

04 - AFTER THE BATTLE:

Écrit par Administrator

Vendredi, 24 Février 2012 23:31 - Mis à jour Vendredi, 24 Février 2012 23:51

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AFTER THE BATTLE:

In 1995 to commemorate the 50th. Anniversary of the battle a local report on the fighting in the village and its neighbourhood was prepared and here are extracts from their story.

2nd. Panzer Division commanded by Colonel Meinrad von Lauchett, forming part of the 5th. Panzer Army, operated in our area, having by passed Bastogne where the fighting still continued. On 23rd. December Bure was occupied and on 24th. Battle Group von Cochenhausen reached Celles, 8 kilometres from Dinant. The Germans got no further, they were short of fuel and the skies cleared, allowing the Allied Air Force, to operate in strength. 2nd. Panzer were stuck. To cover their retreat the Germans must delay the Allied ground forces. They must hold on to La l'Homme and also Grupont. That is why the action in Bure began, so Bastogne could be relieved and the Battle of the Ardennes end in defeat for the Germans.

German soldiers, along with those of the Allies, froze, bled and died in Bure. It is difficult to say exactly how many Germans were killed in Bure. Fifteen bodies were recovered from the snow after the battle and were interred in a temporary burial ground in the village.

Account of L'Abbe Hubert, Cure of Bure:

We waited anxiously. Panic broke out when fighters flew overhead and fired towards Dinant. All the members of the Resistance departed. A bus load of refugees from Clairxaux increasing our unease. During Saturday morning, 23rd. December, we heard that the enemy were at Jemelle. At midday an American convoy arrived, causing confusion among the villagers.

1430 hours, artillery and machine gun fire is heard and everyone takes to the cellars, chiefly the cellars of "L'Alumnat", (a substantial building in Bure occupied by members of a religious order). By 1530 hours the Americans have left and the Germans enter the village. I saw two "Tiger" tanks and several smaller ones. That evening there are four of the smaller tanks in the village and between 100 and 200 German soldiers are laying mines on the approaches to Bure. I saw nothing more of interest on that last evening.

Sunday 24th. several Jeeps carried out a reconnaissance from the direction of Tellin.

31st December 1944, a Jeep carrying three Belgian members of the S.A.S. is shot up, killing all three occupants.

Monday 1st. January, shelling begins. The British are in Haut and Tellin. A shell falls on Robert Crosier's house.

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Tuesday 2nd., I bury a British soldier near the church. The Germans left his body in front of the Presbytery, telling me to bury him.

Wednesday 3rd., very heavy shelling. A number of British soldiers infiltrate into the village, as far as Monsieur Bourtembourg's house.

Thursday 4th., a violent battle. The British are holding Tiran Rue. German reinforcements arrive from Awenne.

Friday 5th., the British advance towards le Pauche, houses burning, the Presbytery is full of British soldiers.

Saturday morning 6th., there is a German counter attack during the night. The British have pulled back towards Tellin, with the Germans as far as the "gendarmerie", near the burial ground. The village is in "no mans land". I return to the Presbytery which has been ransacked and is in ruins. I go as far as the end of Tiran Rue and then as far as the "Henroz" house. I see dead lying in the streets and in the houses also burnt out tanks. The shelling and the machine gun fire, fade away. Patrols from both armies operate around the village.

Tuesday 9th., The Germans leave the district and about 1700 hours a British patrol arrives.

Wednesday morning, 10th., the British arrive in numbers there is no fighting. The inhabitants of the village have lived for the last fortnight in the cellars, chiefly those of "L'Alumnat", where there have been two births, Ginette Petit and Marie Jeanne Rondeau.

Of 165 homes, 13 are burnt out, 4 completely destroyed, 42 badly damaged, 47 have suffered considerable damage and only 45 were slightly damaged. 2 civilians were killed Lucieti Bodart and Louis Laffineur. Many farm animals were killed and the village devastated. 15 German and 80 British soldiers buried. Around Bure, 15 British tanks have been knocked out.

11th. January, Claude Devaux is blown up by a mine and is killed.

February 4th, R.P. Charles blown up by a mine and one of his legs has to be amputated.

June 5th, Marcel Petit blown up by a mine and is killed.

Another account of the suffering of the Belgian civilian population, comes from P. Jean Marie Dearle, Superior L'Alumnat:

Commencing 1st. January, the fighting becomes increasingly violent leading up to the 4th. A German S.P., hidden behind our garden wall, draws a lot of fire directed onto "L'Alumnat". Shells fall all around us and the building suffers 30 direct hits, damaging the roof and shattering the windows, but the walls are solid and shells make little impact. After a fearful night, when every house was the scene of fierce hand to hand to hand combat the British arrive. We give thanks to Our Lady of Bure, kissing each other and weeping. A British Captain advises caution and orders us to stay in doors. Every one obeys, except one brave man who goes to feed his cattle and finds that some have suffered wounds.

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A British tank is burning just outside and the houses in the nearby cul-de-sac are engulfed in flames. The glare of the fire lights up the building and our crowd of refugees panic and make for the way out, screaming "The place is on fire". It requires all my rough strength to stem the mad rush for the doors and to restrain these poor frightened creatures.

At last 9th. January and deliverance from the long incarceration, the Germans have finally left the district and the British have re-entered the village. A British Captain asks for me and greets me courteously and explains he has a load of books to distribute among the refugees. And on that misty morning a golden haze hovering over the village, reveals a scene of dreadful desolation and draws expressions of sympathy for the British soldiers. "Poor Souls", we say and some express a desire to avenge the sacrifices which have been made on our behalf.

The last word is from Celestin Limet:

About the 10th. January we were allowed to return home and found the windows all boarded up with timber from our barn. My cattle had been turned loose. I Don't know who by but I recovered them later from the vicinity of Tellin. One was suffering from frostbite and another wounded by shrapnel. Some one had tethered the goat and left it a bucket of water and some fodder beet.

Clearing up the rubble from outside the house, buried under the snow where the two British machine gunners had been, I made the grisly find of a pair of boots, the feet were still in them. My brother helped recover the bodies. On the hillside there were 117 of them, lying in single file, all killed by the one burst of firing.

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