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Bure January 5th.

January 5th. was another day of attack and counter attack, but gradually as the day wore on the enemy was systematically cleared from the village, one house at a time. Finally at around 2100 hours the last German outpost was eliminated and "A" Company were able to report, that all enemy resistance in Bure had ceased. They were now occupying the south of the village, with "C" Company in the north and Company of Ox. and Bucks in the east. What little was left of "B" Company were in reserve.

Len COX:

Another day and we were still isolated. The mortaring and shelling was as bad as ever so we decided that since the rest of the Company hadn't come for us we would have to go looking for them. We had no idea at all where they were, nor if it was safe to move outside. Gammon bombs were used to hole the walls and that was the method we used to get us back to Company H.Q. They gave us a hot meal, the first for nearly three days and then sent us back the same way to reoccupy our old position.

Later in the day, I went out with a patrol to a crossroads on the outskirts of the village, where some Belgian civilians reported a party of Germans waiting to surrender. They guided us to the spot and then ran off only seconds before a mortar stonk landed around us. We sheltered against a high bank close to where "B" Company had been caught in the open on the first day of the battle. The dead bodies were lying there, now covered in snow. Our patrol returned without any casualties but neither did we have any prisoners.

While we had been away, fresh orders to clear the other half of Bure had been given with 9 Platoon made responsible for the road running to the right away from the church. We systematically checked every house and ended up in an isolated farmhouse, in quite a commanding position, which we were ordered to hold. The German infantry made several attempts to eject us but we held out.

Dennis BOARDMAN:

Just before midnight, we were in the far end of the village when the Company Commander was called to an "O" Group. He wasn't gone long, but the news he brought shook us rigid. We were to withdraw as silently as possible, for the enemy must not know we were pulling out. Bure was now all but in our hands and at that moment, the sacrifice of all the men we had lost and with our best friends killed, seemed to have been for nothing. In consequence there were bitter thoughts and some hard words were spoken as we pulled out. But this I suppose is expected in war.

Elsewhere in the village there was a further reason to regret the hurried call to move out. For the last hour Serjeant Arthur HIGGINS of the M.M.G. Platoon, had been cooking a chicken

stew, now it was almost ready for serving but it had to be left for who ever occupied the house next. In most sub units there was only a five minute interval between receiving the order and actually having to move. Standing patrols had to be recalled, heavy weapons dismantled and stores to be collected, for the orders were, that anything which could be of use to the enemy and which could not be carried for some distance was to be left by the last house on the way out. Here a party under the R.S.M. would collect the same and later destroy it.

By 0015 hours the Battalion had left Bure behind without the enemy realising what was happening and were now on the road to safety. The next two hours were to be a different sort of nightmare than the one we had endured for the past three days. No one knew their destination, hence had no idea as to how long the march was to last and the surface of the road was very treacherous. The frequent passage of both tracked and wheeled vehicles had packed the snow hard, making it more suited for skating than for marching. Those men carrying the heavy weapons and wireless sets were the ones most effected and had the utmost difficulty in remaining upright. The standard British Army boot stud provided no grip whatsoever on the glazed surface and every few yards someone lost their footing and ended up flat on their back and were then hauled cursing and swearing back to their feet again. And so it went on, it could not be called marching it was an awkward shuffling motion that carried us forward through the empty void of the night. For over two hours without a break we moved slowly back to Brigade Headquarters where we found a floor to sleep on for the remainder of the night.

Not all the isolated out posts received the order to withdraw. Len COX:

The farm house we now occupied was some distance from the village and once again we lost wireless contact with H.Q., so we never received the news that Bure was to be evacuated. It was only when the Company were on the move and clear of the built up area that miraculously, contact was made and we were told to make our way back on our own. We moved cautiously back into the village, which was now deserted and then out on the road back to Tellin. The surface was like a skating rink but finally about 0300. hours we reached the safety of our own lines.

The Battalion were still under Command of 29 Armoured Brigade of 11th. Armoured Division. Their official story "The Black Bull", carries this report on the fighting:

A near Division attack was now planned with 7th. and 13th. Parachute Battalions under command, the objectives were initially the villages of Bure and Wavreille and then eastwards to Grupont and Forrieres. The attack started on the 3rd. advancing towards Bure, 6 miles to the east which was dominated by the 2,000 feet high "Chapel Hill" code name "Orange". For the next three days there was a savage battle around Chapel Hill and Bure the 6th Airborne men fighting as infantry suffered 200 casualties, mainly in the 13th.

The battle in Bure raged furiously with a Tiger Tank reported unassailable in the village. Having taken Chapel Hill, Bure proved to be even more difficult with the tanks knocked out by "Bazookas".

The night of the 3rd. was cold and dangerous and the next day in Bure a further three tanks were "brewed". The battle for Bure continued until the 5th. with heavy fighting. The 23rd. Hussars were now due to relieve the 2nd. Fife and Forfar Yeomanry. When they reached Bure

four more tank crews were killed.

The parallel attack, north east to Wavreille, was more successful and 8th. Battalion, Rifle Brigade, occupied it. Having so painfully and brutally taken Bure, a planned withdrawal took place on the night of the 5th.

J. ILLINGWORTH wrote in the Liverpool Daily Post under the headline

"NO QUARTER WAS GIVEN IN THE BATTLE OF BURE"

Lancashire Men used knives In house to house struggle.

Lancashire and Yorkshire men of the 6th. Airborne Division who drenched in snow and ice, fought for nearly 60 hours at Bure on the tip of the German salient in one of the wildest and bloodiest battles of the war. During the battle German tanks ground their way up to the windows of houses where our men were fighting back. Sometimes British and German troops were on different floors of the same house. For three days, four men lay hiding in a loft with the enemy fighting from the windows of the lower floors. The story of the battle which lasted from 1330 hours on Wednesday until midnight on Friday can now be told:

Bure has the look of one of our own North country villages. The houses are of old grey stone, one main street and lies in a valley dominated by three heights, one known as Chapel Hill. Originally it was intended that another formation should subdue the enemy on the hill and then the unit of 6th. Airborne should take Bure.

Their start line was a wood 400 yards front the village they had to man handle all their heavy equipment all the way, for no vehicles could get through in the bitter wintry conditions we were experiencing, they walled. Zero hour was mid day. They waited until 1330 hours and although the enemy still held Chapel Hill they attacked the village. It was a tough task, the enemy knew they were there, all element of surprise had gone.

When the first Company. went in they were met with the fire of artillery, self propelled guns and mortars, but though their casualties were not light, they succeeded in forcing their way to the first houses. They fought with Sten guns, grenades and P.I.A.T.'s and at close quarters with knives. The Germans added to this hell by bringing in Tiger Tanks, five times the Germans tried to throw our men out of Bure, the battle went on all night.

Thursday was the bitterest and bloodiest of the three days, the Germans again and again put in counter attacks with "Tigers" and self propelled guns. It was a fantastic situation, whole 63 platoons were cut off in houses, with enemy tanks roaring outside. Repeated attacks relieved their positions.

The battle for Bure went on all day Friday, one man crossing the street was hit by machine gun fire and the phosphorous grenade in his pouch ignited. Two Serjeants in a house nearby threw smoke grenades near him and under their cover dragged him to safety. It was a struggle of life and death few prisoners were taken. And finally the report concluded with the highest possible compliment. It was the spirit of Arnhem all over again.

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