

## THE SILENT HERO

By David J Radmore

I am writing this for current and future generations of my family so that you can learn what I have learnt about my dad's (Harold Wilfred Radmore) war service.

I was born in 1955 and grew up through a time when there was a constant flow of war movies and documentaries such as "The world at war", "All our yesterdays", etc. Through this I learnt much about the war, as much as others of my age. Like many young lads, I would ask my dad what he did in the war, but like many men who had experienced the war, he didn't want to talk about it, so I learnt very little. I now understand why he was so reluctant to speak about it and so will you as the tale unravels.

What I did know was that he drove lorries; he had driven tanks on to a transporter; he passed through Normandy a few days after D-Day; he had spent time at Catterick and in Scotland; served in France and Germany. Yes, that's it! His medals were service and campaign medals, nothing to pinpoint his unit or service.



War Medal 1938-45



1939-45 Star



Defence Medal



France & Germany

Star

So, from this limited information I had assumed that he was in the Royal Corps of Transport, or more correctly, the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) as they were called at the time of the war. As such I also assumed that he was always several days/miles behind the front and didn't see 'action'.

Many think that heroes are those that do incredible feats: taking a machine gun emplacement single handed; retrieving a fallen comrade under fire. Well of course they are heroes, but so are all those who faced going to war. They grew up being told that The Great War was "the war to end all wars" and the horrendous tales of the trenches from fathers, uncles and older brothers. Every family had experienced loss and knew only too well the cost of war. They believed that they would never be called on to do similar things.

After 'The Great War', Germany was hit hard by the League of Nations. They lost land to other countries and had to pay huge reparations to the winners. This caused great deprivation and created an environment where the likes of the National Socialist Party (Nazis') to form, gain ground and eventually come to power. Whilst the hatred of the League of Nations and those outside of Germany and the 'injustice' that Germany faced were cultivated, it wouldn't draw the support to the

Nazis' that they needed to grow in strength. What they needed was to get the people to hate others inside of Germany, these were homosexuals, disabled, Gypsies and of course Jews. They also developed the sense of injustice about the land that had been "taken" from them. This led to the "taking back" the land by walking into Poland and later Czechoslovakia.

So, it led to the war that Hitler wanted, an excuse to take back the land taken from them after the First World War, rid the country of those who had had hate directed to them. Of course, his ambitions didn't stop there. Just like Napoleon before him, he wanted to be Emperor of all of Europe.

So once again young men were called upon to put their lives on hold and put themselves at risk. They were all heroes, doing what was required of them. But so were those that stayed at home, doing a fulltime job and then putting in service with the ARP Wardens; Home Guard; or by becoming Land Girls or Bevan's Boys.

What I learnt changed my mind about dad and he was definitely a hero, not because of the deeds he did but because of what he faced was so shocking and which is something no one should ever have to face. It changed him and haunted him and, silent hero because he never spoke about it.

## The man



Harold Wilfred RADMORE was born on 11th July 1910 in Peterborough to George Alfred Radmore (Bookbinder/Printer) and Fanny Sarah (nee. Davies). He had three older brothers: George Reginald (Reg); Charles Raymond (Charlie), and; Cyril Blyth and a younger sister Rosabel Maud (Rose).

Before the war he worked as a 'tester' for Raleigh Bicycles in Nottingham. This sounds like a boring factory job, but it was anything but. It involved setting up bikes with prototype products and going out riding to test them out. He started being paid a farthing a mile. For the uninitiated that is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an old penny ( $\frac{1}{960}$ <sup>th</sup> of one pound), finishing with a half-penny per mile. The mileage was measured by visiting Raleigh agents in each village.

He had some interesting stories, one that sticks in my mind was one about testing some new hub brakes. He set up the new hub brakes and also a set of back-up calliper brakes. He cycled to the top of a

steep hill in the Peak District, then started cycling down the hill to get some speed up. Pulling on the hub brakes they immediately failed. Pulling on the back-up brakes, the blocks ripped out of the brakes because he was going so fast. So, he was hurtling down the hill with two sets of useless brakes but no way to stop. A corner was coming up which he knew he was going too fast to take, but there was a farmer's gate and it was open. He went through the gate, across the field and ended up in a ditch and hedge on the other side of the field! Not quite a boring factory job! He had other stories, but this is not about his Raleigh job.

On Sundays, just for 'relaxation', he would cycle with the Notts Castle Cycle Club. He won the Nottingham-Skegness race a couple of times, remember, this is the time of fixed wheel and no gearing! This I think is an incredible feat. Certainly not one I could ever contemplate even with a modern light weight bike and gears!

He met Bertha Francis PADMORE (yes it was Padmore, that is not an error) at the club and married her in Basford, Nottingham on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1939. Mum worked as a bookkeeper at Boots the Chemist head office in Nottingham and this made her exempt from war time service.

Prior to conscription he had joined a Nottingham based company Ewart's as a travelling salesman or "tally man" and learned to drive. Before the internet or even catalogues, the way people bought clothes and household items such as furniture on credit was through the Tally Man. You would go and get what you want and then you paid weekly for it. The Tally Man would come to your house and collect your weekly payment. He returned after the war and remained with them until he retired. On the official documents his occupation was stated as "Traveller" or "Travelling Salesman" or similar, it is the former that appears on his Military records.

## **War Time Service – Enlistment to Normandy**

**Date of Enlistment:** 21<sup>st</sup> November 1940

**Army No.:** 233640

His Service record and its transcription appears in Appendix A.

### **Units in which he served:**

‘B’ Company No. 5 (Drivers) Battalion, RASC based at Sutton-in-Ashfield

HQ and ‘H’ Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division, based at Walton on Thames

192 Anti-Aircraft Company RASC, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Division based at Edinburgh

701 Divisional Transport Company RASC based at “home” and “field” (“field” meaning abroad on active duty in the war zone)

### **‘B’ Company No.5 (Drivers) Battalion RASC based at Sutton in Ashfield**

He started his Army career with one month’s training between 21<sup>st</sup> November 1940 and 21<sup>st</sup> December 1940 at No. 11 Training Centre RASC, Sutton in Ashfield as a Driver. This month was designated as “D & W Training” (believed to be Driving and Weapons Training).

I found this period of his service very interesting due to it being his initial posting, that Sutton-in-Ashfield being just a few miles from where I live now and the scarcity of information on it. The local museum (Mansfield Museum) was unaware of any such training base; the RLC Museum were aware of it but had no information; the local libraries (Mansfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield local history sections) had very scant information. So further research was undertaken and I discovered quite a significant amount although there are remain significant gaps, my findings can be found in Appendix C.

No. 11 Training Centre was for those who could already drive so had the basic skills already, but they were trained and expected to drive anything. They had cars, motorcycles and lorries. Alongside this they were trained as Infantry men, so their time was also spent on marching and firing weapons.

This first four weeks ended on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, whilst there would have been some leave for Christmas, it is likely to have been no more than a couple of days. Following a review of the training in 1940, they continued on “specialist training” for another month. This would have included driving a variety of vehicles, convoy practice, safe loading and similar types of activity.

He was posted to his first unit on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1941.

Dads badges as seen in the photos of him in uniform:



**Royal Army Service Corps**

shoulder flash



**Driver Trade Badge, worn on forearm**



Taken outside the Old Bluebell Public House, Lammas Road, Sutton in Ashfield probably upon completion of Basic Training in December 1941. Dad, front row 2<sup>nd</sup> from right

To put the rest of his service into context, it would be useful to understand the general function of the RASC. The role of the RASC in the field falls into two main parts, supply and transport.

#### Supply.

Supply embraces the provision of food, petrol and lubricants, fuel and light, hospital supplies and disinfectants.

#### Transport.

Transport was concerned with the conveyance of the above supplies, together with ammunition, engineer stores, ordnance stores and post, from railhead, or from base if no railhead exists, to all units of a field force. In addition, RASC units were provided for the carriage of infantry, tanks and heavy bridging equipment. The mechanical transport of medical and certain other units is also found and operated by the RASC.

To enable these services to be undertaken effectively, the RASC were responsible for the provision, repair, and maintenance of their own mechanical transport.

General Transport Companies were allotted to divisions for the transport of ammunition, supplies and petrol. Similar companies were allotted to higher formations and for employment in Line of Communication areas as required.

Personnel of the RASC were trained to fight as infantry and RASC units were responsible for their own local defence.

#### Divisional RASC

The role of the RASC companies was to keep the front-line units supplied. In order to do this, there were three different operations which were carried on simultaneously.

By the end of the campaign it was usual to have a company assigned to supplies, another to petrol and a third to ammunition. Early in the campaign it was more usual to have companies serving brigades and have those companies each assign a platoon to supplies, petrol and ammunition. Clearly the brigade company allowed the brigade to operate independently and was well suited to the rapid advances of armoured divisions. In the large, and often fairly static, armies of the winter of 1944/45 the commodity company was more efficient. The supply system was overhauled in the autumn of 1944 when it became common for transport from army level to deliver to division refilling points and thus cut out a stage of loading and unloading.

The transport was divided into two echelons which operated a two-day turn around system. The major item was rations. These were fairly constant and were delivered daily. Because there were slight variations in the strength of units from day to day each unit had to make a ration return stating how many rations would be required in four days' time. There was always one day's rations with the unit, one day's rations on the second line transport and a third day's rations on the third line transport so that the rations being requested today would leave railhead tomorrow.

Supplies would be delivered to the divisional refilling point by corps transport units. Empty lorries would travel in convoy to the divisional supply refilling point and collect supplies. The lorries from each brigade would load the supplies for their own brigade.

Loaded lorries would travel, preferably by a different route to avoid congestion, from the divisional refilling point to the unit supply points where units first line transport would collect the supplies. There would usually be a rendezvous point where the lorries for each brigade were met by motorcyclists who guided them to the supply point which might have moved or might be difficult to find in the dark.

Once unloaded, the supply lorries would collect any salvage in the form of returnable crates, cans, sacks etc. and then return.

Somewhere on the return route was a reporting centre manned by the echelon commander and personnel and vehicles from company headquarters. Here the section and platoon commanders would report that their mission was complete. Here they could also get refreshment and repairs before returning to a company headquarters for rest and a meal.

Company Headquarters would be sited close to the divisional refilling point and clerks would be provided to check the items being loaded by relief crews. Clerks and loaders would also be provided by the third line transport to handle items being unloaded. Supply Platoons were also available to assist with supply matters.

The system for the transport of petrol differed from that for supplies because all petrol was alike and was not perishable. There was no need for two echelons working a two-day turn around.

Supplies of petrol were delivered to the divisional petrol refilling point by corps transport where it was held on wheels until collected by the divisional transport as required. The corps RASC held a reserve sufficient to move the entire division 25 miles.

Forward of the divisional refilling point was a holding point where the second line transport held a reserve on wheels sufficient to move the entire division 50 miles. Second line vehicles also ran a shuttle service from the holding point to unit supply points so that petrol was always available when required.

On return journeys, lorries should carry salvage in the form of empty cans. All petrol was in cans and a 3ton lorry could carry 160 cans.

There was less need of clerks, although deliveries were monitored so that fresh supplies could be ordered.

#### The transport of ammunition.

The system for the transport of ammunition was similar to that for petrol. Again, the loads were not perishable, and demand fluctuated. However, petrol and ammunition were always kept separate. This was an absolute rule since ammunition was usually safe to handle and transport, but petrol fires would cause it to explode.

Supplies of ammunition were delivered to the divisional ammunition refilling point by corps transport where it was held on wheels until collected by the divisional transport as required. The corps RASC held a reserve.

Forward of the divisional refilling point was a holding point where the second line transport held a reserve on wheels. Second line vehicles ran a shuttle service from the holding point to unit supply points where ammunition was always available.

On return journeys lorries should carry salvage in the form of empty ammunition boxes and cases, packing tubes, and shells that have been unpacked but not used. This latter made it necessary for lorries returning to the divisional filling point to be diverted to a salvage depot where returned ammunition could be handled by RAOC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps) personnel.

A General Duties platoon was available to assist with loading and unloading ammunition. It was a principle of ammunition supply that it should move forward automatically and need not be indented for. Clerks were required to record amounts issued, and units made returns of ammunition expenditure, so that replacement stocks could be provided.

At times of heavy artillery ammunition expenditure divisional lorries could deliver direct to gun lines and dump ammunition on the ground.

Note: The term railhead can also cover Beachhead and or Airhead.

The divisional transport units should not be considered in isolation. In fact, there was a smooth overlapping system in which corps or army units delivered supplies to the divisional units. At the divisional refilling points there were both corps and divisional personnel who worked very closely with each other. At the other end of the divisional transport system there were unit echelon lorries operating under brigade control waiting to receive loads from the brigade transport companies RASC.

The system was sufficiently flexible to cope with rapid movements. When fighting units advanced many miles a day the supply system was able to maintain a steady flow. In the advance, petrol was essential.

It is unclear what role dad took within his service and it is likely that he may have at different times done all or most roles. The only hint as to what he did is he mentioned driving tanks on to a tank transporter at some time, he also qualified to drive staff cars.

The Royal Logistics Corps Museum discovered a copy of a contemporary account of "A short history of the No. 3 Training Brigade" and were able to furnish me with three pages, so this is incomplete, but we also know of one inaccuracy in that they state that No. 11 Training Centre was disbanded in September 1940 when we know this was in fact still operating as No 5 Battalion in November 1940 to January 1941. This document appears in Appendix B.

## **HQ & Holding Company (*Support Battalion*) Support Group Company 8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division/334 Company RASC – Walton on Thames**



### **8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division**

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1941 he arrived at **334 Company RASC** at Walton on Thames. The Unit Diary for the 1<sup>st</sup> says "*Busy with new intake of 57 OR [Other Ranks] which arrived yesterday. Seem quite a good lot.*"

Apart from a "War Weapons Parade", the diary refers mainly to a new training regime and the problems that were experiencing. The diary is only available for February 1941 so unfortunately it is not possible to detail what the unit was involved in.

Dad had mentioned driving tanks whilst loading for transport and driving tank transporters, so this probably happened whilst at Walton.



### **6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division**

I have found nothing in the records that links dad, or any other unit that dad was linked with to this Division, however, this badge was in his collection. The 6<sup>th</sup> deployed to Africa and commenced their first action in November 1942.

Clearly, he did not deploy to Africa so if he did spend time with them before deployment it would have been between his service with 334 Company and leaving the 192 Company. There is no mention of this in his record and he appears to have remained in Edinburgh, so it appears highly unlikely that he served with the 6<sup>th</sup> so the inclusion of this badge is a mystery. There are only two badges in his collection that cannot be verified, this and one that cannot be identified. Clearly, he was not a badge swapper/collector or there would have been many more unaccounted for badges. Did he perhaps go on a temporary secondment to assist in the Division's preparation for deployment to Africa? If so it was not recorded in his Service Record, nor in the Unit's diary.

### **192 Anti-Aircraft Company RASC - Edinburgh**

On 8<sup>th</sup> April 1942 he joined **192 AA Coy RASC** and this was part of the **3 AA Div**. This posting was to Edinburgh.



### **3<sup>rd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Division**

The Anti-Aircraft Command was formed on 1 April 1939. It was responsible for the AA defences of Scotland. They were deployed to defend Eastern Scotland from Edinburgh north.

Whilst this might be assumed to be a "quiet" posting, the 3<sup>rd</sup> saw action protecting the Rosyth dock yards from German bombers.

In 1942, dad had two periods of "privileged leave": 29 April 1942 to 7 May 1942, and 12 August 1942 to 20 August 1942. Privileged leave is granted for specific reasons such as birth, marriage and death. No trace can be found as to explain this, but we know that mum gave birth to a boy that didn't survive, was this the reason? The second dates are nine months after dad's call up, could the first dates could be mum being ill during her pregnancy and the second the birth/death of the child? No evidence can be found to support this but still births were not registered at that time, so that may explain it.

192<sup>nd</sup> Company Diary for April records trips for the Company to:

- Dundee
- Glasgow
- Hyde, Manchester
- York

The Diary for May records trips to:

- Carlisle
- Cowglen, Glasgow

Gloucester  
Hyde  
Kirkliston  
Renfrew  
Salisbury  
Sharpness

I would suspect that these are the longer trips but most trips would have been routine local ones supplying 3AA units with ammunition and other essentials. Dad had mentioned Catterick as a cold windy place. This may well have been a stop over on the trips to the south.

On the 7th June 1942 musical chairs was played with the different units of 192 Company:  
*"192 AA Company RASC Operation Order Number 5 – Change of Section Locations. Main parties to move off at 1000 hours; "A" Section from Dean Orphanage to Craighall, "B" Section from Torrie House to Dean Orphanage to Craighall, and "C" Section from Craighall to Torrie House. Move satisfactorily completed by about 1200 hours."*

This shows where 192 Company was located within the Edinburgh area and is confirmed by the 3AA War Diary for July. No direct reference was found as to 192 transferring command but clearly this did happen. The only reference was in an Operation Instruction dated 1 July 1942 concerning the move to Reading; *"AA Coys, RASC will have many commitments, but any lorries which they can spare will be used to supplement or to release Home Cmd tpt."* With the knowledge they stayed put in Edinburgh, this implies that they were carrying out duties either not directly related to the move or moving things locally to assist the move.

In August 1942 the Divisional HQ moved south to assist in defending against Luftwaffe 'hit and run' attacks on the South Coast of England. at the end of September 1942, resulting in the disbandment of all the AA Divisional HQs.

4 August 1942 the order is issued the 3AA Div *"will take over certain operational commitments from 5, 8 and AA Divisions"* and that the 3AA Div *"will hand over present operational commitments to 7 and 12 AA Divisions"*. They move from Edinburgh to Reading.

There is a stamp reference the 192 AA Coy and the 7AA dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 1943 approving a period of leave which shows that the whole Company transferred before that date. The Company Diary is very unclear as to this change.

The June Diary clearly shows each page as 3AA, but the end of month stamp is for the 7AA. The front page for the month also shows *"192 AA Company (7AA Division) (Late 3AA Division)"*. Confusingly this is also the same for July.



### **7<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Division**

The 7th AA Division took over from the 3rd AA Division in defending Scotland.

The War Diary for the 7AA Div does not mention the move, it being mostly Intelligence Reports rather than a detailed diary of activity.

However, in the "Addendum to Location List 2A" dated 27 July 1942 lists the 192 Coy in its various locations of Dean Orphanage, Craighall, Torrie House and, Sloan's Garage.

A reorganisation of AA Command in October 1942 saw the AA divisions disbanded and replaced by a number of AA Groups more closely aligned with the groups of RAF Fighter Command. The 7th AA Division was split between the 5th AA Group and the 6th AA Group, with the 7th AA Divisional Signals joining the 6th AA Group (Mixed) Signals.

The August Company Diary is titled "*192AA (Mixed) Transport company RASC (6AA Group) (Late 3rd the 7th AA Divisions)*". Each page is similarly titled, and the end of month stamp is also consistent with this.

So, it looks like the period with the 7AA was brief or temporary before moving on to the 6AA.



#### **6<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Division**

We do not have this badge in dad's collection, but the War Diary for the 192 states that after a short period of being with the 7AA Div they became under the 6AA. Not having this badge would suggest that either it has become lost over the years or it was such a short period that they were attached to the 6AA that the badge was never issued.

Upon checking the War Diary for 6 AA Div, it is clear that they were based at this time in Eastern Command covering Kent, Sussex and Suffolk areas. This is therefore clearly an error and can be discounted, dad did not spend time with the 6<sup>th</sup> which explains to lack of the badge.

The 192 Unit Diary for 1st October 1942 states the location as Edinburgh and the Unit was re-designated 192 AA (Mixed) Transport Company RASC.

On the 4th September 1942 they were still in Edinburgh,  
*6 Drivers SOS of this unit on being posted to No3 Depot Hdq Coy RASC wef 4.9.43 Authy:- Col i/c RASC Records TMP.F/3285 dated 2.9.42*  
*4 Drivers SOS of this unit on being posted to No3 Depot Hdq Coy RASC wef 4.9.43 Authy:- Col i/c RASC Records TMP.F/3289 dated 2.9.42*

Dad was one of these 10 Drivers

#### **701 Infantry Divisional Transport Company/701 Company RASC (Army Transport)**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1943 an entry states on dad's service record, "*S.O.S [Struck off strength] of this unit [701 Div TPT Coy RASC] on being posted to MO 3 Depot & Hldg Coy RASC mob centre for duty with 701 Inf Div TPT Coy RASC wef 4/9/43 auth col i/c RASC Records TPM F/3289*"

This is a little odd as 20<sup>th</sup> August 1943 shows that he was still part of 192 Company, but by 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1943 he had already become part of 701. I suspect that this is an error and the transfer was actually from 192 to 701 on 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

The 5<sup>th</sup> September 1943 entry states “T.O.S. [Taken on strength] *this unit* [701 Div TPT Coy RASC]

*w.e.f. 5/9/43...*” the next bit is unclear.

### **NO. 3 RASC MOBILISATION CENTRE - WEYBRIDGE**

Its constitution was comprised of:

Depot and Holding Coys

Tank Transporter School

Plus:

545 Tank Transporter Coy

132 Motor Ambulance Convoy

104 Divisional Transport Coy

199 General Transport Coy

1585 LAA Regiment Platoon

249 Troop Carrying Coy

1573 Independent Platoon

11 Bulk Petrol transport Coy

319 Artillery Coy

222 Corps Transport Composite Coy

213 General Transport Coy

Animal Transport Platoon for 642 Command (Mixed) Transport Coy

1583 Field Regiment Platoon

1584 HAA Regiment Platoon

716 Airborne LT Composite Coy

648 Armoured Divisional Transport Coy

649 Armoured Divisional Transport Coy

**701 Divisional Transport Coy**

702 Infantry Divisional Transport Coy

703 Corps Transport Coy

704 Corps Transport Coy

718 General Transport Coy

719 General Transport Coy

HQ CRASC 2nd Army Troops

HQ CRASC 27 L of C Tpt Coln

HQ CRASC 28 L of C Transport Column

HQ CRASC 6 Airborne Div Cadre

252 Troop Carrying Coy  
2 Petrol Supply Demonstration Unit

This is clearly a significant Centre with hundreds, if not thousands, of men. The Unit Diary for the 701 suggests that most of the activity was "Routine duties, training and maintenance". Alongside this there are references to training with specific weapons.

It would appear that this period was mainly a training period although dad, and his comrades, from the 192 have previous experience. This, one must assume, was also true for many others both in the 701 but all the other units at the Centre.

On 17th November 1943 the unit was re-designated as **701 Infantry Divisional Transport Company**. This is a little odd as the entry on 2nd Sept stated that he was joining this unit. Unfortunately, I have found no verifiable evidence of what Division the 701<sup>st</sup> were attached to. However, this may have been when they joined the **49th (West Riding) Infantry Division**.

There is no mention in the 701 War Diary nor could I find any War Diary for the 49th Infantry Division, which I believe it was attached to. The only contemporary document is "Short History of 49th (WR) Division" by Br. H.B. Latham (see appendix D). This does state the composition of the Division at the start of its operations in Holland, unfortunately the RASC only gets a by-line of "Relevant RASC, RAMC, and REME units".

#### **49th (West Riding) Infantry Division**



Major General Barker ordered the divisional sign to be changed from the first badge of a polar bear with its head lowered, which the GOC believed to be a sign of a lack of martial intent, into a more "aggressive" sign. "That Bear is too submissive. I want a defiant sign for my division, lift up its head and make it roar", Barker wrote. Subsequently the 49th Division was issued with a new "aggressive" insignia, now featuring a Polar Bear with its head facing upwards, roaring. The first is within dad's collection, whilst the second isn't. The change took place in 1943 so I suspect that the 701<sup>st</sup> was attached to the 49<sup>th</sup> and he was issued with the first badge when he joined, this he then changed to the new one which remained upon tunic when he went through demob and was lost.

On 17th December 1943 dad gained the "Spec. Quals", presumably "specialist qualification" for a "Driver HV Petrol and Staff Cars". According to the RLC Museum, it is highly probable that he started driving for the 'brass'? My sister believes this is the case. At no time was he transferred to the General Staff therefore he would have not been allocated to a single Senior Officer but would have been a pool driver.

On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1944 the unit relocated to Cawthorne, near Barnsley. The 701<sup>st</sup> Diary has the following note: *"This move seems to be part of Exercise – Misinformation. There are supplemental papers headed this concerning the move to 8 Corps area"*



### **VIII Corps**

This badge is in dad's collection, and the 49<sup>th</sup> Polar Bears were attached to 8 Corps so this could be the connection.

In February 1943, some elements took part in Exercise Eagle and in March Exercise Post Eagle which is likely to be training related to the upcoming invasion of Normandy.

Quite why they kept changing the name of the 701<sup>st</sup> so frequently and subtly over this period is not known, but clearly this made no practical difference to the day to day activities or make up of the unit. On 5th April 1944 the Unit designation changed again to 701 Coy RASC (Army Transport).

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 1944 the Unit moved to new location in Southend (presumably Leigh on Sea – see below).

28<sup>th</sup> May – 8<sup>th</sup> June 1944 *Waterproofing vehicles was taking place in preparation for "Exercise" Overlord*

1<sup>st</sup> June the unit relocated to Leigh on Sea, Southend. So did some units move on the 9<sup>th</sup> May and then the rest joined and officially were located there on the 1<sup>st</sup> June.

10<sup>th</sup> June 1944 *Unit moves to Marshalling Area.*

12<sup>th</sup> June 1944 moved to Tilbury. *"First and 2nd parties moved to Tilbury at 1900 hrs. Veh parties RV'd at Docks. Personnel from camps were accommodated in tented Camps."*

13 June 1944 *"Parties HQ, C, D, Wksps loaded into 2 LSTs and A, B 1 ship M.T. by 1200 hrs. Ships RV off Southend."*

14 June 1944 *"Ships left anchorage in convoy 2100 hrs"*

So, into action in France!

## War Time Service – Normandy

### 701 Infantry Divisional Transport Company

15 June 1944 *"Voyage uneventful. Arrived off **Asnelles-sur-mer** 1900 hrs"*

16 June 1944, the location is indicated as *"Field"*. *"LSTs beached at 1100 hrs – Disembarkation was effected – partly dry up to 1500 hrs. Unit assembled in Transit Area and left for unit location at **Sommervieu** at 2100 hrs CD pls left to deliver preloads of Amn to 101 ASD – weather fine"*



Dad, on the left in both pictures, with his mates. The guy in the first photo is assumed to be his best mate (name not known) who was shot dead whilst next to dad. This affected him badly.

On 16<sup>th</sup> June 1944 dads record shows him disembarking. A really interesting bit of evidence that has emerged is a note giving him instructions for when landing. It is in very poor condition, so I have provided a transcript below:

#### *What to do when you land*

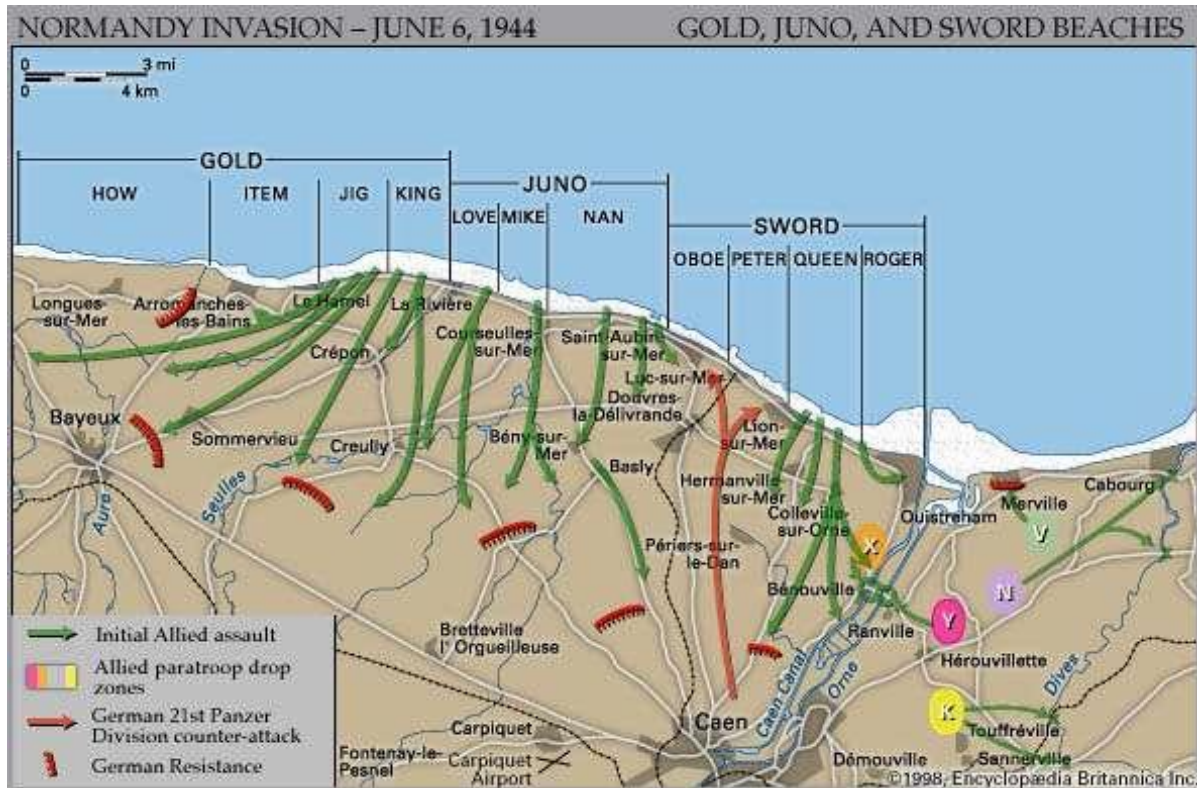
- 1) on landing go immediately to nearest X wheeled vehicle Transit area*
- 2) on orders of OC Transit area go to Code name KEATS*
- 3) your load of ammunition is to be delivered to No 2 L of C terminal*
- 4) when you have delivered this load report immediately to your unit at ....*

#### **REMEMBER**

- 1) if you get lost try and find an officer or NCO of your own unit in Assembly Area Report Centre*
- 2) in case you lose this do not forget the name of your assembly SEC*

*You should land on beach J/K and proceed to assembly area Keats where you should ask for the "Army Troops Section" (NB not the Army Group Troops section)*

*If you land on the wrong beach go via the Wheeled Vehicle Transit Area to the nearest assembly area which may be called Byron or Fielding, report to the army troops section there and you will be redirected*



This would mean that he would land on the eastern end of Gold beach north of Crepon. I have been unable to determine where the other locations (Keats; N0.2 L of C terminal; Army Troops Section) are although they are likely to be very close to the beaches.

I wonder if 'Keats' is the assembly point for King Beach (keeping the 'K' theme) so possibly in the fields around the D112 road between the coast and Crepon. This would be a logical location as it would prevent immediate congestion backing up to the unloading area on the beaches, and there are four roads leaving Crepon: east towards Caen (not liberated until 9<sup>th</sup> July); south towards the villages in the Bocage country and the front at that time, and; west towards Sommervieu (their first location) and Bayeux (liberated 7<sup>th</sup> June and became a place for R&R for British and Canadian forces) which was towards the western edge of the British sector.

For the next few days, the 701<sup>st</sup>'s Diary focuses on AA fire and the weather other than the first casualty on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, although it reads as if it may have been an accident rather than enemy contact.



Map showing demarcation point and their first three camps.

24 June 1944 *"Unit came under comd 44 Tpt Coln. One pl 96 Tp Carrying Coy came under command".*

26 June 1944 entry in the War Diary states *"O.C. and detached H.Q. 1 section of Wksps, B & C Pls and attached pls moved at 0700 hrs to fwd location nr Creully, coming under comd CRASC 8 Corps Tps Col. A Pl came under 47 Canadian G.T. Coy. CRASC 44 Tpt Coln visited unit during morning."*  
**Creully** is located just south of Crepon.

1 July 1944 Coy Rear HQ, "D" Pl and 1 section of Wksps moved into location on banks of River Seulles on Caen-Bayeux Road.

**River Seulles on Caen-Bayeux Road** is just a few miles west of Creully.

3 July 1944 *"44 Tpt Coln ordered rear party to return to old location at Sommervieu to hold location for 20 Tp Carrying Coy."*

**Sommervieu** is just north-east of Bayeux.

14 July 1944 *"Whole Unit reassembled at location on banks of R. Seulles in Caen-Bayeux Rd."*

23 July 1944 *"Unit came under comd 2 Canadian Corps Tpts. "A", "B", "C" and "C" Tpt Pln collected amn from B.A.D. and delivered to gun sites near Caen during the night 23/24."*

### The Battle for Normandy

To understand what faced him on arrival, there are two eyewitness accounts from members of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured who landed at the same time.

*"We turned left and down along the beach, running parallel to the sea. The barbed wire hung in torn shreds and the sand dunes were pocked with shell holes and slit trenches. On a corner down a track*

*was a little wooden cross made out of a 'compo' box inscribed 'A Canadian soldier lies here'. That was all. No name, no regiment... We passed through a German minefield, still wired off and marked with the skull and crossbones sign. Halfway up the ridge was a crashed American fighter plane and just past three British graves in a line, with a khaki cap hung over each of the uprights of the cross."*  
Noel Bell, Commander 'G' Company, 8th Rifle Brigade

*"... there were signs of the battles which had already taken place all around us, damaged houses, burned out tanks and other vehicles strewn about the roads and fields. Corpses of soldiers, British, Canadian and German, lying unburied, and the bodies of cows..."* Rifleman Roland Jefferson, 8th Rifle Brigade  
(P22, Delaforce 1993)

The battle for Normandy was extreme hard and costly in men and equipment. It took place in "Bocage" country. This is a patchwork of small fields bounded high hedges and single-track sunken lanes. The Germans had had months, even years, to select appropriate points for defences. Most fields had gun emplacements dug into the corners of fields with fields of fire over the whole field. The battle was quite literally fought field by field. It was not uncommon for the Allies would take a field during the day, to lose it overnight and have to retake it the next day.

The Germans had the devastating 66mm gun. These would stop any vehicle, be it a tank or truck. This made moving through the narrow lanes very dangerous. Many were lost through bad luck, but also by lack of experience. Vehicles were fairly well hidden on the sunken lanes, but there were cases of vehicles being parked opposite field gates and in sight of the enemy. Having sighted and destroyed the visible vehicle, they would direct fire along the lane assuming other vehicles would be there.

The 701<sup>st</sup>'s Diary refers to carrying ammunition to the road-heads immediately behind the front-line which was not a well-defined line but more a fluctuating band moving back and forth with the ebb and flow of attack and counterattack. So, let's look at the battle from the eyes of the fighting men of the 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

*"23<sup>rd</sup> June: I [Major-General Barker] went round my RASC units and REME workshops – all excellent. The former have had a really hard time dumping quantities of gun ammunition."* Delaforce: 1995, p57

The 49th's first major action as a Division came during Operation Martlet, the first phase of Operation Epsom, the British attempt to capture Caen. Although Lieutenant General Sir Richard O'Connor's VIII Corps made the main effort, XXX Corps, with the 49th Division under control, was to protect VIII Corps' right flank by seizing the Rauray ridge.

*"Pte. Jack Snook drove a 15cwt truck for the divisional RASC. He recalled: In that cramped bridgehead, ammunition always a top priority, was required in almost unheard of quantities. The roads were crammed night and day with endless convoys of ammo lorries. They were bombed, ran the risk of road mines, occasionally sniped but no guns were ever kept waiting. We all took too much for granted, our food, water, petrol, oil, our letters, NAAFI rations, medical aid, RE supplies and conveyance of troops over many miles were all by kind permission of the RASC. No one missed his daily bar of chocolate and rations of cigarettes, much less a meal."* Delaforce, 1995; p90

The operation commenced on 25 June, and the division, supported by elements of the 8th Armoured Brigade and a massive artillery barrage from over 250 guns, initially went well, with the first phase objective, the town of Fontenay, being captured by the end of the first day against units of two German panzer divisions (the 2nd and 9th). However, capturing Rauray itself proved more difficult although, after hard fighting, much of it in close quarters, it eventually fell to the 70th Brigade on 27 June which, for the next few days, had to ensure a series of very fierce counterattacks, with the 1st Battalion, Tyneside Scottish and 11th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry bearing the brunt of the German attacks, which were repulsed with heavy losses on both sides, although the Germans suffering by far the greater. It was during this period of the fierce fighting in Normandy that the Nazi propaganda broadcaster, Lord Haw-Haw, referred to the division as "the Polar Bear Butchers", alleging that British soldiers wearing a Polar Bear flash had massacred SS tank crew who were trying to surrender. The 49th's GOC, Major General "Bubbles" Barker, explained it in his diary on 2 July, "Yesterday the old 49 Div made a great name for itself and we are all feeling very pleased with ourselves. After being attacked on my left half, all day by infantry and tanks, we were in our original positions after a small-scale counterattack by the evening. We gave him a real bloody nose and we calculate having knocked out some 35 tanks mostly Panthers. One of my Scots Battns distinguished themselves particularly. We gave him a proper knockout with our artillery with very strong concentration on any point where movement was expected".

Caen finally fell on 20<sup>th</sup> July after devastating bombing and exhaustive artillery fire. The northern suburbs were still fought and cleared street by street, building by building.

The division, by now known widely as, "Barker's Bears", then held the line for the next few weeks, absorbing reinforcements and carrying out patrols until its participation in the Second Battle of the Odon, before, on 25 July, transferring from Bucknall's XXX Corps, in which the division had served nearly six months, to Lieutenant General John Crocker's I Corps. The corps was now part of the First Canadian Army and the 49th Division, on the corps' left flank, in August, took part in the advance towards the Falaise Pocket, where the Germans were attempting to retreat to, capturing thousands of Germans in the process. It was during this time that the Division lost the 70th Brigade, which as a junior, 2nd line territorial formation, was broken up to provide reinforcements to other units. However, substituting the 70th Brigade was the 56th Brigade, formerly an independent formation comprising entirely Regular Army units, that had landed in Normandy on D-Day.

### **The Breakout**

Between 23 July and 5 September the breakout was made. On 10th August Hitler decided that Normandy was lost and ordered forces to 'disengage'. To the south the Falaise Pocket had formed and the battle began.

We know that dad's best mate died next to him, what we do not know is who he was or when and where it happened. In my research, I also discovered that Reg Harris the British cyclist served in the RASC. I also recall dad telling me that before the war he and Reg would train together. I don't know whether they served together or not, but Reg was not the 'best friend' that got killed as he went on to post-war cycling success. He won the world amateur sprint title in 1947, two Olympic silver medals in 1948, and the professional title in 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1954. He also surprised many with a comeback more than 20 years later, winning a British title in 1974 at the age of 54.

## The Battle for Normandy

The following are places that the 701<sup>st</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Division were at specific times through this period

701 <sup>st</sup>	49 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Arrival</b>	
16/6 base at Sommervieu	Coulambes St. Gabriel Rucqueville Bronay
<b>First contact</b>	
	Le Hamel Tilley sur Seullles St. Pierre Ducy-Ste-Marguerite 14/6 Audrieu 15/6 St Pierre 16/6 Cristot 17/6 Le Parc de Boislande
<b>Operation Martlet 24/6 – 1/7</b>	
26/6 base at Creully	Fontenay-le-Pesnel Rauray Juvigny
<b>Operation Epsom (overlapped with Martlet so one ran directly into the other</b>	
1/7 base at River Seullles on Caen-Bayeux road 3/7 base at Sommervieu 14/7 back to base at River Seullles on Caen-Bayeux road	28/6 Tessel-Bretteville 1/7 Rauray Battle 14/7 Vendes 21-24/7 Division withdrawn and relocated SE of Caen I Corps of 1 <sup>st</sup> Canadian Army relocated to Frenoville Cuverville Cagny Demourville Grentheville Emieville Le Poirier

## War Time Service – The Great Swan

The next phase of the war following the breakout from Normandy became known as The Great Swan. Certainly, the pace of advance was dramatically faster, but the troops were certainly NOT swanning along! The Germans fought very effective rear-guard actions. They would defend river crossings during the day and then retreat to the next river crossing. They laid large quantities of mines and blew bridges to slow the advance. They would defend villages fiercely. Another factor that slowed the advance was the narrow roads blocked with abandoned vehicles and equipment.

As the front advanced and the Germans retreated, pockets of German troops were left behind, and these would attack the flanks of the Allied columns. Many such skirmishes caused great numbers of casualties and hindered the support columns for those at the front.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Division reached the River Seine in the late August, and, upon crossing the river, turned north towards Le Havre, which was captured on 12 September (Operation Astonia) with very light casualties to the 49th Division and its supporting units – 19 killed and 282 wounded – and capturing over 6,000 Germans in the process.

*“A heavy smoke barrage as part of the Operation Astonia [the taking of Le Havre] plan. The 118<sup>th</sup> Company RASC had to rush back to the bridgehead to pick up these ‘emergency rations’, and arrived back at the outskirts of Le Havre with an hour to spare.” Delaforce, 1995; p147.*

Major General "Bubbles" Barker, the GOC, wrote in his diary that it *"will be a memorable day for the Division and myself"*. However, the division then had all its transport sent forward to other units then advancing into Belgium, temporarily grounding the "Polar Bears", although giving the division a few days rest, deservedly so after having endured almost three months of action since landing in Normandy and suffered over 5,000 casualties. (But no rest for dad and his mates!)

### 701<sup>st</sup> War Diary records:

5 September 1944 *"Coy.H.Q. and Wksps moved to **FRESNON AU VAL**."*

**Fresnon au Val** is close to Amiens, north of Paris.

7 September 1944 *"Coy. H.Q. and Wksps moved to **BELLINGEN**, near HAL", south west of Brussels.*

23 September 1944 *"Unit moved to new location **WACKERZEEL** and came under comd 22 Tpt Coln", northwest of Brussels.*



The map above shows the location of the new camp at Bellingen and then Wakkerzeel and places mentioned for deliveries/collections throughout September.

The 49<sup>th</sup>, along with other Allied troops in that area, reached the Belgium/Dutch border and the Great Swan came to an end. (Some suggest that the Great Swan ended upon reaching the Seine but the same type of actions and progress.)

701<sup>st</sup> Diary entries: 7 December 1944 Coy moved to new location at **HOUTHAELEN** still in Belgium but close to the Dutch border.

7 July 1944 "T/14566980 Dvr. Carris, R and T/14620812 Dvr. Taylor, A, killed by enemy fire. T/5259533 Dvr. Wallis, J, wounded". Maybe one of these was dad's best mate.

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September there are considerable truck movements to many different locations where they are clearly seeking petrol, but there is a major shortage.

The Breakout 10-17/8	
	Vimont Moult Chickabouville Sollers Bourguebus La Hoyue Mezidon Quelieville Le Mesnil-Mauger Fresnay
The Great Swan 18/8	
19-25/8 deliveries to "Cushion Road head" 26-31/8 deliveries to 24 Army Road head"	Mery Corbon Rumesnil Bonneborg St. Philibert-des-Champs Lisieux

	<p>Cormeilles Pont Audemer</p> <p>1-2/9 Crossed the Sciene</p>
<b>Operation Astonia 2-12/9</b>	
<p>1-2/9 deliveries from Bayeux and Villiers le Sec to Auneul and "2 Cushion"</p> <p>4/9 deliveries to "no. 3 Cushion"</p> <p>5/9 Workshops moved to Fresnon au Val</p> <p>5/9 delivery to "6 Army Road head"</p> <p>6-7/9 deliveries/collections Gournay, Glissy, St Clair, Vitrey</p> <p>7/9 Workshops move to Bellingen</p> <p>8-14/9 collections from Evere Airfield</p>	<p>Le Havre</p>
<p>15-18/9 collections from Marboeuf, Shell Depot - Brussels deliveries "6 ARH" [no 6 Army Road Head?], Lille Airfield,</p>	<p>12-18/9 Reorganise and R &amp; R</p> <p>2 Glous – Notre Dame de Gavenchon</p> <p>Lincolns – St Aubin Rotot</p> <p>Hallams – Le Cerlanque</p> <p>KOYLI – St. Nicholas de la Toulle</p> <p>Pompadours – Lillebonne</p> <p>11 Scots F – Le Mesnil &amp; Bolbea</p>
<b>On to Belgium</b>	
<p>19-23/9 collections from Namur, Louvain, Marboeuf deliveries to Haecht, Wolvertham Airport, Bourg Leopold, Montaigu, Vendeville Airfield (Lille)</p>	<p>Pas de Calais</p> <p>Turnhout (cleared areas)</p> <p>Brussels</p> <p>Zonderen</p> <p>Maerle</p> <p>Oustalle</p>

## **War Time Service – Liberating a Concentration Camp**

This information came from my sister who stated that dad had been involved in the liberation of a concentration camp and this caused him to have, what nowadays would be called, PTSD. He refused to talk about the war at all, other than the few bits that I learnt from him, and he had night terrors.

The initial problem was not knowing which concentration camp. Initial research, before I obtained his Service Record” suggested it was Bergen-Belsen as the literature suggested that this was the ONLY concentration camp liberated by the Brits along with the Canadians. However, this sent the research in a direction suggesting that he had been with the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division but there was no subsequent evidence to support this. Until I was able to access the War Diary for the 701 Coy, I had assumed that they had transferred but the Diary, whilst not confirming which Division the Company was attached to, the places named did not match the route of the 11<sup>th</sup>, but did match the 49<sup>th</sup> Division.

So what concentration camps, if any, could have been liberated by dad? Well, there are a number that lay in the path of the advancing 49<sup>th</sup>:

### **Royallieu-Compiègne Internment and Transit Camp, France**

The Royallieu-Compiègne was an internment and deportation camp located in the north of France in the city of Compiègne. French resistance fighters and Jews were among some of the prisoners held in this camp. It is estimated that around 40,000 people were deported from the Royallieu-Compiègne camp to other camps in the German territory of the time.

The camp was sectioned off by categories of prisoner: A number of Americans left behind in France at the entry of the US into the war were interned here in relatively good conditions, and some other prisoners were ‘lucky’ enough to wind up in this relatively mild internment section of the camp. Political prisoners, however, often wound up in sections of the camp whose appalling living conditions more resembled a concentration camp. A number of French communists in this camp section were shot in reprisals on several occasions.

Within Royallieu stood "Camp C", or the "Jewish camp". This part of Royallieu was an extermination camp. The Jewish prisoners were starved to death.

The camp's main function remained a deport base. The main camp that Royallieu-Compiègne deported to was Auschwitz among various other concentration camps. On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1942 the camp made its first Jewish round of deportations to Auschwitz. The last deportation took place on 17 August 1944 to Buchenwald, and the camp was liberated on 26 August.

So very unlikely candidate as the camp was empty when the Allies arrived.

### **Breendonk, Belgium**

During World War II, Breendonk Fort was requisitioned by the Germans as a prison camp for detaining Belgian political dissidents, captured resistance members and Jews. Although technically a prison rather than a concentration camp, the Fort was infamous for its prisoners' poor living conditions and for the use of torture. Most prisoners who were detained at the camp were later transferred to larger concentration camps in Eastern Europe. Of the 3,590 prisoners known to have

been imprisoned at Breendonk, 303 died or were executed within the fort itself but as many as 1,741 died subsequently in other camps before the end of the war.

All the prisoners were subjected to forced labour. The camp authorities wanted the earth that had covered much of the Fort to be removed and shifted to build a high bank around the camp to hide it from outside view. In the few years Fort Breendonk was used by the Nazis, 250,000 cubic metres (8,800,000 cu ft) of soil covering the fort were removed by the prisoners by hand at a gruelling pace. Prisoners only had hand tools to complete this enormous task and the soil had to be transported to the outer wall via hand carts on a narrow-gauge railway system. The ground in the camp was often very soggy causing the rails to sink away in the mud. Prisoners were then expected to move by hand the carts filled with dirt, pushing and dragging them back and forth over a distance of more than 300 meters. This regime was imposed for over 12 hours a day, seven days a week, even in the worst of weather conditions.

The camp was eventually closed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1944 and all the prisoners transferred to Vught in Holland and later to Germany. The Allied troops arrived at Breendonk on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1944. The camp was empty, so again, an unlikely candidate.

### **Mechelen, Belgium**

The Mechelen transit camp, officially SS-Sammellager Mecheln in German, was a detention and deportation camp established in a former army barracks at Mechelen in German-occupied Belgium. It was managed by the Sicherheitspolizei (SiPo-SD), a branch of the SS-Reichssicherheitshauptamt, in order to collect and deport Jews and Romani mainly out of Belgium towards the labour camp of Heydebreck-Cosel and the concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau in German occupied Poland.

During the Second World War, between 4 August 1942 and 31 July 1944, 28 trains left from this Belgian camp and deported over 25,000 Jews and Roma, most of whom arrived at the extermination camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau. At the end of war, 1240 of them had survived.

The first group of people arrived in the camp from Antwerp on 27 July 1942. Between August and December 1942, two transports, each with about 1,000 Jews, left the camp every week for Auschwitz concentration camp. Between the 4 August 1942 and 31 July 1944, a total of 28 trains left Mechelen for Poland, carrying 24,916 Jews and 351 Romani; most of them went to Auschwitz. This figure represented more than half of the Belgian Jews murdered during the Holocaust. In line with the Nazi racial policy that much later became named the Porajmos (or Samudaripen), 351 Belgian Romani were sent to Auschwitz in early 1944.

Many witnesses were struck by the terrible treatment of the Gypsies. They were locked up in the attics of the barracks and isolated from the other detainees. They were not allowed to receive packages from outside the camp, and as a result they were starving. They slept on straw mattresses, had no access to the toilets and or to hospital care. Their daily exercise was limited to one hour and was often a painful and violent experience: three musicians were forced to play music while the women were beaten by the SS. At the end of the walk, they were locked in the attics again.

The last transport left on 31 July 1944, but Allied forces could not stop it before its destination was reached. When the Allies approached Mechelen by 3 September 1944, the Germans fled the Dossin Barracks, leaving the 527 remaining prisoners behind. Some remaining prisoners escaped that night and the others were freed on the 4th,

As some prisoners remained, it is possible candidate, however, at this time the 49<sup>th</sup> were engaged in the fight to take Le Havre, so unlikely.

### **Vught, Netherlands**

As the only concentration camp in the Netherlands, Camp Vught fell directly under the SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt in Berlin.

Herzogenbusch concentration camp (Dutch: Kamp Vught) was a Nazi concentration camp located in Vught near the city of 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands. Herzogenbusch was, with Natzweiler-Struthof in occupied France, the only concentration camp run directly by the SS in western Europe outside Germany. It started functioning in January 1943, after prisoners from camp Amersfoort had prepared the camp. In Vught a separate section was set up as Judendurchgangslager. In addition, some 31,000 prisoners included members of the resistance, withdrawers from the labour force and Jehovah's Witnesses. 749 prisoners died in the camp, and the others were transferred to other camps shortly before the camp was liberated by the Allied Forces in 1944.

The first prisoners, who arrived in 1943, had to finish the construction of the camp; it was used from January 1943 until September 1944. During this period, it held nearly 31,000 prisoners: Jews, political prisoners, resistance fighters, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, homeless people, black market traders, criminals, and hostages.

Due to hunger, sickness, and abuse, at least 749 men, women and children died there. Of these, 329 were murdered at the execution site just outside the camp. When allied forces were approaching Herzogenbusch, the camp was evacuated and the prisoners were transferred to concentration camps further east, with women inmates being transferred to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, and the men to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp by 4–5 September 1944.

It is reported that on 26 October 1944, Scottish troops of the 7th Black Watch and Canadian troops of the 96th Battery, 5th Anti-tank Regiment liberated the camp after fighting a rear guard of SS guards left to defend the nearly evacuated camp. There were around 500-600 live prisoners left, who had been set up for execution that afternoon, whose lives were spared by the arrival of the liberating forces. About 500 inmates were also discovered dead in piles near the gates, who had been executed the very morning of the day that the camp was liberated.

This is a good candidate with piles of dead bodies and survivors, enough to badly affect anyone. However, it is not a 'dead cert' as the units mentioned were not listed as part of the 49<sup>th</sup> but the area and timing is right.

At the time of the liberation (26<sup>th</sup> October) elements of the 49<sup>th</sup> were reported as fighting in the area in and around Tilburg, just 18 km (11 miles) southwest of Vught (however that distance is from the centre of Tilburg. The 49<sup>th</sup> were covering a 20-mile front from Roosendall to the west, through Breda to Tilburg to the east. Vught was therefore at the juncture between the 49<sup>th</sup> and the neighbouring forces. At this time formation of Divisions were very fluid as was the front, the 49<sup>th</sup> were under the command of Canadian forces and those named at the camp may have been attached to the 49<sup>th</sup> or their neighbours covering the front line to the east of the 49<sup>th</sup>.

At this time, the 49th was part of I Corps which in turn was part of the Canadian First Army. The 7th Battalion of The Black Watch appear to be further south and were involved in the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes. It is therefore very possible that the Black Watch mentioned were in fact The Black

Watch of Canada who were also part of the Canadian First army. This places the same formation in which the 49th were, in the right place.

### **Westerbork, Netherlands**

Camp Westerbork was a transit camp in Drenthe province, north-eastern Netherlands, during World War II. Established by the Dutch government in the summer of 1939, Camp Westerbork was meant to serve as a refugee camp for Jews who had illegally entered the Netherlands.

Camp Westerbork was utilized as a staging ground for the deportation of Jews. Only one-half square kilometre (119 acres) in area, the camp was not built for the purpose of industrial murder as were Nazi extermination camps. Indeed, Westerbork was seen as “humane” by Nazi standards. Jewish inmates with families were housed in 200 interconnected cottages that contained two rooms, a toilet, a hot plate for cooking, and a small yard. Single inmates were placed in oblong barracks which contained a bathroom for each sex.

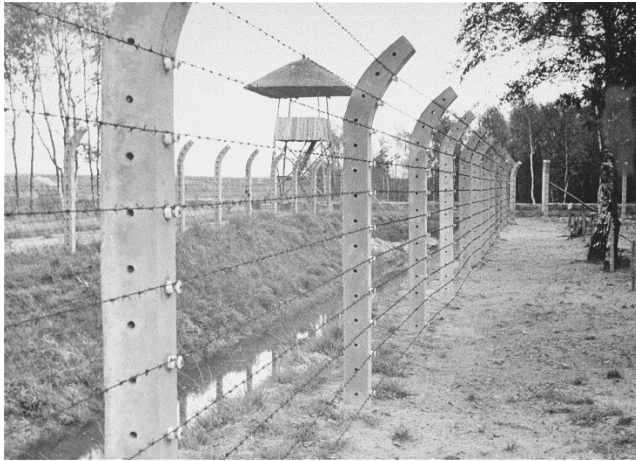
Transport trains arrived at Westerbork every Tuesday from July 1942 to September 1944 and left with an estimated 97,776 Jews. Jewish inmates were deported in waves to Auschwitz (65 train loads totalling 60,330 people), Sobibor (19 train loads; 34,313 people), Theresienstadt ghetto, and Bergen-Belsen concentration camp (9 train loads; 4,894 people). Almost all of the 94,643 persons deported to Auschwitz and Sobibor in German-occupied Poland were killed upon arrival.

Transports came to a halt at Camp Westerbork in September 1944. Allied troops neared Westerbork on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1945, after German officials abandoned the camp. Westerbork was liberated by the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1945. A total of 876 inmates were found.

At this time, the 49<sup>th</sup> were engaged in Operation Destroyer in and around Arnhem so were a considerable distance from Westerbork so this is highly unlikely to be the camp concerned.

Unfortunately, the information on these camps and their liberation is limited so it is not possible to identify which one, or ones, dad may have been involved with. It seems highly likely that Vught was the camp that he was involved with. It is also important to consider that he may have been driving staff cars, so he may have driven officers to areas outside of the area in which the 49<sup>th</sup> and its units were fighting.

**Pictures of Vught camp after liberation**



**Gallows and incinerator at Vught.**



**A pile of human remains and bones found near an incinerator in Vught by the Allies.**



On, and around, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1944, the 701<sup>st</sup> Unit Diary shows many trips, but all within Belgium and up to Antwerp. At this time the 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Polar Bears) were in The Netherlands so there would have also been supporting them so that is a little confusing.

By 20<sup>th</sup> November, the 701<sup>st</sup> were making collections from aircraft arriving at Breda which is 60km to the east, so this confirms that they were in area at that time. By then, the area was obviously safe otherwise they would not have been flying supplies into that airport at that time. The first mention in the 701 Company diary of Vught was on 24 November 1944.

*“25 x 6 ton vehs detailed to lift 2500 rds LEND SERVICE MATRESSES from VUGHT and deliver to MEIJEL. Detail completed 25.11.44.”*

Clearly, within a month of liberation, the 701 were visiting Vught (possibly the camp but no confirmation of this).

### **Bergen-Belsen**

Whilst in the early phases of research I thought that he must have been in the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured and involved in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, this was clearly not the case. I have found no accounts of the liberation of any of the above camps so I have included the following to give an indication of the horror that forces found upon liberation of camps, even though this was a far greater horror due to the numbers of survivors involved, the number of dead and rotting bodies laying around the camp and the diseases that were within the camp.



The following sections contain extensive edited extracts from 'The Story of Belsen' by Captain A. Pares, Adjutant of the 113th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, The Royal Artillery, c.1945. [ [durhamrecordoffice.org.uk](http://durhamrecordoffice.org.uk)] and "From the Beachhead to Belsen: The Humanitarian Mission of 113 Light AA Regiment RA" [ [theobservationpost.com/](http://theobservationpost.com/)]. It gives a clear, broad picture of what was faced by the liberators and what was undertaken.

Ben Shephard, 2006 "After Daybreak: The liberation of Belsen, 1945", offers a full account of the conditions found, the trials and tribulations of attempting to find an effective way to deal with the diseases, finding a feeding programme that the starved can digest and strengthen them, to find a means of disposing of the huge number of bodies, a means of identifying and removing those without disease, finding somewhere to accommodate them, treating those that are sick, and so on. It was a massive task with few resources.

On 12<sup>th</sup> April, two German officers approach the British 11th Armoured Division under a white flag offering a local truce to prevent fighting breaking out around Bergen-Belsen and prisoners then roaming the area spreading disease. In return, the Germans offered them the intact bridge over the Aller at Winsen.

The truce was established by the local German Army Commander, Oberst Harries, which detailed a neutral zone covering 6 x 8 kilometres around Belsen.

The British were very concerned specifically about the spread of typhus. They didn't know exactly what they were to face but agreed to the truce. It was agreed that the Germans would guard the perimeter until handing over to the British to prevent the inmates escaping and causing health problems. Outside of the 'neutral' zone, the resistance was intense and slowed the Brits reaching the camp until the 15th.

Lieutenant Sington was ordered to '*go forward with your loud-speaker into this place, Belsen*'. Lt. Colonel Taylor, commander of the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment was given the job of commandant of the Belsen camp with the orders '*prevent the spread of disease and to prevent criminals breaking out*'. This order might seem a little odd, but the British believed that Belsen was an internment camp holding political prisoners, professional criminals and homosexuals.

Technically Belsen was liberated on 15th April 1945 when the 1st Special Air Service (SAS) entered the camp, but they just located and removed one specific person before leaving, taking no other part.

The Commanding Officer, Lt Col Taylor orders Lt. (later Capt.) Derrick Sington, and two NCO's Sergeant Eric Clyne and Lance Corporal Sindey Roberts, of 14<sup>th</sup> Amplifying Unit to enter the camp with a loudspeaker van.

The first British soldiers who entered Bergen-Belsen described seeing a huge pile of dead, naked women's bodies within full view of several hundred children held at the camp.

Lt. (later Capt.) Derrick Sington, Sergeant Eric Clyne and Lance Corporal Sidney Roberts, accompanied by Josef Kramer broadcast a message from VIII Corps Commander advising the internees that they were liberated although they were not permitted to leave because of the danger of spreading Typhus.

What they found was approximately 45,000 prisoners: 15,287 men and 28,185 women. Belsen was not an extermination camp such as Auchwitz where there were gas chambers and cremation facilities but killed prisoners through starvation and work and then buried the bodies.

About 50% of the inmates were in need of immediate hospital treatment. All of them had been without any food for 7 days, and prior to that living on the normal concentration camp semi-starvation scale of diet. The prisoners were suffering from Typhus, Typhoid, Tuberculosis and Gastro-Enteritis.

There were about 10,000 typhus-infected bodies, mostly naked and many in an advanced stage of decomposition, lying around the camp, both inside and outside the huts, which required immediate burial; and the daily death rate remained at around 500 mainly from disease or prolonged starvation.

The living conditions were appalling - people were sleeping 3 in a bed, mainly treble-bunk beds, and huts which would normally accommodate 60 were housing 600. There were no sanitary arrangements, and both inside and outside the huts was an almost continuous carpet of dead bodies, human excreta, rags, and filth. One of the British senior medical officers, Brigadier Llewellyn Glyn- Hughes, told the Reuters news agency he saw evidence of cannibalism in the camp. There were bodies with no flesh on them and the liver, kidneys and heart removed. He said typhus had caused far fewer deaths than starvation. Men and women had tried to keep themselves clean with dregs from coffee cups. Medical supplies were severely limited - there were no vaccines, or drugs and no treatments for lice.

The only food available for the prisoners was turnip soup and British guards had to fire over the heads of prisoners to restore order among those desperate to get at the food stores. Those prisoners who were too weak to get up and collect their food went without and died.

There were some 50,000 persons to supply and feed, but the cooking facilities were totally inadequate. There were 5 cookhouses of varying size equipped with a number of large boilers, and the only containers available to distribute the food were a few large dustbins. A large proportion of the occupants were bed-ridden, and many were incapable even of feeding themselves.

The inmates had lost all self-respect and been degraded morally to the level of beasts. Their clothes were in rags and teeming with lice; they had no eating utensils or plates, and at the time of the food distribution they behaved more like ravenous wolves than human beings.

There were 49 SS male and 26 female prison guards under close arrest and a Wehrmacht Hospital with 2,000 sick and convalescent German soldiers.

The electricity which came from Celle was cut off and the wiring sabotaged; the water supply which depended on it for pumping had consequently failed.

To prevent spread of Typhus and the other diseases it was necessary to keep all the internees within the Camp, yet the Hungarian guards were grossly lax and made little effort to prevent them from filtering out.

To fully understand the horrendous conditions, there are various documentaries about this on YouTube of different length and quality. One that is worthy of note is "Bergen-Belsen Camp – the suppressed story" which contains original footage which is very harrowing and as well as interviews.

The whole administration of the Camp was controlled by 10<sup>th</sup> Garrison and later by 102<sup>nd</sup> Control Section. In support was 113<sup>th</sup> LAA Regt RA with its REME Workshops and 1575<sup>th</sup> Artillery Platoon **RASC** for general duties. The medical area was administered by 32CCS with 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and later 9<sup>th</sup> (Br) General Hospital and 35CCS, with 107<sup>th</sup> Mobile Laundry and a host of small RAMC and specialist units. 224, 618, and 904 Military Government Detachments divided themselves between the Concentration and Reception Camp. There were also 6 detachments of the British Red Cross Society and 100 medical student volunteers from the London Hospitals.

The RA set up special organisations to deal with burials. Between 19-26 April 9,200 bodies were buried in the communal pits and over the whole period 15,000 were buried - the highest figure was 1,700 on 21 April. All graves were decently enclosed, funeral services read daily, and notice boards stating the date and number in the grave were erected. Mass graves were dug to hold up to 5,000 corpses at a time. The former army guards from the SS were deliberately made to use their bare hands to bury the prisoners, many of whom had died of contagious diseases.

Large food-stocks uncovered in the Wehrmacht barracks were immediately impounded and delivered to the Concentration Camp. In addition, a dump of tents was transported to the camp and pitched to relieve the overcrowding.

Each cookhouse was made the personal responsibility of an RA Officer or Warrant Officer. At the beginning messing strengths averaged 10,000 to each cookhouse, and in one case 16,000. A Central Messing Office was set up under an RA officer to co-ordinate the distribution of rations and equipment and the re-allocation of cooks as evacuation occurred. An invalid cookhouse was established to prepare a special Bengal Famine Diet for the very sick, which was delivered round the huts for the medical students to administer to those who could not feed themselves.

All the electricians and fitters in the REME Workshops were organised into a team and repaired the electricity and restored the water supply. They also repaired the plant in the Camp Bakery and the other electrical apparatus in the Supply Depot so that the bakery was able to meet all the requirements of the Camp for bread.

Ablution benches, water points, and latrines were set up under the direction of the Field Hygiene Section, and while these were being made or during the periodical failures of the electricity, all the RA water-carts toured the area continuously, bringing water to the cook-houses, huts and barrack blocks.

The Russian POWs were organised by 10<sup>th</sup> Garrison into a Battalion with their own officers, equipped with rifles, issued with British Army rations, and eventually they superseded the Hungarians on the Camp Guard.

A Maternity Home and Children's Ward were set up under 32CCS and later 9<sup>th</sup> Gen Hospital. A cot was made for each child by RA joiners, complete with blankets and waterproof sheets. Toys were impounded from the neighbouring towns, and swings were built for the playground. It is worthy of note that a very high percentage of the babies born were suffering from congenital venereal disease.

Over the next month 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured took over the Wehrmacht barracks at Bergen-Belsen, which would become Bergen-Hohne Camp. The typhus epidemic meant that the concentration camp inmates could not be allowed to leave. They built cookhouses, buried the dead transferred the living to clean accommodation, guarded the SS men, and disarmed the Hungarians. Their soldiers can be seen in the newsreel shots. The War Diary entry for 26th April comments that over 8,000 bodies had been buried since their arrival in the camp. The SS Guards interviewed for the newsreel seem to have lost the SS Runes from their uniforms. These seem to have fallen into possession of the Gunners.

The **RASC Artillery Platoon** undertook the task of co-ordinating all transport details, and in addition to their Regimental duties they drew all the supplies for everyone in the Camp, including rations and petrol. They supplied lorries for collecting food, clothes, beds, soap and all types of stores from the surrounding districts. With the aid of the RA butchers their supply section broke down the rations for every individual unit in the Camp including the Russian Battalion of 850 men.



Crowds watch the destruction of the last hut at Belsen two days after the camp was finally evacuated. © IWM (BU 6674), CC BY-NC-ND

On VE Day, 9th May 1944, the Regiment paraded through Hohne Camp, starting at the corner of the Belsen Concentration Camp past British, Soviet and US Senior officers who took the salute to the

sports pitch where the 54 guns of the Regiment fired ten rounds single shot and ten rounds automatic to celebrate victory and peace in Europe.

The Concentration Camp was burned down hut by hut under RA supervision. At a ceremony held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1945 at the liberated concentration camp, a wooden prisoner hut decorated with the German War Flag and a huge portrait of Adolf Hitler was torched by a flamethrower – symbolising the end of the “Hell of Belsen”. When the hut went up in flames, the Union Jack was raised for the first time in Bergen-Belsen.

After the traumatic work, 113<sup>th</sup> LAA Regiment (and presumably the other attached units of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured) were given ten days leave beside the Baltic and issued 6000 bottles of beer. One must assume that this was because the hard work at Belsen was complete, the camp emptied and burnt down; inmates either repatriated, in hospital or in displaced persons camps. It was also probably felt that a couple of weeks R&R would solve any problems that troops may have as a result of their work at the camp. It is clear from the comments of many on bulletin boards that those involved suffered from what is now understood to be Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Two weeks R&R is sure not to put something so traumatic behind them, but I must say that they even thought about giving them a break is surprising.

Clearly, whichever camp dad was at, the situation would have been on a lesser scale. However, it is likely that they faced the same issues of dead bodies; living skeletons, some of whom would die regardless of the camp being liberated; disease; the living reduced to base animal instincts. But also due to the scale, there would not have been the same support structure and resources allocated. So to feed the prisoners, they would probably had to use their own rations. Medical care would come only from those medical staff allocated to the fighting units who would also have their own duties to the troops. This would have been an extremely traumatic situation generating a sense of total failure to cope with it.

Many have criticised how the liberated prisoners were treated in regard to the lack of food and medical care. I find this extremely harsh. Coming upon say Vurght camp, the troops would have had no advance notice of what they would find, there was no way to suddenly find food, medical supplies, staff and everything needed to adequately cope with the survivors. It is also essential to reiterate that no one knew how to treat starving people with regard to a diet that didn't do more harm than good. They were, of course, also still in an active war zone fighting an aggressor who cared little about the allied forces and not at all for the survivors.

## **War Time Service – Holland and to Demob**

The Division received the order to move, arriving, after travelling some 200 miles, in the south of the Netherlands at a concentration area on 21 September, ten miles south of the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. Over the next few days, the Division liberated Turnhout and crossed the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. It was during this period that the Division was awarded its first and only Victoria Cross (VC) of the Second World War, belonging to Corporal John Harper of the Hallamshire Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment. The Division, after being on the offensive since landing in Normandy, then spent the next few weeks on the defensive along the Dutch frontier, before returning to the offensive in the third week of October, with the objective, after Tilburg and Breda had fallen to the 49th, being the capture of the town of Roosendaal, which fell after ten days of vicious fighting. Major General Barker described the town as "not much of a place, bombed by USAF early in the year... We have crossed 20 miles in 10 days and had to fight every inch of it".

### **Driving the supplies**

Whilst ports such as Le Havre, Calais, Cherbourg and Dunkirk had been captured, they were mainly or completely unusable, so everything still had to come through Normandy. To make matters worse, the American Mulberry harbour had been put out of action due to storm damage after just a few days after D-day, so only beaches and the British Mulberry were available.

Antwerp became a great priority and whilst the port and town were captured, the port remained unusable due to mines and the estuary had not been secured. If it had been usable, it would have been a significant game changer.

The distances that had to be covered from dock to front were vast when considering the narrow roads and the restricted crossing points of major rivers. Basically, the Allies had advanced beyond their own logistical support. They knew the dangers of this as this was exactly what happened to Rommel's Africa Corps.

Google Maps states that the distance between Antwerp and Caen is 510km and take 5 hours. We have to remember that Google assumes modern vehicles on modern motorways not old 3-ton trucks on narrow congested roads and restricted bridge crossings. This would suggest that the total journey would take a very long day of driving to make the journey one way.

It would have taken much longer, and they would probably have gone through Brussels, Amiens, Rouen and so to Caen. The roads would have been extremely busy with lorries of all shapes and sizes would have been taking the same route. This again supports some facts that I have been made aware of by my sister. Dad received Christmas cards from a friend in Brussels and on a family holiday to France, I was not aware that dad expressed a desire to visit Caen and Rouen as he had been there during the war. We must also never forget that this was not a "safe" job even if it was not as dangerous as being front line troops. During the advance near Lens a convoy of RASC trucks were attacked and several were destroyed.

Le Havre port opened on 9 October, this would not have greatly reduced the journey but probably reduced congestion at the beachhead. This would have eased the issue of crossing the Seine river which was extremely restricted with just one bridge at Rouen available until Paris was liberated and

then that would entail a major diversion. Calais port opened in November, but Dunkirk didn't surrender until 9th May 1945.

The first convoy arrived in Antwerp on 29th November. This was the first Belgium port to become operational. After it was liberated on 4th September but the battle of the Scheldt followed to secure the estuary to make it safe to enter the port. It took longer to demine the river. This would greatly reduce the logistics route that had would have had to make.

Further fighting continued until the Division ended up at Willemstad at the Hollandsche Diep. The Division then transferred from Lieutenant General Crocker's I Corps to Lieutenant General Neil Ritchie's XII Corps and helped in the clearing of the west bank of the River Maas, along the Dutch border, fighting in very wet and muddy conditions.

### **Operation Market Garden**

As the Allies reached the Dutch border problems started to slow the advance. There were two significant problems: first, the supply routes; the second the total amount of supplies available.

Now two Generals started fighting for supplies. Montgomery wanted a major offensive north in to Holland, across the Rhine and into Germany by the back door bypassing the main German defences along the Rhine. The counter argument from Patton was that a direct assault across the Rhine and straight into Germany would be a better option as it was more direct and a 'quicker' route to Berlin. Monty won and Operation Market Garden ( of "A Bridge too Far" film fame) was initiated. This took priority for all supplies over the Americans further south.

The story is well known due to the film, a drive of a single column up a single-track road to Arnhem. Paratroopers being landed at all the key bridges to take and hold awaiting the arrival of the ground troops. It's a nice story, but as is usually the case, greatly simplified. A single column all on one road would be picked off at will by the Germans attacking the flanks and cutting the column. So, the 49<sup>th</sup> became "Monty's left flank".

### **The "Island"**

So, after the liberation of Vught, the 49<sup>th</sup> continued fighting their way northeast towards Arnhem. But, prior to reaching that, they spent the winter on "The Island".

In late November, the Division suffered a blow when its GOC, Major General "Bubbles" Barker, who had continuously commanded the 49th since April 1943, succeeded Lieutenant General O'Connor as the GOC of VIII Corps and left the Division. Barker's handling of the 49th "Polar Bears" Division, most notably during Operation Epsom in Normandy, had clearly impressed his superiors. He later wrote that *"My fortune was to command the Polar Bears whose achievements were made possible by its great efficiency at all levels, its high morale and the marvellous team work..... It was a splendid fighting machine"*. Barker's successor was Major General Gordon "Babe" MacMillan, formerly the GOC of the 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division. Like his predecessor, MacMillan was a distinguished veteran of the First World War.

Of course, we all know that Market Garden failed to reach Arnhem, this left the Allies short of the Rhine and they became very bogged down in an area of Dutch low land, of dykes and roads on embankments. The area where the 49<sup>th</sup> were based became known as "the Island". Fighting in this area was very difficult as the ground was so soft that even tracked vehicles would bog down if they

went off-road. This left fighting mainly on the very exposed roads. This situation was made far worse by two things, firstly the Germans blew the dykes and flooded the area and secondly, the winter was exceptionally hard that year. Fighting became focused on no-mans-land. Both sides would send out night patrols to harass the enemy, sometimes this would be in boats. The troops would be regularly swapped out to allow them to get back to warmer rest areas before going back into the fray.

The winter of 1944 was extremely harsh so the roads would have been icy and covered in snow for much of the time. When it wasn't icy then it would have been wet. Now keep in mind that some of the roads would have been pavé (cobblestones) and would have been very slippery and dangerous. However, in late March 1945, the Division, commanded now by Major General Stuart Rawlins after MacMillan was ordered to become GOC of the 51st (Highland) Division, received orders to clear "The Island", which, after much hard fighting but relatively light casualties, was cleared in early April, before advancing north-eastwards towards Arnhem.

<p>19-23/9 collections from Namur, Louvain, Marboeuf deliveries to Haecht, Wolvertham Airport, Bourg Leopold, Montaigu, Vendeville Airfield (Lille)</p> <p>23/9 Unit moved to Wackerzeel</p> <p>23-25/9 collections from Evere Airfield, Vermelles deliveries to Corbie Nr Amiens, Bourg Leopold</p> <p>27/9 collections from Westpellar, Wygmiel deliveries to Bourg Leopold</p> <p>28/9 unit moved to Evere Airport</p> <p>For October place names become less common in the diary but a greater interest in tonnages moved. Presumably the person writing it changed. Those places mentioned are:</p> <p>3/10 deliveries to Aachen and with Eindhoven, Evere, Melsbroek, Antwerp repeatedly mentioned.</p> <p>29/10 'A' and 'Y' pls moved to Laak</p>	
<p>In November the same place names as October but many more. Presumably another person took over the diary keeping. In addition to those mentioned in October plus collections from: Ostend (where 60 Weazels were collected), Vise, Vere, Sabliere, Mol, Hecteren, St. Nicholas, Rouen, Nijmegen, Helchteren, Breda, Bruges, Vught</p> <p>And deliveries to: Bourg Leopold, Usine de Zing Boom, Oostham, Tessenderloo, Brussels, Foret de Soignes, Weert, Soignes, Hasselt, Winterslag, Beek, Meijel</p>	
In December	

<p>Collections: Antwerp, Breda, Evere, Melsbroek, Breda, Brussels, Hamond. Malines, Boon, Hasselt, Helmond, Dieppe, Overpelt, Zolder, Beeringen, Tessenderloo, Leende, Foret de Soignes, Beek, Brasschaet</p> <p>Deliveries: Evere, Helmond, Hertogenbosch, Mol, Waterscheide, Lommel, Brussels, Heppen, Eysden, Gheel, Heesche, Eindhoven, Diest, Heusden,</p> <p><i>7/12 Coy moved to Houthaelen; 'C' Pl established in location at Heppen</i></p>	
<p>From January 1946 onwards the diary failed to give information on movements with comments like <i>'Normal routine duties'</i> which is not helpful.</p>	

The 49th Division's last major contribution to the Second World War was the liberation of Arnhem (Operation Dutch Cleanser) and the fierce battles that led to it. The Division, now part of I Canadian Corps, under Lieutenant General Charles Foulkes, and supported by Canadian tanks of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, liberated the city at a cost of less than 200 casualties, but over 4,000 Germans became casualties.

Just after the German surrender on 7 May 1945, the 49th Division played a part in the liberation of Utrecht, with the 49th Reconnaissance Regiment entering first, followed by Canadian troops. There is a monument dedicated to the Polar Bears at a spot on Biltstraat in the city. During the course of the Second World War, from Normandy to Arnhem, the 49th Division had suffered 11,000 officers and men wounded or missing, with 1,642 of these being killed in action.

We saw earlier that on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1944 the Company moved to new location at HOUTHAELEN in Belgium but close to the Dutch border. There are no further such moves recorded in the 701<sup>st</sup> Diary.

An entry in dad's record is dated 10th February 1945. *"Remains on strength this unit on re-designation from 701 Coy RASC (Army TPT)"* this is to 701 Coy RASC (Sta Maint).

Whilst the 701st changed its designation and this suggests that they became static and carrying out routine maintenance and repair, it is also possible that they were mobile and carrying out work closer to the front and, of course, dad could still have been driving the brass.

He underwent a medical on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1945 and declared "B1", which he was on conscription. This is high but would suggest some issue that prevented his gaining an A category. He did have a hernia that I believe he got during the war but never got treated, this could count for the lower grading but surely the grading on conscription would have been higher?

On 8 January 1946 he *"Embarked and SOS (Struck off Strength) BAOR Class 'A' Release"* and his unit is shown as **X8A** which can be assumed is a "demob" designation.

His demob papers refer to him as *"An efficient and hardworking soldier"* and he disembarked on 8 January 1946 in Hastings. He still is recorded as being with 701 Coy RASC. His rank is shown within all

the records as "Driver" including the demob papers. This is at odds with the photo where he has Lance Corporal stripe. However, there is one reference to "Driver LC", does this relate to Lance Corporal? If so, why is there no reference to him gaining this rank?

He received his medals on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1950, these included 1939/45 France and Germany Stars; War Medal 1939/45; Defence Medal

He was finally released from the Reserve List in July 1955.

Despite my belief that he was a Lance Corporal, he never was officially. It is possible that he was given a "local" promotion to Lance Corporal as these were given to those that were given responsibility of say a convoy so that they had some standing if stopped by other troops.

He was awarded a "Good Conduct Chevron" which is similar to a Lance Corporal Stripe but is located on the forearm whereas a Lance Corporal strip is worn on the upper arm.

## Research Resources

### Primary Sources

#### Personal Documents

Service and Casualty Form B303-1  
Record of Service Paper B200d  
Beach Landing Instructions

#### Document held be Royal Logistics Corps Museum

A Short History of No.3 Training Brigade RASC

#### Maps held at Sutton-in-Ashfield Library

Ordnance Survey Office 1947; Parish of Sutton-in-Ashfield Revision of 1938; Nottinghamshire Sheet XXVII. N.E.  
Ordnance Survey 1959; Plan SK 55 N.W.

#### War Diaries held at The National Archives

CAB 106/1086: Short history of 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Division 1939-1945, by Brigadier H.B. Latham  
WO 166/13177: 701 Coy  
WO 171/2511: 701 Coy  
WO 171/6330: 701 Coy  
WO 171/9852: 701 Coy  
WO 166/12952: 3 RASC Mob Centre  
WO 166/7345: Royal Artillery: 7 Anti-Aircraft Division RASC  
WO 166/9054: 192 Coy  
WO 166/13045: 192 Coy  
WO 166/5115: 334 coy  
WO 166/6503: 8 Armoured Division RASC Troops Coy  
WO166/6504: 8 Armoured Division RASC Support Coy  
WO166/6502: 8 Armoured Division RASC Service Coy  
WO166/7323: Royal Artillery: 3 Anti-Aircraft Division, General  
WO166/7338: Royal Artillery: 6 Anti-Aircraft Division, General  
WO166/7342: Royal Artillery: 7 Anti-Aircraft Division, General  
WO166/7345: Royal Artillery: 7 Anti-Aircraft Division RASC  
WO 219/5201: Vught Interment Camp  
WO 309/1415: Bois-le-Duc or Vught Concentration Camp, Holland: alleged killing and ill-treatment of allied nationals

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en.wikipedia.org/wiki/23rd\_Hussars  
go2war2.nl/artikel/4590/Concentration-camp-Bergen-Belsen.htm?page=4  
durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/article/10740/Transcript-of-The-Story-of-Belsen-by-Captain-A-Pares-  
Adjutant-of-the-113th-Light-Anti-Aircraft-Regiment-The-Royal-Artillery-c1945-DDLI-740410  
"From the Beachhead to Belsen: The Humanitarian Mission of 113 Light AA Regiment RA"  
[theobservationpost.com/]  
www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/4495/royal-army-service-corps

# Appendix A

## Military Record: Army Form 303-1

Army Form B 103-1.

### SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM

Army No. 233640 ✓ Signature of Officer [Signature] Major ✓

Corps B. B. Coy. No. 5 Training (Dev) Battalion R.A.S.C. Unit R.A.S.C.

Surname RADMORE ✓  
 Christian Names Harold Wilfred ✓  
 Religion CE ✓  
 If married state date 12/10/39 ✓  
 \*Substantive Rank and Appointment 701 DIVL. TPT. COY. R.A.S.C. ✓  
 \*Acting, Temporary or Local Rank, giving date B 2007 ✓  
 Attestation paper (Number of Army Form) 3 ✓  
 If of Alien origin state particulars None ✓

Date of birth as declared on attestation 11/7/10 ✓  
 (a) 2/11/40 ✓  
 Date of Enlistment 2/11/40 ✓  
 Date Service reckons from 2/11/40 ✓  
 (b) Date called to Colours 2/11/40 ✓  
 Period of Engagement DoFW. 6y ✓  
 (c) Special conditions (if any) of Enlistment or Rate of Pay }  
 (d) Any subsequent variations of conditions of service }  
 Extension of Service (Dates and period to be stated.)  
 Date of Re-engagement Period yrs.  
 Trade on Enlistment TRAVELLER ✓  
 Corps trade and grade  
 Qualifications (e)  
 Miscellaneous entries (f) :—  
 (f) (1) gle ✓  
 (f) (2) Ph. Enlistment ✓  
 (f) (3) 2/11/45 ✓  
 (f) (4) 6 - SEP 1945 ✓

To be completed by O. i/c Records when the Soldier is transferred to or re-engaged in the Army Reserve :—  
 (i) Date of transfer to Army Reserve  
 (ii) Rank on transfer to Army Reserve  
 (iii) Date of promotion thereto  
 (iv) Service in present rank Yrs. Day  
 (v) Re-engagement or Re-enlistment for Sec. D Army Reserve Date Period Yr

Medical (b)  
 Category B1 ✓ Date 22/11/40 Authority MO. Hant ✓

\* Full Name and Address of Next of Kin and Relationship.  
BERTHA FRANCIS RADMORE  
3. BEECH AVE  
(WIFE) ✓ NESTON NOTTS.

Continued beyond 21 years to (date service expires)

NOTES.—  
 (a) Entries to be made in pencil.  
 (b) Here enter particulars of any subsequent claim as to actual age after verification by birth certificate.  
 (c) Instructions regarding completion of this sub-head will be issued when necessary after mobilization.  
 (d) Whether "for Home Service only," enlisted at special rates of pay, &c.  
 (e) If to be retained on Home Service, period, if specified, to be stated, also authority, and on what grounds.  
 (f) Signaller, Farmer, &c.  
 (g) Instructions regarding allotment of these sub-heads will be made as may be necessary after mobilization.

Nothing to be written in this margin.

Forms B103-1/3.

WL 40089/271. 2000m. 12/39. C.B.S.S.I. 51-6640

Army No: 233640

Surname: Radmore Christian Names: Harold Wilfred Religion: CE If married state date: 12/10/39 Substantive rank and appointment: Dvr Attestation paper: B200D Date of birth as declared at attestation: 11/7/10 Date of Enlistment: 21/11/40 Period of Engagement: D of W Trade on Enlistment: Traveller Miscellaneous entries: 24e 6 Sept 1945	Corps		Unit
	B Coy. No.5 Training (Drvs) Battalion RASC		
	B Coy		RASC
	RASC		
	701 DIVL. TPT. COY. RASC		
	Medical		
	Category	Date	Authority
	B1	22/11/40	MO Unit
	Full name and address of next of kin and relationship		
	Bertha Francis Radmore		
	9 Beech Ave		
	Beeston		
	(Wife)	Notts	

#### Abbreviations

**CE:** Church of England  
**Coy:** Company  
**DIVL:** Divisional  
**D of W:** Duration of War  
**Dvr:** Driver  
**TPT:** Transport

(A) No. of Part II Order or other Authority.	(B) Unit	(C) Record of all casualties regarding promotions (acting, temporary, local or substantive), appointments, transfers, postings, attachments, &c., forfeiture of pay, wounds, accidents, admission to and discharge from Hospitals, Casualty Clearing Stations, &c. Date of disembarkation and embarkation from a theatre of war (including furlough, &c.).	(D) Place of Casualty	(E) Army Rank	(F) Date	(G) Service not allowed to reckon for pension Yrs. Days	(H) Signature of Officer certifying correctness of entries
	13 Coy R.A.S.C. D.E.W. Training		Shullin to Hafeld Prov.		31-11-40		J. J. M. d.
Q. 234	1100 H. Coy	Ported to 1st Inf Div Group Coy			31/1/41		W. J. M. d.
P. 7/41	324 Coy	Joined 324 Coy RASC. H. M. d.			1-2-41		W. J. M. d.
P. 10/41		Granted leave 2 days w.e.f.			16-2-41		W. J. M. d.
P. 23/41	8.3.41. Coy	Granted leave 7 days w.e.f.			15-4-41		W. J. M. d.
P. 30/41		Granted 2nd Prof. Pay W.E.F. H.F.			21-5-41		W. J. M. d.
P. 4/41		Granted leave 7 days W.E.F. H.F.			24-7-41		W. J. M. d.
P. 5/41		Granted leave 7 days			14-10-41		W. J. M. d.
P. 3/42		Granted leave 7 days W.E.F.			3-1-42		W. J. M. d.
P. 20/42		Granted embarkation leave 7 days w.e.f.			21-2-42		W. J. M. d.
P. 3/42		S. off S. on posting to 192 A.A. Coy. R.A.S.C.			8-6-42		W. J. M. d.
P. 12/6 of 1942	192 A.A. Coy	Ported to this unit from 8th Coy (334 Coy) RASC w.e.f. 14/42 Edinburgh			9-6-42		W. J. M. d.
P. 23/293		9 days Priv. leave. 24-16-42 to 7-1-42			15-5-42		W. J. M. d.
P. 58/502/42	192 A.A. Coy	Granted Priv. leave with L.R.A. 20 Aug 42 to 20 Aug 42. Incl.			20-8-42		W. J. M. d.
P. 20.90/4.9.43		S.O.S. of the unit on being posted to No. 30. 1st 4th Coy RASC. Mob. Centre for duty with 101 Inf Div. 4th Coy RASC. w.e.f. 4.9.43 Auth. Home. Col. 1/c RASC. Records T.P.M. F/3289 dated 2nd Sept. 1943.			4.9.43		W. J. M. d.

Comdg. 192 A.A. Coy. R.A.S.C.  
(3 A.A. Div.)

[Army Form B. 103-II to be gummed here if required.]

	'B' Coy RASC	D & W Training	Sutton in Ashfield	Dvr	21/11/40 to 21/12/40
G234	HQ & H Coy Sp Bn (RB)	Posted Support Group Coy 8 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Div	-“-	-“-	31/1/41
PII 7/41	334 Coy	Joined 334 Coy RASC	Walton	-“-	1/2/41
PII 10/41	-“-	Granted leave 2 days wef	-“-	-“-	16/2/41
PII 23/41	8 <sup>th</sup> SP Gp Coy	Granted leave 7 days wef	-“-	-“-	15/4/41
PII 30/41	-“-	Granted War Prof Pay wef	H7	-“-	21/5/41
PII 41/41	-“-	Granted leave 7 days wef	H7	-“-	24/7/41
PII 56/41	-“-	Granted leave 7 days wef	-“-	-“-	14/10/41
PII 3/42	-“-	Granted leave 7 days wef	-“-	-“-	3/1/42
PII 30/42	-“-	Granted embarkation leave 7 days wef	-“-	-“-	21/3/42
PII 37/42	-“-	S off S on posting to 192 AA Coy RASC	-“-	-“-	8/4/42
??? 6 of 1942	192 AA Coy	Posted to this unit from SP Gp Coy (334Coy) RASC wef 7/4/42	Edinburgh	-“-	9/4/42
23/293 ?	-“-	9 days priv leave 29.4.42/7.5.42 <i>[note: unclear why unless illness in family]</i>	-“-	-“-	15.5.42
			Comd Divg 192 A.A. Coy, RASC (3 AA Div)		
??II.58/502/42	192 AA Coy	Grant priv leave with LRRRA 12 Aug 42 to 20 Aug 42 Incl	Edin	Dvr	20/8/42
			Comd Divg 192 A.A. Coy, RASC (7 AA Div)		
Pt.IID 80/4/9/43	“	S.O.S of this unit on being posted to MO 3 Depot & Hldg Coy RASC mob centre for duty with 701 Inf Div TPT Coy RASC wef 4/9/43 auth col i/c RASC Records TPM F/3289 dated 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept 1943	Home	“	4/9/43

### Abbreviations

**A:** Anti-Aircraft

**BN:** Battalion

**Comd:** Command

**D & W:** Driving & Weapons

**Divg:**

**H7:**

**H/Hldg:** Holding

**Home:**

**HQ/H Coy:** HQ & Holding Coy

**LRRRA:** Lower rate Rations Allowance

**Priv Leave:** Privileged Leave (special leave for an event)

**S off S/ SOS:** Struck off strength

**TPM:**

**wef:** with effect from

# SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM

(Part II. CONTINUATION SHEET.)

OFFICE STAMP.

Army Form B.68-2

Regiment or Corps. R.A.S.C. Army Number I 233640

\*Substantive Rank. Plt Surname. RADMORE Christian Names Harold Wilfred  
(in block capitals)

\*Acting, Temporary, or Local Rank.....

(\*To be entered in pencil to facilitate alteration.)

(A) No of Part II or Part III Orders or other Authority	(B) Unit	(C) Record of ALL CASUALTIES which appear in Part II or Part III Orders or other Authority.	(D) Place of Casualty	(E) Date of Casualty	(F) Army Rank	(G) Service not allowed to reckon for pension Yrs. Days	(H) Signature of Officer certifying correctness of entries
Pt II 23	701 DIV	T.O.S. this unit w.e.f. 5.9.43. dtdy. O/C	Home	5.9.43	Dev		W Rye
6.9.43	6th Coy RASC	RASC Records F/3289 dtd 2.9.43					Cpt
5.2/43	"	Designation of unit changed to	"	17/11/43	"		H Rye
		701 Infantry Div Tpt. Coy. RASC					
6.2/43	701 INEDIV	Spec. Quals. Driver H.V. Petrol	"	17/11/43	"		W Rye
	TPT. COY	and Staff Cars					Cpt
2E21/9409/4	701 A/R	Emb UK	on	13/6/44			
-/935/4	-	Scient. Unit	-	14/6/44	-		
2E21/3624/45	701 Coy	Remained on duty this unit					
	W. Rye	on redesignation from 701					
		Coy RASC (Army Spt)	wf	10/6/45	"		
14639/45	701 Coy	Remained on duty this unit					
		on redesignation from 701					
		Coy RASC (Army Spt)	wf	10/6/45	"		
XX09/46	XBA	Embarked		9.11.45	Dev		
		and SOS B A O R		7/ JAN 46			
		Class 'A' Release			Dev		

PtII 23 6.9.43	701 Div TPT Coy RASC	TOS this unit wef 5/9/43 authority O i/c RASC records F/3289 d/d 2/9/43	Home	5/9/43	Dvr
52/43	“	Designation of unit changed to 701 Infantry Div TPT Coy RASC	“	17/11/43	“
62/43	701 Inf Div TPT Coy	Spec Quals Driver HV Petrol and Staff Cars	“	17/12/43	“
2E21/9409/44	701A/TPT	Emb UK on	Td? <i>[Tilbury Dock]</i>	13/6/44	“
-19352/K	-	Disemb ??? -	-	16/6/44	“
2E21/3524/45	701 Coy (Sta Maint)	Remains on strength this unit on re- designation from 701 Coy RASC (Army TPT) wef	“	10/2/45	“
17639/45	701 Coy	Medically examined on 9 Nov 45 & found fit for further service in med cat B1	?????	9/11/45	“
XX09/46	X8A	Embarked and SOS BAOR Class ‘A’ Release	Td?	8 Jan 46	DVR

#### Abbreviations

**BAOR:** British Army on the Rhine

**Class A release:**

**EMB:** Embarkation

**Disemb:** Disembarkation

**Sta Maint:** Station Maintenance

**TOS:** Taken on Strength

## PART I

## NOTIFICATION OF IMPENDING RELEASE

PAGE THREE

To: G.O. Military Disembarkation Camp Unit in U.K.

To be completed by units overseas who are despatching men to U.K. for release.

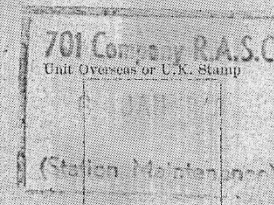
Surname (Block letters)..... **RADMORE**  
 Christian Name/s..... **Harold Wilfred**  
 Army No. **7233640** Age and Service Group..... **24C**  
 Present Rank..... **Driver** Unit, Regt. or Corps..... **701 Coy RASC (Station Maintenance)**  
 Documents attached..... **AFR 122 & AFR 154**

## PART II

To be completed by unit overseas or in U.K.

(a) Date on enlistment..... **1st Jan 46** (b) Trade courses and trade tests passed..... **Nil**  
 (c) Service Trade..... **Driver**  
 (d) Any other qualifications for civilian employment..... **Nil**

Military Conduct..... **Exemplary**  
 Testimonial:  
**An efficient and hard working soldier.**



Place..... **Field - B.A.O.R.** Date..... **1 Jan 46** Officer's Signature..... **Donald Mcayor**

Army Education Record (including particulars under (a), (b), (c) and (d) below).

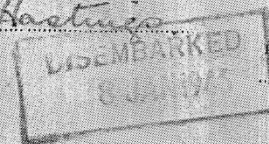
This Section will not be filled in until the receipt of further War Office Instructions.

	(a) Type of course	(b) Length	(c) Total hours of instruction	(d) Record of achievement
(i)*	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>	<b>Nil</b>
(ii)*				
(iii)*				
(iv)*				

\* Instructors will insert the letter "I" here to indicate that in their case the record refers to courses in which they have acted as instructors.

Signature of Unit Education Officer.....

## PART III

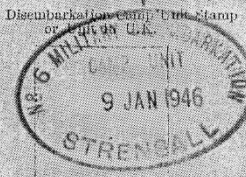
To: Officer in charge of Record Office, **RAF****One Place Hastings**

Permanent Address (if not known, insert temporary address):

**9 Beech Avenue, Birston, Nottingham**

Military Disembarkation Camp Unit Stamp or Unit in U.K.

Surname (Block Letters)..... **RADMORE**  
 Christian Name/s..... **Harold Wilfred**  
 Army No. **7233640** Age and Service Group..... **24C**  
 Present Rank..... **Driver** Unit, Regt. or Corps..... **701 Coy RASC (Station Maintenance)**  
 Documents attached..... **AFR 122 & AFR 154**



Surname: Radmore Christian Names: Harold Wilfred Army N: T/233640 Present Rank: Driver Documents attached: AFB 122 & AFH115Y			Age and Service Group: 24C Unit, Regt or Corps: 701 Coy RASC (Sta Maint)		
Trade on enlistment: Travelling Collecting Driver Salesman Service Trade: Driver LC Any other qualifications for civilian employment: Nil Military Conduct: Exemplary Testimonial: An efficient and hard working soldier			Trade courses and trade tests passed: nil     701 Company RASC 6 Jan 1946 (Station Maintenance)		
Place: Field BAOR      Date: 1 Jan 1946					
To: Officer in Charge of RASC Regional Office: One Place, Hastings Disembarked 6 Jan 1946					
Permanent Address: 9 Beech Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham					
Surname: Radmore Christian Names: Harold Wilfred Army No.: T/233640      Age and service group: 24C Present Rank: Driver      Unit, Regt or Corps: 701 Coy RASC (Sta Maint) Documents attachment: AFB 177 & AFB 157					
Military Disembarkation Camp Unit Stamp Nr 6 Military UK Embarkation Camp Unit 9 Jan 1946 Strengall					

### Abbreviations

LC: NOT Lance Corporal

**APPENDIX B**  
**THE UNIT BADGES**

The following badges we have from dad's collection:



**8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Anti-Aircraft Division**



**7<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Division**



**49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division**



**2<sup>nd</sup> Army**

The VIII Corps (see below) was part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army



### VIII Corps

Contains the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division that contains the 113<sup>th</sup> LAA Regiment.



### 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division



Amongst his badges is this which closely resembles the post-1952 Berlin occupying forces badge.



I have been unable to correctly identify this badge and the RLC Museum, whilst very helpful in many respects, were also unable to identify it. Was it the pre-1952 Berlin occupying force badge and so he sent time in Berlin? There is no evidence of this. Was it perhaps simply an occupying force badge for troops in Europe? If so, one would assume it would be readily identifiable. Somewhat a mystery!

The following badges appear on this photograph of dad, but are missing:





**Royal Army Service Corps** shoulder flash



**Good Conduct** sleeve badge



**Driver Trade Badge**, worn on sleeve

One must assume that these badges were on the tunic at the end of dad's service and were either the tunic was handed back with the badges still in place or the tunic was kept but was subsequently lost.

There is one other badge showing which is the divisional badge. This one must assume also remained on the tunic and is therefore lost.



Assuming that I am correct, and he was with the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division at the end of the war, the badge would be the newer version that was introduced in 1943. The older version as seen earlier.

## APPENDIX B

### No. 11 Training Centre RASC, Sutton in Ashfield

#### 'B' Company No.5 (Drivers) Battalion RASC

##### No.11 Recruits Reception and Training Centre

At the outset of the war, new recruits were given 4 weeks training to create Drivers. Unfortunately, this proved unsuccessful in creating drivers suited to war time service where one was required to drive anything, anywhere.

The Sutton-in-Ashfield centre was part of a Group with the Group Headquarters based in Mansfield with the following units:

No. 3 Recruits Reception and Training Centre	Sutton-on-Trent
No.11 Recruits Reception and Training Centre	Sutton-in-Ashfield
No.5 Driver Training Centre	Sheffield
No.9 Driver Training Centre	Mansfield
No.12 Driver Training Centre	Eckington
No.14 Driver Training Centre	Matlock
No.15 Driver Training Centre	Chesterfield
No.16 Driver Training Centre	Alfreton

The first two Centres were for recruits who could already drive whilst the others were for those without previous driving experience.

It is interesting to note the proximity of all the camps, the roads in the area must have been congested with trainee drivers and practice convoys etc.

Initially all the training in centres across the country delivered training of four weeks, but it became clear that the standard of the drivers produced was very poor and variable. As a result, the training was reviewed that resulted in some weapons training being removed from the syllabus simply because the weapons were not available. The training at all centres became standardised and this improved the quality of the finished product – the drivers. Also added to this 4-week basic training was added a further 2-5 weeks of “specialist” training.

##### 'B' Company No.5 (Drivers) Battalion RASC – Sutton-in-Ashfield

This change was reflected in the Group becoming a Brigade in September 1940 and there was a structural change in the Centres becoming Battalions. No. 11 Centre becoming No.5 Battalion in which dad was trained. The 4-week training remained (dad doing D & W Training believed to be Driving and Weapons Training between 21<sup>st</sup> November 1940 and 21<sup>st</sup> December 1940) and the “specialist training continuing until 30<sup>th</sup> January.

It is clear that the “Training Centre” was not a single enclosed area but was spread around the town using various local facilities.

I found this account by Eric Kelsey of his time at Sutton-in Ashfield on the BBC People's War website which probably accurately reflects dad's experience:

*"I arrived at Sutton in Ashfield at tea time. I was in the RASC and billeted in a church hall and issued with a straw filled palliass, blankets etc. I had a medical and saw the dentist and told that we would be spending time drilling and marching etc. Within the week, the Corporal instructed me to march the squad back to our billets; eventually all our squad reached the required standard and after the Passing Out Parade, we went on to our mechanical training. I found this easy. We did lorry driving, convoy work, night driving etc. During the time the drivers had to wait until the non-drivers passed their test we were sent into Sherwood Forest cutting saplings for the Signal Corps. Eventually we were to be sent to army units as drivers."*

Also, on the same site there is the following concerning Edmund Davies: *"He signed up for the Territorial Army in 13th March 1941 and was first posted to **"B" Coy No 5 Training Bn. (Drivers), RASC.** Which I believe his training was in Sutton in Ashfield."*

The following is an account from The Sutton-in-Ashfield Living Group 1989.

#### **"Billets and Drills**

St Joseph's Social Club on High Pavement that was previously Dr Nesbitt's house, that was the Sergeants Mess and what is nar [now] Shacklock's was the Officers' Mess – that's on Church Street – and other ranks were billeted in church halls and Sunday school rooms and all sorts like the 'Cong's' [possibly Congregational] school room before it were pulled down. The Rialto was the 'messaging' for the ranks. The Sunday School room just below the Baptist Church – that was one for t'Market. One or two local soldiers – they wished they'd been anywhere but Sutton because I know two or three that were doin' the drillin' on Sutton Portland Square and t'Lamms and of course if anyone knew yer [you], yer looked a ryt [right] pillock didn't yer?" (p49)

The Sutton Living Memory Group 1997.

#### **"Strangers**

Soldiers had 'messes' in the old Town Hall (the Rialto on the Market Place) and St Josephs' Social Club. There was an officer's mess in, what was, Shacklock's on Church Street. Soldiers drilled on the market place and on the Lammas. They were billeted at the Conservative Club, the Baptist Church and throughout the town."

From these accounts we have a picture of the use of various parts of the town:

#### **Messes**

The 'other ranks' Mess: The Rialto cinema, Market Street; Sunday school room below the Baptist Church, Market Place?

Sergeants Mess: St Joseph's Social Club, 71 High Pavement

Officers Mess: Shacklock's, Church Street

#### **Billets**

Church Halls; Sunday school rooms; 'Cong's' [Congregational?] school room, High Pavement

Local churches that could possibly be have been used:

Wesleyan Chapel, corner of Outram Road and Welbeck Street

St Johns Methodist Church, Brook Street

St Modwens Church, Station Road

St Michaels Church, Outram Street

Providence Hall (free church) corner of Mount Street and High Pavement

Methodist chapel, Brook Street

St Michaels Church Hall was used for dances so was probably not used as billets

### Parade Grounds

Portland Square (also known as Market Square, Bottom Green and Swines Green)

The Lammas. This is an area donated to the people of the town for perpetuity for recreation, it is now where the Lammas Road Leisure Centre is located.



**Sergeants Mess:** St Joseph's Social Club, 71 High Pavement

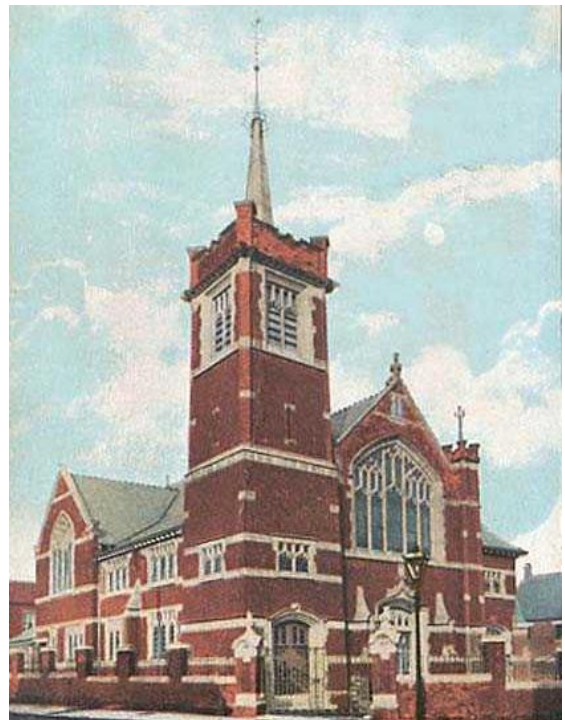


**Officers Mess:** Shacklock's, Church Street



The marketplace, **Portland Square**, Sutton-in-Ashfield

**The Congregational Church**, High Pavement





**The Rialto (old Town Hall)**

There would be a need for a significant vehicle park and parade ground, unfortunately no evidence of this could be found, nor even indications. There appear to be two possible alternatives.

### Barracks

I have been informed that there were barracks on Mansfield Road with a large area of hard standing. It was suggested by staff at Sutton-in-Ashfield library that this was “mainly used by the Nottingham and Derby Regiment”. This clearly would have been post-war but there is no evidence as to this or its war time usage.

It’s supposed that it was located in the corner made by Mansfield Road and Eastfield Side. When referring to maps, in 1938 (and earlier) it shows some roads Barn Street, Apollo Road, Chapel Street, Factory Yard as well as a hosiery factory. Post war map of 1959 still show these roads with a pub, that remains as The Oddfellows today and a garage that, whilst replaced by a modern building, remains as a car dealership. The area is undergoing some current redevelopment, but is mainly commercial properties of various ages. There remains evidence of where Chapel Street joined Eastfield Side is still clear.

Researching of various maps of different times does not show any other possible sites for a barracks other than those of the US Hospital at Kills Mill. Whilst it was sometimes the practice to avoid placing military establishments on maps or sometimes showing them with designating them as military allowing an assumption of industrial complexes, I believe that this suggestion of a barracks is very improbable.

### The Lawns

The second possible is a local park The Lawns or Lawns Pleasure Grounds. This was formerly the grounds of Sutton Hall before it burnt to the ground in 1875. The Lawns is now laid out with a series of landscaped flat areas. Some of these are now used for football pitches, 5-a-side pitches, more are not used including a hard standing. Could these flat areas have been created during the war for parking areas?

Surrounding the park area is post-war development including 1960s industrial units and more recent housing. This area according to maps of the day shows that these areas would have been available during the war and it begs the question as to whether the development took place on brown field land where temporary army buildings such as Nissan huts used for offices, stores, workshops, etc. were.

Clearly there may be another location as yet not identified, probably farmland. My thoughts are that why would the Army requisition farmland for use of parking trucks at a time when food production was a high priority and when council owned land was readily available. Therefore, The Lawns is a prime possibility and the landscaping into flat areas suggests its use.



Taken outside the Old Bluebell Public House, Lammas Road, Sutton in Ashfield probably upon completion of Basic Training in December 1941. Dad, front row 2<sup>nd</sup> from left

If the Passing Out Parade took place on “The Lammas” then it would make sense why this photo was taken where it was.



The pub still stands and looks the same even though it is not in use and is somewhat dilapidated.

Note the layout of the door, windows and sign, but also the distinctive right-hand corner of the building that enabled it to be identified

The following is a document supplied by the RLC Museum and a contemporary document about the history of another Training Centre, this being the one based at Sutton on Trent. Unfortunately, we only have pages 1, 2 and 5.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF NO. 3. TRAINING BRIGADE, R.A.S.C.

### Introductory.

Despite the fact that transport, by means of the I.C. engine, had been an accomplished and accepted fact for more than 40 years prior to 1939; and had, even in the Great War 1914-1918, largely superseded all other forms of land war transport, except in a few isolated instances, such as mountain warfare; a rapidly expanding military organisation soon found that the number of men required to drive its many and complex vehicles was not obtainable, even as bodies proficient in the mere physical act of driving, from the thousands of ex-civilians rather bewilderingly being pushed into battle-dress for the first time. More than any other arm of the service, the R.A.S.C. had to have quickly, drivers, and still more drivers.

Driving the family saloon, the sports tourer, the public service vehicle, or even the long distance transport lorry, were very different matters indeed, from propelling a W.D. vehicle anywhere in accordance with the strategical and tactical demands of the British High Command, and the no less exacting requirements dictated by the pleasantries of totalitarian warfare as enacted by the German equivalent authorities.

Civilian mechanical transport organisation had thrived on the fact that one man drove a vehicle and another, or several others looked after its internal and external wellbeing. Sufficient to the vehicle is the driving thereof, became a quickly outmoded shibboleth, when the sheer inability of quite a lot of transport to move when so required, threw an unwelcome spanner into the workings of high strategy and local tactics.

It was as important to cause a change of mind as to produce some form of instruction which would turn a raw recruit into "an R.A.S.C. Driver", with all that description entailed and demanded. The methods existed - but the fundamental importance of their application was not fully realised until the War was nearly two years old.

The peculiar demands of totalitarian warfare soon demonstrated that the R.A.S.C. driver I.C. had to be all things at all times. In the not so very distant days, frantic demands from Officer i/c R.A.S.C. Records only asked that the man could drive. How - or even what - was really specified. Today those methods to attain quantity in any sort of quality seem little short of horrifying, but it is from the lessons learned by trial and error that the edifice of present-day methods is built. Even now, it is far from ideal - but it is unlikely that the changes necessary to produce the near perfect product, are possible in this War.

The story of No. 3. Training Brigade, R.A.S.C., as told from its records, its correspondence, its training programmes and the memories of those who served against almost unbelievable difficulties; can be repeated in almost any branch of the Army during those hectic days when countermeasures to meet an impending invasion were interwoven with the intensive training. Good-will, enthusiasm and ever-ready adaptability were the only abundant ingredients to mix with the raw material. The traditions and previous history of the Corps stood the test and shown that "the end" of "delivery - where - when - and how required" was never obscured by the frequently misty "means" used to attain it.

### How the Brigade started.

In October, 1939, the War Office decided to form a series of R.A.S.C. Training Units consisting of a number of Driver Training

Centres, plus two units designed to deal with Military Training only, for those civilians, who were proficient drivers. These were designated Recruits Reception and Training Centres. Their various titles varied out of proportion to their locations, but were stabilised about February, 1940 under a Group H.Q. situated in MANSFIELD and commanded by Colonel A.M. Wilson, D.S.O. The units themselves were located as follows :-

No. 3. Recruits Reception & Trg. Centre.	SUTTON-ON-TRENT.
No. 11. " " " " "	SUTTON-IN-ASHFIELD.
No. 5. Driver Training Centre.	SHEFFIELD.
No. 9. " " "	MANSFIELD.
No. 12. " " "	ECKINGTON.
No. 14. " " "	MATLOCK.
No. 15. " " "	CHESTERFIELD.
No. 16. " " "	ALFRETON.

The establishment of the Group Headquarters was :

1 Commandant (Brigadier)  
 1 G.S.C.2.  
 1 Staff Captain.  
 13. Other Ranks, Clerks etc.

Its transport consisted of :-

1 Car 4 str.  
 1 M/Cycle.  
 2 Bicycles.

The establishments of the Driver Training Centres, as notified by A.C.Is. in November, 1939, was as follows :-

1 Headquarters	C.O. a Lieut-Colonel with eighteen other officers and 6 O.R.'s.
1 Headquarters Coy.	3 officers and 200 O.R.'s
4 Training Coys.	each comprising a Company H.Q. of 2 officers and 61 O.R.'s. with the Company itself of 200 O.R.'s.

Total personnel for the centre was therefore :- 30 Officers  
 1,250 O.R.'s.

Transport was remarkable for its variety rather than dependability and quantity. War Establishment laid down the following, but any centre which could claim "no deficiencies" was considered to have made a mistake in its returns.

	<u>Administrative.</u>	<u>Instructional.</u>
Cars 4 str.	1.	-
Cars 2 str.	1.	8.
Lorries or Vans (various)	-	130.
Motor Cycles.	-	16.

Weapons consisted of 300 rifles and 8 L.M.G.'s. - correspondence indicates their quantity existed only on paper for many months.

Many of the lorries still bore imperfectly concealed reminders of their civilian status and any training company which could put on the road even 50% of their vehicles was considered to have achieved the impossible.

Each centre was designed to produce 800 trained drivers every 2 months. Military training was fixed at a period of 4 weeks for everyone. Driver training varied from the short time required to pass a driving test for those who were proficient, to 5 weeks for those men who had no previous experience. Intakes arrived

The Military Training syllabus consisted of relevant extracts from existing pamphlets and Manuals. The training centres commented on this syllabus - and a suitable version of the condensed opinions was passed on to M.T.C. Replies indicated, amongst other things, that too much attention need not be paid to Bren Gun training or Anti-Tank Rifle training - as there was only one Bren Gun in each Centre and no A/Tk Rifles. The introduction of a standard training did, however, achieve a better product. The "reasons for" were emphasised as far as training in vehicles was concerned, and gave every driver a chance of knowing "why" as well as knowing "how".

In September, 1940, the formation of No. 3. Training Brigade, R.A.S.C. became an accomplished fact. Under the Command of Colonel A.M. Wilson, D.S.O., the Driver Training Centres and Recruits Reception and Training Centres became absorbed as follows :-

No. 9. D.T.C.	became	No. 5. Training Battalion (Dvrs.)	R.A.S.C.
			MANSFIELD.
No. 5. D.T.C.	"	No. 6. Training Battalion (Dvrs.)	R.A.S.C.
			SHEFFIELD.
No. 15. D.T.C.	"	No. 7. Training Battalion (Dvrs.)	R.A.S.C.
			CHESTERFIELD.
No. 14. D.T.C.	"	No. 8. Training Battalion (Dvrs.)	R.A.S.C.
			MA TLOCK.
No. 16. D.T.C.	"	No. 9. Training Battalion (Dvrs.)	R.A.S.C.
			ALPINGTON.

Numbers 3 and 11 Recruits Reception and Training Centres and No. 12 Driver Training Centre became disbanded.

The establishment of the Brigade Headquarters differed only from the old Group Headquarters in that the G.S.O.2. was replaced by a Brigade Major (See Appendix for personnel details).

The establishment of each Battalion, as notified in A.C.Is. 1940 was as follows :-

Battalion H.Q.	
Military Training Wing.....	H.Q. & Holding Coy.
	2 Training Coys. each of
	2 Sections.
Specialist Training Wing.....	H.Q. Coy.
	1 Workshop Section.
	2 Trg. Coys. each of 2 Sections.

Each battalion was commanded by a Lt.-Colonel, with a Major Commanding each of the companies.

Total personnel was: 36 Officers 1796 O.R.'s.

The battalion was designed to produce 116 fully trained recruits weekly. Vehicle establishment was :

	<u>Administrative.</u>	<u>Instructional.</u>
Cars 4 str.	1.	
Cars 2 str.	3.	
Lorries instr.		
Motor Cycles.	2.	140.
Lorry Breakdown.	1.	60.

This was an increase on the old D.T.C. establishment particularly as far as motor cycles were concerned.

Army Class intakes arrived at the rate of 232 per fortnight and underwent 4 weeks military training and dependent on their driving abilities 2-5 weeks specialised training. Training was no longer concurrent - but this was an improvement on the old method.

It is possible to look back on a year's hard work under the most adverse conditions - with ~~any~~ feeling that something had been

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## **Appendix D**

### **“Short History of 49<sup>th</sup> (WR) Division” by Br. H.B. Latham**

CAB 106/1086: Short history of 49th (West Riding) Division 1939-1945, by Brigadier H.B. Latham

This is an interesting, but very brief account of the “Polar Bears”. It provides an overview but little detailed information.

SHORT HISTORY OF THE  
49TH (WEST RIDING) DIVISION 1939 - 1945

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This Division, in 1939, was a first line Territorial Army Division with its Headquarters at York and its component units recruited from the areas around Leeds, Doncaster and Nottingham.

It had had a distinguished career in the Great War 1914-19, being continuously engaged on the Western Front from 1915 onwards. It was embodied on the 3rd September 1939 and in February 1940, mobilised for the campaign in Norway, where during the period April to June, the Divisional Headquarters with two Field Companies R.E. and the 146 and 148 Infantry Brigades were engaged at Narvik, Namsos and Aandenes respectively.

On returning to England the Division was reconstituted and immediately remobilised on 12th June 1940 for service in Iceland, where the Divisional Headquarters and 146 and 147 Infantry Brigades remained till mid-1942 as part of the garrison. During this period 148 Infantry Brigade left the Division, its place being taken by 70 Infantry Brigade, which had taken part earlier in the retreat of the B.E.F. to Dunkirk.

For the next two years the Division remained in England, till in February 1944 it came under the command of H.Q. XXX Corps and landed on the Normandy beaches on the 13th and 14th June. It was quickly absorbed into the heavy fighting to expand the bridgehead and its first divisional action took place at Pontenay Le Pesnil, on the right flank of the Battle of the Odon.

In July it was transferred to I (U.K.) Corps, then under the command of the H.Q. First Canadian Army, on the left flank of the Allied front and in August took part in the advance to the Seine which it crossed to invest Le Havre with the 51st Highland Division. On the 21st August 70 Infantry Brigade left the Division being replaced by 56 Infantry Brigade, which had previously taken part in the assault landing in Normandy on the 6th June. Le Havre was captured on 12th September, after which the 49th Division advanced

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northwards and by the end of September had secured a bridgehead over the Antwerp - Turnhout canal.

At the start of its operations in Holland the Division consisted of:-

Div H.Q.

Commander: Major-General R.H. Barker, O.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.D.  
Recon: 49 Reconnaissance Regiment  
Sig: Div Signals  
M.M.G. Bn: 2nd Kensington Regiment

56 Infantry Brigade

Commander: Brigadier M.S. Ekins  
Units: 2nd Essex Regiment  
2nd South Wales Borderers  
2nd Gloucestershire Regiment

146 Infantry Brigade

Commander: Brigadier J.F. Walker  
Units: 4th Lincolnshire Regiment  
1st/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry  
Bullamshire Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment

147 Infantry Brigade

Commander: Brigadier H. Wood  
Units: 1st Leicestershire Regiment  
7th Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)  
11th Royal Scots Fusiliers

Divisional Troops included:-

R.A. 69, 143 and 185 FA Regts  
55 A Tk Regt  
89 LAA Regt

R.E. 24, 756 and 757 FA Coys  
289 FA Pk Coy

Relevant R.A.S.C., R.A.M.C., R.A.O.C. and R.E.M.E. units.

Early in October the combined attack of 1 Polish Armoured Division and 49 Division towards s'Hertogenbosch reached Alphen when 49 Division and 4 Canadian Armoured Division were ordered to attack northwest to secure Roosendaal and Bergen Op Zoom and so assist the forces on their left to open the Scheldt. This attack started on 20th October and the opposition to it quickly stiffened, but by 28th October a bridgehead had been secured by 7th Duke of Wellington's Regiment across the anti-tank ditch southwest of

2.

northwards and by the end of September had secured a bridgehead over the Antwerp - Turnhout canal.

At the start of its operations in Holland the Division consisted of:-

Div H.Q.

Commander: Major-General E.H. Barker, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.,  
Rece: 49 Reconnaissance Regiment  
Sigs: Div Signals  
M.M.G. Bn: 2nd Kensington Regiment

56 Infantry Brigade

Commander: Brigadier M.S. Ekins  
Units: 2nd Essex Regiment  
2nd South Wales Borderers  
2nd Gloucestershire Regiment

146 Infantry Brigade

Commander: Brigadier J.F. Walker  
Units: 4th Lincolnshire Regiment  
1st/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry  
Hampshire Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment

147 Infantry Brigade

Commander: Brigadier H. Wood  
Units: 1st Leicestershire Regiment  
7th Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)  
11th Royal Scots Fusiliers

Divisional Troops included:-

R.A. 69, 143 and 185 Pd Regts  
55 A Tk Regt  
89 LAA Regt

R.E. 294, 756 and 757 Pd Coys  
289 Pd Pk Coy

Relevant R.A.S.C., R.A.M.C., R.A.O.C. and R.E.M.E. units.

Early in October the combined attack of 1 Polish Armoured Division and 49 Division towards s'Hertogenbosch reached Alphen when 49 Division and 4 Canadian Armoured Division were ordered to attack northwest to secure Roosendaal and Bergen Op Zoom and so assist the forces on their left to open the Scheldt. This attack started on 20th October and the opposition to it quickly stiffened, but by 28th October a bridgehead had been secured by 7th Duke of Wellington's Regiment across the anti-tank ditch southwest of

4 3.

Rosendael, while further to the west Voss had been secured on the main road to Bergen. During that night this bridgehead was lost to a strong counter attack, but further to the west another bridgehead was gained on 29th October by 1st Leicestershire Regiment after a hard fight, and this battalion then advanced into the western outskirts of Rosendael during the night, driving the enemy before them.

The division continued its advance to the north and after overcoming opposition on the River Mark, secured Klundert and Villesstad. With the south bank of the River Maas clear of enemy, 49 Division was transferred to 12 (U.K.) Corps and took part in the Second British Army operation, which cleared all the Germans from west of the River Maas between Neerwyck and Bommel. On 30th November Major-General Barker left the division to take command of VIII (U.K.) Corps and was replaced as divisional commander by Major-General G.H.A. MacMillan, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

The division now rejoined First Canadian Army, coming under command of H.Q. II Canadian Corps, and took over part of the Nijmegen bridgehead between the Rivers Waal and Nederrijn. Early in December the Germans blew the dykes in the vicinity and flooded the northern part of "The Island", as this area was called; 49 Division then took charge of all the bridgehead remaining above water. In mid January a German paratroop attack on Betton was decisively defeated after a small initial success.

During the Battle of the Rhineland the division continued to hold this area and was taken under direct command by H.Q. First Canadian Army. In mid March it was placed under command of H.Q. I Canadian Corps on the latter's arrival from Italy. On 28th March Major-General S.B. Hawline, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C. took over command of the division from Major-General MacMillan, who took command of 54 Division. On 31st March 5 Canadian Armoured Division took over the left sector of "The Island".

On 2nd April 49 Division and 5 Canadian Armoured Division attacked and by evening 4th April the south bank of the Nederrijn had been secured as far east as Wageningen, while part of

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524.

49 Division was firm on the north bank in Westervoort area. Both divisions now concentrated east of the IJssel, less one Canadian brigade, and on 12th April 49 Division assaulted across the IJssel and captured Arnhem in 48 hours of fighting. 5 Canadian Armoured Division now passed through to the IJsselmeer and 49 Division sent one brigade west, which captured Ede and Wageningen, and the other two northeast to link up with 1 Canadian Infantry Division and then turn west. By 24th April the division was just short of the German defence line on the Grebbe River, from Renswoude to Wageningen, where they were halted whilst the negotiations for the capitulation of the German forces were concluded.

## **Appendix E**

### **The Order of Battle of 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division (The Polar Bears)**

**as constituted during the war:**

#### **146th Infantry Brigade**

- 4th Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment
- 1/4th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
- Hallamshire Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment

#### **147th Infantry Brigade**

- 1/5th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment (left 7 September 1942)
- 1/6th Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment (left 6 July 1944)
- 1/7th Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment
- 147th Infantry Brigade Anti-Tank Company (formed 20 March 1940, disbanded 1 August 1941)
- 11th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers (from 8 September 1942)
- 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment (from 6 July 1944)

#### **148th Infantry Brigade (left 4 April 1940)**

- 1/5th Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment
- 1/5th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (until December 1939)
- 8th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters
- 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers (from 18 December 1939)

#### **70th Infantry Brigade (from 18 May 1942, disbanded 20 August 1944)**

- 10th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry
- 11th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry
- 12th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry (until February 1940) when converted to 1st Battalion, Tyneside Scottish (Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment))

#### **56th Infantry Brigade (from 20 August 1944)**

- 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers (left 27 April 1945, rejoined 14 June 1945)
- 2nd Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment
- 2nd Battalion, Essex Regiment
- 7th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers (from 28 April 1945, left 13 June 1945)

#### **Divisional Troops**

- 2nd Battalion, Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment (from 7 June 1943, joined as divisional support battalion, became machine gun battalion 28 February 1944)
- 49th Reconnaissance Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps (formed 5 September 1942, became 49th Reconnaissance Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps 1 January 1944)
- 49th (West Riding) Divisional Signals Regiment, Royal Corps of Signals

- 60 Field Security Section, Intelligence Corps

#### Royal Artillery

- 69th (West Riding) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery
- 70th (West Riding) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (until 6 August 1940)
- 71st (West Riding) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (until 6 August 1940)
- 79th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 8 until 23 June 1940)
- 80th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 8 until 23 June 1940)
- 143rd (Kent Yeomanry) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 26 April 1942)
- 178th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 15 May 1942 until 28 December 1942)
- 185th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 24 December 1942, disbanded 29 November 1944)
- 74th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 30 November 1944)
- 58th (Duke of Wellington's) Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery (until 23 June 1940)
- 88th Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 17 June 1942 until 24 July 1943)
- 55th (Suffolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 26 July 1943)
- 118th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 5 July until 8 December 1942)
- 89th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery (from 29 December 1942)

#### Royal Engineers

- 228th (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers (until 30 September 1939)
- 229th (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers (until 4 April 1940)
- 230th (West Riding) Field Company, Royal Engineers (until 4 April 1940)
- 231st (West Riding) Field Park Company, Royal Engineers (until 4 April 1940)
- 294th Field Company, Royal Engineers (from 26 April 1942)
- 756th Field Company, Royal Engineers (from 26 April 1942)
- 757th Field Company, Royal Engineers (from 26 April 1942)
- 289th Field Park Company, Royal Engineers (from 26 April 1942)
- 23rd Bridging Platoon, Royal Engineers (from 1 November 1943)

The division was disbanded in Germany in 1946,