; 4 secs 2 Pl attd 3 pl returned at 0800 hrs and relieved on maint FBE by 2 &amp; 3 secs. 1 &amp; 4 secs returned to br at 1200 hrs. Remainder of Pl went to Eindhoven and harboured there. One 3 ton truck crashed into ditch on way to EINDHOVEN. 1 OR injured.</p> <p>No 3 Pl - completed cl 9 br at 0915 hrs and returned to harbour area.</p>	Ref Map Series - as for 12th. Str 6 & 234

			Weather - Wet.	
"	23 SEP		No 2 Pl - Maint of FBE. Relieved by 3 Pl at 1700 hrs. Weather - Wet.	-do-
"	24 SEP	0800	No 3 Pl - Handed over br maint of FBE to 279 Fd Coy. No 1 Pl - Opened Water Point at 2723. Weather - Wet.	-do- Str 6 & 233
MEERVELDHOVEN (392146)	25 SEP		No 1 Pl - operating Water Point. Weather - wet.	Ref map series as for 12th. Str 6 & 233
"	26 SEP		Whole coy in harbour. Weather - dry and cold.	-do-
"	27 SEP		Coy moved at 1300 hrs to MR 406235 Nr EINDHOVEN.	-do-
		0900	3 Pl took over maint of cl 40 br and cl 9 br on WILHELMINA Canal at 389250 and rd from br to X rds 378267. 2 Pl took over maintenance of two existing brs and one cl 40 br from 7 Armd Div at ST OEDENRODE 4332 and also some ¼ mile of damaged pave.	Str 6 & 232
		1000	3 Pl told to recce for class 9 Bailey Br over WILHELMINA Canal. Eqpt only available for 130 DS Br to be on WEST of and as close as possible to existing cl 40.	
		1200	Design of br completed. Design was 130 DS supported on DS Bailey piers without special parts. 20 ft SS each end joining piers to bank. CRE asked if extra eqpt could be made available. Meanwhile excavation proceeds.	
		1800	1 Pl told to take over 3 Pl's maint task and have one sec available to help 3 Pl as br is to be done by us.	
		1900	CRE orders br to be constructed. Work on piers started. One sec from 2 Pl and one sec from HQ withdrawn to help 3 Pl unloading br eqpt.	
406235		2100	Br eqpt arrives and unloading starts.	
		2300	Eqpt unloaded. Piers completed except for decking on top. Work stops until first light. Weather - cold and wet.	
"	28 "	0600	Work on piers resumed. Delay caused by finding grillage and preventor lorry did NOT contain 9"x4" timber but old sleepers instead. 9"x9" timber was found and design modified accordingly.	Str 6 & 238.
		1000	Building commenced.	
		1230	Piers complete, nose and 10 bays of br complete. Work held up by shelling.	
		1400	Work resumed and br launched undecked at 1430 hrs.	
		1600	Br decked down. Jacking started.	

		1845	Br complete and maint taken over by 1 Pl. 2 Pl continue with rd repair. Weather - dry and cold.	
"	29 SEP		No 1 Pl - one sec on drains for piers on cl 9 B Br. - two secs still maintaining both cl 9 & 40 B Brs and removing FBE at MR 3925. - one sec still on Water Point at 2723. No 2 Pl - br maint at MR 425318. Rd repairs completed. No 3 Pl - improvements to piers of cl 9 BB. Class 9 & class 40 brs received intermittent shelling. Weather - cold and dry.	-do-
406235	30 SEP		1 Pl completing drainage of piers and sorting FBE. 2 Pl br maint 3 Pl checking and sorting spares for Bailey Br.  Cl 9 & Cl 40 brs received intermittent shelling. Weather - showery.	str 6 & 231  Weekly W3008s & W3009s  C.R. Nicholls Major RE OC 278 Field Coy RE