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ARMY FORM C.2118

WAR DIARY

or

Unit 279, Fd. Coy. R.E

~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~

(Delete heading not required)

Month and Year NOV. 1944.

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

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
DEURNE	1		2 Pln draining rd DEURNE - ASTEN. Recce ordered of prepared rd demolitions in wood area 6512. Lt. Haines & Thomas in scout cars. Lt. Thomas blew up in Humber scout car at 668134. No one hurt. Many tanks had previously passed along the track. 14 TM; 42 lifted, some with track marks over them. Prepared demolitions NOT found. Water point opened 602127 for 44(L) Bde.	
	2	1340 1350 1450 1800	44(L) Bde attack. S.L. LIESEL objective MOOSTDIJK. Lt. Haines with left hand Bn. Lt. du Vivier with Right. Task to open up routes fwd behind leading Bns. Report from du Vivier - scattered mines area 692113, am marking. O.C. orders up 3 secs 1 Pln with minimum transport to R.V. 682128 for verge clearing. Then 2 Pln shortly after. 1450 hrs Sjt. Parr, L/Sjt. Taylor, Dvr. Dixon, all of 2 Pln, killed in accident at LIESEL. They were carrying T.Mi 42s still fuzed from a wall where they had been laid out to a truck. An explosion took place, all the mines going off. No more details are known. Verges of main rd swept 682128-694113. No mines found. The general scattered mines in fields were found during the attack, knocking out some tanks. Notification received - Capt. J.P. Blockley (late 621, Fd Sqdn 7 Armd Div) awarded immediate M.C.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	3		Coy deployed on rd maintenance DEURNE-ASTEN-LIESEL-HEITRAK. Mine clearing at 692113 disclosed odd Teller mines. At 690111 3 rows of Tmi 42 discovered, clearing proceeded. A few were found with no cover caps & Z 43 igniters. Policy now is to pull every mine with signal cable into a central dump and then blow up the lot.	
	4		Maintenance rd SLOT-HEITRAK. Mine clearing as for 3 Nov continued. L/Cpl. Bethell patrolled with K.O.S.B. but unable to reach track to be examined.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	5		44(L) Bde attack - objective MEIJEL - made no headway. Mines & soft going both a hindrance. Verges checked as far as BROEK.	

		Pln 278 Fd Coy RE u/cmd but not employed in operation. 3 Pln left for Tilburg to set out in order monastery to be used as Div rest centre. Jobs - hot water system - cooking ranges - Blackouts for 400 windows - rock repairs - bar	
	6	Further mine clearing same area in morning. Afternoon "make and mend" O.C. left on visit to 3 Pln in TILBURG.	
	7	O.C. returned in morning. Mine clearing continued area 69112. Only 3 Tmi found in mornings work. Many reports now coming in of mines, both A/Tk and A/P. In this boggy country they are employed at their best on the comparatively few possible lines of advance. Further maintenance rd LIESEL-MOOSTDIJK.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	8	Sewage drain of house 609142 repaired at request of 44(L) Bde who had smashed it while moving in. Rd ASTEN-LIESEL now our responsibility again. Verges going, making 2 way traffic difficult.	
	9	1157 check. Maintenance rds ASTEN-LIESEL-HEITRAK. O.C. & 2i/c visited 3 Div. SCHU mines demonstration in afternoon. No really satisfactory answer yet. Rain.	
	10	Rd maintenance. Rain, all rds needing draining.	
	11	4 cross routes recced to join rd ASTEN-MIESEL to rd LIESEL-HEITRAK in order to make a circuit and allow rd ASTEN-LIESEL to become one way. All routes unsatisfactory, requiring up to 3 weeks work comprising hard core top dressing or corduroy construction over greater part of length. O.C. again visited 3 Pln at TILBURG. Work in main building complete. Hot water system delivering well.	Appx (1)
	12	Warned to put on SCHU mine demonstration on 15th. Site chosen and dummy figure made. 2 Pln cut and delivered 60 12 ft poles (from young firs) to 20 Fd Coy RE.	
	13	Lt. Thomas with Sec 2 Pln lifted SCHU mines in 3 Div area. 15 complete plus 10 without igniters all located by careful prodding with 4' single prodders. Spr. Hills killed whilst doing something to a dump of R mines. No one knows what. Preparations for demonstration proceeded. 2 strands of Cordtex fired with PIAT bomb travel 60 feet. 4 strands 45 feet.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	14	12 more SCHU mines lifted. One set off by careless prodder who sustained injury to his eye. He had been wearing goggles but had pushed them up onto his forehead. No other injuries. Demonstration area taped out.	
	15	SCHU mine demonstration put on in afternoon. Attended by Div Comd, C.E. and reps from all units in Div. Appx.2	Appx. (2)

			Road & verges cleared down to HOF. 60 Tmi 42 2 Tmi 35 steel, 28 "S" mines lifted. Smashed tanks cleared from rd at 709081. All T mines are now pulled clear & blown up.	
	16		1 Pln cleared Rd & verges down to 712067 and then to 715067. Teller & S mines. 2 Pln cleared tracks 708074-709075-714072-720071 using prodding & compressor nozzle. T mines & SCHU mines found. All tracks taped off. They are for the fwd Inf. Coys. Cpl. Chisholm & Spr. Picinni on recce patrol at night to canal at 727075. Infm reqd. What is depth of water. Is site suitable for KAPOK. What is slope of bank. What is size of floodbank. Answers 6" water over soft mud. KAPOK would just float. Bank slopes gently. Floodbank abt 5'. The plan is to do an assault crossing by day at this point, supported by fire from tanks and crocodiles against the enemy on the far bank, and then to make a cl. 9 crossing - probably by culverting & bulldozing. Plan NOT yet firm & operation will be very difficult if opposed with determination.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E. PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	17		1 Pln maintained rd MOOSTDIJK-MIESEL. 2 Pln further track clearing, 40 SCHU mines, 20 Teller mines found mostly by eye, rest by detector & prodding.	
	18	0830 1230	Rd drained as far as 713078 by 1 Pln. 2 Pln lifted over 500 SCHU mines in 2½ hrs. Located by eye & prodding between 716076 & 717077. Various tracks in wood cleared & marked. Lane cleared by compressor jet. -1630 O.C. at TILBURG visiting job at RED LION CLUB. Capt. Blockley to C.R.E. conference. Plan now in for 51 (H) Div to come round behind the enemy on canal position and then for Cl. 9 & Cl. 40 to be built at 728065 (MEISEL EAST), Cl. 9 to be job of 279 Fd Coy. Timing uncertain yet. 1 Pln to be u/cmd of 278 for br at HOOGEBRUG. Operation laid on but did not take place on Nov 18.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	19	1130 1515 1930	O.C. returned from C.R.E. O Gp. Operation to begin at once. 2 & 3 Plns & 3 D 7 bulldozers moved out to site and started bulldozing 1400. Capt. Blockley as step up to C.R.E. Capt. Blockley attended Div mine warfare conference. Reporting of mines found was tied up. Crossing opened. See Appx 3A for trace of Div routes.	Appx (3A)
	20	1400	MEISEL EAST widened & causeway heightened whole traffic crossed. Rubble cleared from MEISEL village. In refs App. 3a 3 Pln less small party retd from Red Lion Club job in TILBURG & took over on MEISEL EAST.	Appx. (3A) " 4
	21		O.C. to Brussels for leave. 2 Pln in support of 6 RSF checked track	

			Lateral B 754070 -739001 with 2 secs. 3 Pln continued on MEIJEL EAST. 1 Pln u/cmd 278 Fd Coy on HELENAVEEN br. Lt. Thomas reced North end on lateral B 739001 - 740018. 16' ditch needs filling at 741016. Rain all day again.	Appx. (5)
	22	2000	2 Pln moved out to school 749086 complete. 2 Pln worked filling 16' ditch at 741016 dragging away Cl. 5 timber br & bulldozer. Finished by hand as B dozer became bogged. Route opened. 3 Pln continued improving MEIJEL EAST & then went u/cmd 20 Fd Coy laying Summerfeld on SKY route. 1 Pln again u/cmd 278 laying Summerfeld on AYR route. All rds in shocking state thro' days of hy rain & heavy traffic. Leaguer for HQ & 1 Pln found at 739111.	Appx. (6) PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
HELENAVEEN	23	1800	HQ moved. Arrived 1800 hrs having had to go round old MEIJEL EAST. Large empty house. 3 Pln joined 2 Pln at 749086 in School. 1 Pln joined HQ at 739111 & then worked again under 278 Fd Coy. 3 Pln again u/cmd of 20 Fd Coy. 2 Pln improved B lateral which is cracking up on NORTH side. Ditch crossing also finished off. Capt. Blockley to CRE to report. MEIJEL EAST becoming soft. Decision taken to lay corduroy 2 way over crossing. Another foul day.	App (7)
	24	0930	O.C. retd from leave to Brussels. Whole Coy fully committed. 1 Pln still u/cmd 278. 3 Pln still u/cmd 20 on the 2 fwd Div routes. Both Plns laying Summerfeld to make routes passable. 2 Pln laid corduroy over MEIJEL EAST with 2 secs and Inf carrying party. Lt. Haines supervised Inf loading party in ASTEN. 2 secs of 2 Pln checked unloading area beside lateral B for BUFFALOES. HQ Pln put every available man into putting hardcore on lateral B and also maintained the water point at ASTEN. Many Infantry working on rds which were just kept open. The two fwd routes had no foundation and became a sea of mud and impassable except over logs or Summerfeld. More Rain.	App. (8) PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
	25		SKYE route maintained also lateral B. 2 Pln continued 2 way corduroy over MEIJEL EAST.	App. (9)
	26		MEIJEL EAST finished. All excellent job. Plns had day for general sort out which was very necessary after the week's hard slogging in the mud.	
	27		Small mtce party on lateral B.	
	28		Ground checked at SLOT for R.E.M.E. to recover tanks. MEIJEL EAST maintained. Water point at ASTEN closed.	
	29		Notification recd Major P.T. Wood M.C.R.E. (O.C.) awarded immediate D.S.O. L/Sjt. O'Shea awarded immediate M.M.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.

	30		Lateral B maintained. All officers attended cloth model exercise for next operation by 44 Bde.	PT Wood Capt. Maj. R.E. For O.C. 279th Field Company R.E.
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