

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. I. and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

ARMY FORM C.2118

**WAR DIARY**

or

Unit 279 Field Coy. R.E.

**~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~**

(Erase heading not required)

Month and Year Feb.45

Commanding Officer Maj. P.T. Wood, D.S.O. M.C.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
TILBURG 175315	1		Coy still in private billets, with large factory for officers, messing, and vehicles. 6 R.S.F. require maximum numbers instructing on A/Per mines. 4 Instructors taking continuous classes.	
	2		Lt. Haines & C.S.M. recce for new area, assembly area for operation "Veritable". Lt. Haines returned leaving C.S.M. & 2 Sprs to try to improve cramped accommodation. Officers briefed by O.C. for "Veritable". Mines instruction continued.	App. (1)(1A)(1B)
	3		Mines instruction completed. 200 Inf. shown A/Per mines. Party dispatched to assist Assault R.E. assemble bridges.	
	4	1930	Corps & Div Cmndrs addressed all Div Offrs on op "Veritable". Div signs on vehicles and tunics covered. Began move to NIJMEGEN.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
NIJMEGEN 705628	5	0140	Arrived NIJMEGEN. Very crowded billet. Capt. Blockley with C.R.E. recce routes fwd. Contacted Assault R.E. Small party to assist them to assemble A.V.R.E. bridges.	App. (2)
	6		Began transporting logs to sledges and loading them. 3 Sherdozers & 1 Kangaroo joined us. N.C.O.s briefed by A/O.C. & Pln Commanders. Party maintaining road BURGEM DAC - GROESBEEK. Some of Coy first set foot in Germany.	
	7	1000 2300	Loading of sledges completed late evening owing to late arrival of 4 Sledges. Whole Coy briefed by A/OC. 2/Lt. Black joined Coy. Remainder of Kangaroos arrived and loaded. Fourth Sherdozer arrived and put u/cmnd 6 R.S.F. Capt. Blockley to final coordinating conference, Bde HQ. Tried marrying up of Kangaroo crews with Armoured column and movt of 2 Pl in 3 Half Tracks with 1 Sherdozer. 9 Kangaroos and 2 Sherdozers joined Armd Column ready to move off next day. Preparations complete.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	8	0930	O.C., Lt. Black, 2 Pl & 1 sherdozer to Bde HQ to get into Column. Moved off 1100 hrs.	

		1030	1 & 3 Platoons in kangaroos with Armd Col. From now until after midnight this column moved slowly forward and eventually up to start line. 2 sherdozers with it. Lt. HAINES (A/2 i/c) to near GROESBEEK with 3 Armd D. 7 bulldozers to be slipped into tail of Armd Col in passing. During morning 46 & 227 Bde attacks went well though some of their flails bogged. Opposition sporadic, rather overwhelmed by terrific Artillery barrage.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
		1530	C.R.E. on M/c reced routes with O.C. Route for wheels proved as far as forward infantry. 2 Platoon set to fill small holes while held up in convoy.	
		1630	A 2 Platoon ½-track blew up on mine. Road had been cleared by preceding Fd Coy. Another 2 trucks also blew up. Without doubt mines very deep and there is no known way of locating these. A favourite German practice in Africa - not met much in N.W. Europe. Trucks at once bulldozed into ditch.	
		1800	O.C. with Lt. BLACK and 2 Platoon get out to recce F.U.P. Bulldozer and 1 ½-track bogged. Remainder went on and had a look at start line. No shooting. 2 Platoon began marking while O.C. went back to send forward bogged trucks. Recce car got squirted accidentally by flame thrower. Stuff did not ignite but not comfortable among blazing houses. Then Recce Car stuck in slit trench. O.C. walked back, sent up 2 bogged vehicles - to collect Lt. BLACK en route.	
		2000	O.C. at Bde. Tank track for Armd Col unpassable. C.R.E. arrived, having found a way round and personally cleared up to start line with bulldozer, pushing trees & R-mines off road.	
		2030	Brigadiers orders - O.C. to light approach road for Armd Col and take personal command of columns allotted for lanes 4 & 5 now to be concentrated on opening AYR route. Lanes 1, 2 & 3 as before.	
		2115	O.C. reported to Bde - route lit. Awaiting Armd Col. Called up Lt. BLACK & 2 Platoon and told them new plan. All waited at top of start line.	
	9	0200	Armd Col began to arrive. Only 2 A.V.R.E. bridges and not full complement of flails. All A.V.R.E. officers who had been recceing ahead had vanished. Columns 1, 2 & 3 sent off to starting point with 2 A.V.R.E. bridges. Zero hour now fixed for 0400. Gordons arrived and took 2 Platoon to begin clearing PEARL BLACK. Still no shooting.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
		0330	O.C. gave out orders to NORTH force. 2 flails to flail up to ditch along road which was in fact only a track. Sprs in Kangaroos to follow. 2 sherdozers and one Armd D. 7 to be	

819552		<p>prepared to fill in crossing over ditch. 3 flails then to cross and go on to objective followed by sprs.</p> <p>0400 Crossed start line, heralded by brief and highly dangerous fusillade of tracer from our tanks further south. Stopped this. Advance proceeded uneventfully until 6 cowed Germans bobbed up out of a hedge and surrendered.</p> <p>0515 Reached A/Tk ditch. Bulldozers began work on half demolished earth causeway.</p> <p>0545 Flails able to cross and flailed on to objective. No mines had been met at all. No opposition. Meanwhile sprs were laying a mat of logs spiked together over the bulldozed causeway and finishing the marking of the gap</p> <p>0700 Gap declared open. Bde informed over wireless. Began collecting up funnies, some of which had temporarily ditched themselves. As it grew light began moving funnies back out of sight behind houses and - after being told nothing would be coming through for a while - eventually back to start line. Spr party left near crossing until battalion had passed through at about 1130. Everyone collected up then at the top of the start line, we found a fairly undamaged house, and began sorting out. Meanwhile on lanes 1, 2 &amp; 3 further south progress had been as follows:- No. 1 gap was abandoned almost at once as everything got bogged. No. 2 gap was put through almost as planned except that the A.V.R.E. laid his bridge badly and the second A.V.R.E. bridge was called into gap 2 and laid to the left of the first. On gap 3 the approach to the ditch was poor &amp; after a bulldozer had made a crossing the first half of the route was not used. After a while the A.V.R.E. bridge became impassable and traffic came up gap 2, crossed the ditch at gap 3 and returned to gap 2. Routes opened 0720 hrs. Personnel returned to top of start line. 2 Platoon with Lt. BLACK had opened road with Gordons up to their objective.</p>	<p>JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p> <p>(Some mortar fire on (these 3 gaps, only (casualty one flail (commander later on.</p> <p>JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p> <p>App. 3A.</p>
	10	<p>Whole Coy on road maintenance. Tasks - AYR route - Pearl Black as far forward as possible - making railway fit for wheels from 818552 to 802558. Method - to fill between north set of rails to cover sleepers with 2 of ballast. Excellent track then. Track 851562 to 857557 cleared of mines. NOT fit for through route.</p> <p>1700 A/O.C. to C.R.E. conference at NIJMEGEN. C.R.E. back. Major Wood returned to Coy. Tasks for to-morrow - road maintenance. Only PEARL BLACK is good road, it is a struggle to</p>	<p>App. 3</p>

			keep all others open. 43 Div passing through 15 (S) with difficulty. Traffic control strict. Road at KRANENBORG becoming flooded by Rhine floods.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	11	0130  1000 1700	Major P.T. Wood, D.S.O., M.C., received immediate posting order to become C.R.E. 2 Army Troops, after commanding the Coy since Spring 1941. Left after breakfast. Capt. J.P. BLOCKLEY, M.C., again A/O.C. Lt. BLACK joined 8 R.S. to get a look at water obstacle in CLEVE as soon as possible. Not possible all day. Road maintenance as yesterday. All other available men on railway. O.C. at Bde. No jobs yet other than roads. Major W.F. INGLIS arrived, new O.C., from 8 Corps. Tasks for tomorrow as at App. 4.	App. 4
	12	1900	Road maintenance as App. 4. Tank track marked but expected to be boggy. Everywhere sodden. Deep mud. Angledozer on AYR. Major INGLIS toured jobs with Capt. BLOCKLEY all day. Major INGLIS to hospital for few days with poisoned foot.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	13		Road maintenance continued. All routes still passable for all traffic and can just about be kept open by all the Coy.	
	14		Road maintenance continued. Drying up nicely now.	
	15		Roads mostly O.K. now. Most of Coy bathed in magnificent improvised bath. Road maintenance continued.	
	16		Road maintenance as before plus pot-hole filling on PEARL BLOCK.	
	17	1430 1830	Recces for Leaguer Area south of CLEVE. Coy moved after lunch into very good billets. O.C. at Bde conference on Op Spider. O group. For Bde Plan see App. 5. Coy Plan:- Recce L/Sjt with each of 2 leading Bns to remove charges from river bridges if captured. 2 & 3 Platoons to move into assembly area - tasks:- 1. Open main road (CARTER) for wheels into GOCH. 2. Mark flailed gaps if necessary. 3. Assist in maintaining ditch crossings made by Assault R.E. U/Cmd.:- 2 sherdozers, 1 Armd D. 7, 1 D. 4, 12 tippers, 3 lorries culverting.	App. 5.  JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	18	1100 1300	O.C. & Lt. BLACK moved up with Bde H.Q. 2 & 3 Pl followed. O.C. & Lt. BLACK forward to look at crossings over PHOENIX made by 43 Div night 17/18. Reported to C.R.E. CARTER crossing undamaged, HIKER next best of the 4 others.	Wireless as at App 6.

		<p>1400 C.R.E. visited. Put him in picture. Opposition apparently slight so 8 R.S. attempting to go straight on. 1 Pl ordered to join us on C.R.E. instructions. 279 may have to build bridge in GOCH.</p> <p>1430 8 R.S. up to . Assault R.E. laying bridge. 2 Pl with 1 sherdozer sent up to PHOENIX to be ready to make solid crossing.</p> <p>1500 O.C. at PHOENIX. Heavy small arms fire on Do Do and shelling on PHOENIX. Obviously work impossible for some time so ordered 2 Pln to move back and improve rd behind PHOENIX.</p> <p>1600 AVRE bridge on HIKER unsatisfactory. 2 Sherdozers sent up to bulldoze solid crossing. On arrival however they found br O.K. so returned. Got bogged en route &amp; were stuck 'til morning of 19th. HIKER now impassable and full of bogged tanks.</p> <p>1700 O.C. to Bde. 6 KOSB now on CARTER unable to get over Do Do. Bridge laid but tank unable to disengage and under direct Spandau fire. O.C. to see O.C Assault RE. Nothing can be done till dark &amp; then tank crew will demolish coupling with HE. 8 RS pushing on over HIKER having cut across from CARTER. Bridging of R. NIERS obviously not possible tonight &amp; unlikely tomorrow. 51 Div entering GOCH from SOUTH. Captured br 904441.</p> <p>1815 2 &amp; 3 Plns sent back for night. Plan made with Assault RE to make fascine &amp; bulldozed crossing over do do by side of Br on CARTER. This was being tied up from 2100 till 2330. Armd D7 u/comd 2 AVRE fascine tks for job. Assault R.Es job.</p> <p>2200 Everyone to bed except Lt. Black (who was marrying up bulldozer) &amp; O.C.</p> <p>2359 Crossing party moved off.</p>	<p>JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p> <p>JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p>
	19	<p>0230 O.C. on site. Work just beginning. Sporadic Spandauer but no more shelling.</p> <p>0430 O.C. back &amp; to bed. Bde infd. Bridge O.K. for wheels.</p> <p>0630 Crossing completed. Bde informed. Rd mtce during day. Rd 909448-910433 checked. Several UXB (British). B.D. Sec sent for.</p> <p>1600 Maj. Inglis returned from hospital.</p> <p>1700 Lt. Herbert reported Br 910433 needs 100ft. Bailey. Abutments appear to be in good shape but NOT passable carry out detailed Recce because of snipers. All Officers had had orders to get a look at any bridge across R. NIERS as early as possible. C.R.E. informed. No work tonight. Recce of other bridge arranged for early tomorrow in conjunction with Infantry.</p>	
	20	<p>0900 Reports in about Bridges. 908435 Cl. 40 intact. 907434 needs 60ft. Bailey. 904441 intact apart from 2 big holes in decking.</p>	<p>JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.</p>

		1100	C.R.E. at Coy H.Q. Long and fairly useless discussions to what Cl. bridge at 904441 was, only one officer present having seen it. After further details had been acquired decision taken to make this bridge into a certain cl. 40 by bridging holes on decking with Bailey. To start 1900. Bridge subjected to shelling by observation by day. 1 Pln attempted to fill bomb craters 913439 but shelling too heavy. Crater filled 906442.	
		1900	Bailey began.	
	21	0130	Job complete. One bridge vehicle blew up on mine. Rd mtce. Allotted part of SKYE circuit. Tippers and mud-shovelling.	
	22		Bailey at 904441 slightly damaged by shelling. Damaged parts replaced. Recce attempted of Rly 9442 but impossible to get near enough. Whole Coy together at 931477.	
	23		SKYE route maintained. Bde attack down into woods EAST of R. NIERS. Recce Sjts with 2 fwd Bns. One took the Sjt, the other didn't. No work for them anyhow. 2 Pln standing by all day. Lt. Boardman back from U.K. leave.	Appx (8)
	24		Maj. W.F. Inglis posted to 1 Corps. Rd mtce. All mech eqpt ret'd to Fd Pk preparatory to Div moving out for a rest.	App. (9)
	25	1700	3 Pln rd mtce. 1 & 2 Pln check'd & mkd Assembly areas in which Bde Gp intended to form up before moving off. Just completed when area was changed. 278 & 279 Fd Coys ordered to stop on another 48hrs to make good a stretch of rd vital for Corps plan.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	26		Coy deployed on rd. To be cl. 40 one way but for a few days may be used as 2 way. Jobs- shovelling off loose mud. Revetting banks for short stretches & making rubble berms. Surfacing sharp corner with rubble & cutting down tree. Cutting away banks at narrow stretch. All Plns working in morning. Then 3 Pln had afternoon off & worked thro' night.	
	27	1730	1 & 2 Pln finished rd job. Job complete & good. Coy worked extremely well.	
	28		Moved to s'Hertogenbosh for rest period. Quartered in 3 schools. Maj. W.M. Inglis arrived to take command of Coy.	JP Blockley Capt. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.