

**'...BUT OUR PATROLS ARE OUT':
MEDICAL AND MILITARY BRINKMANSHIP AT THE
NORMANDY BRIDGEHEAD AND A ROYAL RESCUE**

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THE REGIMENTAL AID POST (RAP) AND ITS PERSONNEL

In commando operations medical staff are frequently confronted with difficulties and dilemmas with moral and emotional as well as medical dimensions. A man lying wounded in the open puts an onus on medical staff to leave safe positions while mortar bombs may still be spewing a lethal spray of shrapnel (Figure 1); a wounded man, in pain, and needing help who has to be left behind as the commando (Cdo) moves on can create emotional conflicts for medical staff who have to abandon him and try to enable him to come to terms with this. In a closely-knit unit those wounded are frequently close friends of medical and other soldiers with whom they have been living, often under conditions of considerable hardship, and together sharing the risks and fears of front-line battle. A comradeship can develop of a depth which few other lifestyles can achieve: its ethos includes great loyalty to a 'mate'. Conflicts of loyalty including duty, fear and lack of resolve which may discount responsibility to a mate can cause disturbing guilt feelings. Few speak of these things. Siegfried Sassoon proved his courage early in World War I, but later tried to resign his commission as he developed an overwhelming abhorrence of 'war's senseless carnage'. In Craiglockhart (Edinburgh) War Hospital for Neurasthenic Officers the feeling of guilt that he had deserted his men, not any lessening of his revulsion of war, led him to return to the battlefield.

Medical orderlies/stretchers-bearers run considerable risks. When 47 Cdo left Sallenelles ten weeks after D-Day two of its ten medical orderly/stretchers-bearers, L/Cpl Chatfield and Marine Kinloch, had been killed and three, L/Cpls McGuire, Kendrick and Cole, wounded. During the European campaign, Cpl Pymm, and L/Cpls Jesney and Kendrick, were awarded Military Medals and L/Cpl Thornton Mentioned in Dispatches. The only RAMC Victoria Cross of World War II was won posthumously by L/Cpl Harden, a medical orderly of 45 RM Cdo whose MO (Medical Officer) was Dr John Tulloch, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

In the European campaign three per cent of Army MOs served in front-line regiments. As MO to 47 Cdo, exempt from seeking to kill and wound, I shared, in lesser measure, the risks, fears and hardships of my combatant colleagues but I had the privilege of serving dedicated young men who gave so much and for whom I had profound admiration and respect. A medical officer is favoured too that his training inures him to the mutilations of the battlefield and allows him to practice his own profession.

General Dempsey, field commander of the British Army in Normandy on D-Day (6 June 1944) singled out two actions for special mention - the capture of Port-en-Bessin by 47 Royal Marine Commando (47 Cdo) and the establishment of a bridgehead east of the River Orne by 6th Airborne Division.^{1,2} On 10 June, 47 Cdo moved to Douvres la Délivrande to attack the German battery holding out there within the British bridgehead but when Douvres was reached the battery had fallen. 6th Airborne

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Division beyond the Orne (Figure 2) was under severe pressure and the commando was ordered to move there to support it. On D-Day, 9th Parachute Battalion, reduced to only 150 men because many had been dropped outside the landing zone, had captured Merville battery suffering 65 casualties. The Germans counter-attacked and despite support from 45 RM Cdo the occupying force had to withdraw to the south of the village of Sallenelles (Figures 2,3,4).

SALLENELLES

On 11 June, 47 Cdo crossed the Canal du Caen over Benouville (Pegasus) bridge and the Orne at Ranville Bridge (Figure 3), the sites a few days previously of the first actions of the Normandy campaign. Like a flock of resting migratory birds the ground was covered with gliders (Figure 5). The night was spent at Ecarde, the RAP occupying Café Tabac. The owner was fulsome in his welcome and promptly removed all his stock!

Next day the march was to Le Plein (Figures 2,3) and along the top of the Breville-Amfreville-Sallenelles ridge, the scene of much fierce fighting involving the 9th Parachute Battalion, 45 RM Cdo and 6 (Army) Cdo. Determined counter attacks had been repulsed and dead German soldiers were scattered along the roadside (Figure 6). By a tree near the roadside, a 6 Cdo officer (Lieut Dillon) was found alive. He had been shot in the chest, was unconscious and profoundly hypothermic - which probably saved his life. Close by sprawled a dead German sniper who had apparently fallen from the tree, second in a shooting contest with Lieut Dillon. Four French members of 10 Inter-Allied (IA) Cdo with shrapnel wounds of the legs were also rescued.

As 47 Cdo advanced along the ridge a fierce battle was being fought around Bréville (Figures 2,3) by 3rd Parachute Brigade and tanks of 13/18 Hussars, of which I had previously been medical officer. The commando came under fire as it approached a prominent house on the outskirts of Sallenelles (Figure 7), now the eastern limit of the British beachhead; later we named this house 'Maison Chevigny' after the present owner who as Mayor of Sallenelles organised the erection of a Commando Memorial there (Figure 8). (The house has a Royal link with Britain - Mr Chevigny's son-in-law, Sir Robin Janvrin, is Deputy Secretary to the Queen.)

Entering the Chevigny garden the commando came under intense mortar fire which killed one of the accompanying Royal Engineers and seriously wounded two others. The commando then deployed south of Maison Chevigny, holding the Sallenelles end of the ridge in a defensive position of slit trenches; northwards covering Sallenelles and eastwards an area beyond which La Grande Ferme du Buisson (La Grande Ferme), 900 yards away, was in no-man's-land. (Figure 3).

A SUITABLE RAP

With the bridgehead stabilising it was necessary to establish a suitable RAP. The options were slit trenches in the open or Maison Chevigny which Colonel Phillips (later Major General Sir Farndale Phillips), the Commanding Officer (CO), did not wish to use for defence because of its isolated position. I decided to use it as the RAP. The CO did not demur. An austere man with a formidable military presence, decisive in command and a strict disciplinarian, he never quite knew how to handle an Army medical officer (I was the first to serve in a RM commando) with the executive authority which the latter possesses compared with Naval MOs to whom he had been accustomed. He nearly always trusted my decisions and even with reservations would

respond with a quizzical expression and an uncharacteristically ambivalent remark such as, 'Doc, you are a prescriptive fellow'.

The house faced the enemy but barbed wire rolls were placed on the enemy side and across the road to Sallenelles, and mines laid beyond. Maison Chevigny had been used as a brothel and evacuated in haste. It was filthy, littered with women's clothing, uniforms, boots, helmets, webbing, leather belts, knives, forks, crockery, half-eaten food and makeshift beds. Imagination boggled at the possible state of dress or undress of those who had so obviously fled in panic from these quasi military activities as parachutists dropped from the heavens in the dead of night and began emerging from the Normandy bocage.

Rubbish was cleared out and sandbags placed over windows at ground level, excluding daylight from the basement which, partly below ground level, was relatively safe from mortaring and rifle fire. Four medical orderly/stretcher bearers, two MOAs (Marine Officers' Attendants) and two medical jeep drivers, slept on stretchers in the large basement room; padre and MO in a smaller basement room.

The basement was infested with rats which scurried about at night. Although a determined assault on them with anything which could act as a truncheon resulted in a number of casualties the rodent reserves were large. In the large basement room, overhead pipes led to an unused stove and the room's occupants often lay at night with a torch watching the antics of the rats as they balanced on or ran along the pipes. The Army's understanding of the realities of war had foreseen such a scenario. One of the more flamboyant lecturers at the Army School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine had lectured on 'how to get a rat out of your sleeping bag before it does unmentionable damage to masculinity', a lecture which did not now seem so apocryphal as it had at the time. He counselled discretion; tactical advantage lay with the rat; fighting with a trapped rat inside a sleeping bag was unwise, attempts at manual extraction risky. The rat should be encouraged to leave quietly by creating an easy escape route through the mouth of the bag. A preventive nightly ritual of inspecting beds for 'cuckoo rats' proved effective.

Inevitably at Maison Chevigny there was lurking concern that we might be captured. Only rolls of barbed wire and some mines separated us from the enemy. One night as the padre and I slept on our stretchers in the basement there was a knocking, scraping noise at the small ground-level window above us. With the prospect that our defences had been breached and the usual method of entering a defended house - a grenade or a burst of automatic fire through the window - might be employed we dare not show a light or reveal any other evidence of occupancy. Had I been foolhardy in preferring the amenity of Maison Chevigny to the austerity of an earthy trench? We lay motionless, not a little apprehensive. The sound stopped and cautiously we shone a torch at the window. A large rat had been hurling itself at the glass in an attempt to escape and lay trapped and exhausted between window and sandbags.

To begin with, the large front room above ground level was used as the main medical room but movement across the glassless window too often resulted in a fusillade of shots, so the 'surgery' with its 'operating table' - a stretcher laid on two trestles - had to be moved to the large basement room. The house was frequently mortared, when anyone in the garden was at risk. On one occasion a shell went through the roof leaving a large hole. Lacking electricity, we relied on paraffin lamps. After we left a booby trap exploded when the electricity was restored.

At Sallenelles, unlike Port-en-Bessin where we had no transport, we had two 'medical' jeeps. Initially casualties were carried on a stretcher laid across the bonnet

(Figure 9) but as stretchers were longer than the width of a jeep casualties risked being knocked off. The next adaptation was a raised steel frame in line with the vehicle (Figure 10). This was more satisfactory but patient and stretcher had to be tightly strapped down because the height of the frame accentuated any tilting movement over rough ground aggravating casualty discomfort; and there was little protection from the weather. Our jeep drivers, Stow and Tarbin, therefore modified our jeeps by removing the rear seats and bolting on a steel frame made by REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) with a canopy extending to the rearward end of the stretcher (Figure 11). This arrangement greatly improved casualty comfort. Sadly, the 'Sallenelles Jeep' did not find its way into *World War Two Military Vehicles*.³

During the first four days at Sallenelles, Marine Tatton and Marine Maud (missing on patrol) were killed and 23 casualties treated for shrapnel or bullet wounds. On 16 June the commando's position was mistakenly bombed by the RAF, the bright yellow silk squares which we had for personal identification apparently unnoticed. The bombs, dropping with the high pitched screech and tearing explosion which identified them from mortar bombs, killed Sergeant Fuller, a German member of 10 IA Cdo attached to 47 Cdo who had distinguished himself at Port-en-Bessin,² and Marine Tullett.

On the same day a casualty was rescued in circumstances which elevated warfare above the disregard for human suffering which so often characterises it. An old Frenchman, despite the warning signs, tried to cross one of our minefields, trod on a mine and fell, wounded. His plight was seen by one of our officers, Lieutenant O'Brien who, unaware of the positions of the mines, immediately entered the minefield and carried out the old man who had sustained severe multiple injuries.

PATROLLING

The main activity of both commando and enemy, at this time, was patrolling in no-man's-land - military sparring rather than a main bout. Patrols would go out towards Sallenelles or to and beyond La Grande Ferme. Such warfare without major battles creates the impression in the media that little is happening, that 'all (is) quiet on the Western Front'. Reports often ended, as it seemed to the troops, in a somewhat apologetic note, '...but our patrols are out'. Patrolling, however, is a stressful form of soldiering carrying considerable risk. Those involved are operating in small groups, isolated from the main body of their colleagues, frequently in the dark. The Normandy bocage concealed friend and foe. The mine was the silent, deadly enemy; the ambush the hidden foe striking before any chance to reply: a rustle nearby could presage the arrival of a grenade: the shadowy figure suddenly looming up in the dark could be the enemy or, tragically, assumed to be such and prove too late to be a patrol from an adjacent British unit - one of our patrols suffered casualties in this way. A corporal leading a patrol carried total responsibility, not the limited responsibility he had when his troop officer was present. Patrolling seldom gave the sense of achievement which assault and capture of an enemy position gave. Although patrolling was unpopular there were individualists, human nocturnal predators, who preferred stalking at night to an open fight.

Patrolling was not without its amusing incidents. Night patrols sometimes stalked each other. On one occasion a member of a night patrol positioned himself in a tree close to one of the routes used by enemy patrols. As an enemy patrol approached he hurled a grenade from above but his aim and timing were poor. Dislodged from the tree by the blast, he was completely at the mercy of the enemy who, uninjured, were

as confused as he was and beat a hasty retreat.

One dark night a member of a patrol thought he heard the whispered word 'Müller' from behind. As he turned quickly two shadowy figures disappeared. Two Germans had been pursuing the patrol to find out a safe route through our minefield.

Because La Grande Ferme had been abandoned, the animals there were uncared for, cows un milked. It was not unknown for a patrol to bring back a can of milk or occasionally for the yield to prove low - the Germans had been there first.

Once a patrol returning to troop HQ brought back a goose, tying its leg to a sapling pending 'processing'. The goose escaped into a minefield. At that point the troop commander, Captain Isherwood, appeared and ordered his troop marksman, a qualified sniper enjoying the title of 'Silver Spoon' to 'shoot the b*** goose'. From 25 yards Silver Spoon fired at the fluttering bird but through excitement or compassion missed. Before the position could be reassessed the field telephone rang - 'Spencer [the Adjutant] here; who fired that shot at the Colonel?' The erring shot had just missed the CO, now on his way to investigate this mutinous deed of arms. Lieutenant Bennett, observing the incident but, merely on a social visit, felt it better to beat a retreat rather than risk, even by association, the wrath about to be unleashed.

THE FIGHTING PATROL (RAID) OF 18 JUNE

In static warfare, intelligence regarding enemy intentions is important and prisoners provide the best source of information. With that objective and to weaken enemy morale by demonstrating vulnerability to attack, a daylight raid was made on the enemy lines on 18 June. As the raiding party attacked they were subject to the ultimate test of the front-line soldier's discipline, courage and fieldcraft - his willingness to advance in daylight over an uncharted, probably mined, area against an enemy firing at him and wounding his colleagues. The raiding party reached and overran the forward enemy positions capturing eight prisoners, but at a high price. Marine Davies was killed and 26 others wounded, one of whom, Marine Zammit, died five months later from his chest and spinal injuries. L/Cpl McGuire, one of the medical orderly/stretcher-bearers, had his left leg blown off at mid-thigh by a mine. He had entered the minefield to rescue a wounded marine who had himself trodden on a mine. As McGuire lay bleeding, he tied a tourniquet round the stump of his leg then dragged himself out of the minefield. Marine Didd suffered a penetrating sucking wound of the chest. Marine Dixon was hit in the face by a piece of shrapnel which ruptured his left eye. Marine Viner lost his left foot. Corporals Bryce and Mold suffered fractures, one compound. The remainder suffered mostly lacerations or penetrating wounds of the lower limbs or pelvis. Rescue was difficult because of the number who had been injured by mines and mortars in feet or legs and could not walk. All were rescued and taken to the RAP. A soldier's confidence that he will be rescued if wounded plays an important part in creating and sustaining morale.

Excision of destroyed tissue, patching of the sucking chest wound, bandaging, dressing, splinting and morphia were the order of the day. Dr John Tulloch has emphasised that if this type of first aid reaches them it is remarkable how few soldiers die of their wounds.⁴ Some of the seriously wounded were grey and shocked, little aware; others lay on stretchers waiting to be dealt with, quiet despite their pain and suffering. They were greatly helped by the padre, the Rev. Reginald Haw, whom they trusted because he shared their risks and understood their feelings: he recognised that front line soldiers tend to suppress contemplation of wounding but when it occurs can be apprehensive as to its outcome, an apprehension best met by an understanding

voice and informed, sympathetic reassurance. All but one of the wounded had to be evacuated: our medical jeeps had a busy night.

Even amid bloodshed the British soldier's capacity for humour, no matter the circumstances, was not lacking. L/Cpl McGuire, Liverpool butcher in civilian life, managed to mutter to me as I removed dead tissue from the stump of his left leg that he had not thought that he himself would be the subject of butchery! Thirty-three years later when I wrote to ask him how life had treated him he did not refer to the loss of his leg and expressed no complaint or regret: his reply, ending 'I am content', seemed to indicate only satisfaction that he had done his duty.

On 19 June, 46 RM Cdo relieved 47 Cdo which returned to Ecarde. The MO of 46 Cdo did not initially use Maison Chevigny as his RAP, preferring slit trenches. While I was visiting him an officer and a marine taking cover in a slit trench were killed close by. A mortar bomb hit the side of the trench, burying the occupants who had not been struck by shrapnel but were dead despite being dug out within minutes.

The commando returned to the front on 24 June, was rested between 3 and 10 July and then returned again. Between 24 June and 22 July Lieut Whittaker, L/Cpl Young and Marine Smith were killed and 22 marines injured. Mines and mortars were mostly responsible.

On 7 July, a 450 bomber daylight raid was the prelude to the ground attack on Caen. From a vantage point close by we watched in awe for 90 minutes as wave after wave of Lancaster and Halifax bombers lumbered low overhead in a sinister procession shaking the ground with 2500 tons of bombs. As two bombers plunged earthwards we counted parachutes unsure what the total complement should be, and whether those dangling from them would land among friend or foe. Two other bombers, returning, had large holes in their wings. Seen two days later, Caen had been almost obliterated, streets and buildings merging in piles of rubble (Figure 12).

CIVILIAN MEDICAL PRACTICE

Before D-Day the Germans banned doctors from the coastal region of France because of the ease with which, on their rounds, they could observe defence preparations and obtain intelligence information. MOs of the invasion forces had to give such civilian help as they could. At Sallenelles I had a small civilian practice. The medicaments available to a field MO officer hardly met the needs of civilian practice although there was an ample supply of the Army's panacea for all 'complaints medical' in the soldier, the 'number 9' (tablet) designed to cure by activating the most recalcitrant of bowels. Sergeant Leaman RAMC set about extending our pharmacopoeia. The Germans had left behind in Maison Chevigny large quantities of white sodium bicarbonate tablets - presumably their debaucheries there had resulted in frequent indigestion - and with these as the substrate and a few colouring materials, mostly blue and red ink, plus water, Sergeant Leaman soon had a range of coloured tablets and 'mixtures' in the 'dispensary'. He averred that the prescription of the bicarbonate, red, white or blue, often led to benefit being attributed specifically to a pill or potion of a particular colour. I dismissed this as scientifically unsustainable. How satisfied would Sergeant Leaman have been with the conclusion of a serious research study published in the *British Medical Journal* 52 years later - 'Colours affect the perceived action of a drug and seem to influence the effectiveness of a drug.'⁵ Perhaps in his honour this should now be called the 'Leaman effect'.

The padre, incognito as such, frequently accompanied me on civilian visits. With his semi-bald head he looked, and was, older than me and was often assumed to be the

'senior doctor'. He took great pleasure at such vicarious recognition, always explaining however, in grave but halting French, that he felt he should pass the case over to 'my junior colleague who happens to have a special knowledge of your particular problem'.

THE FIGHTING PATROL OF 23 JULY

On 22 July the commando was ordered to send out a night fighting patrol to breach the enemy line beyond La Grande Ferme and take prisoners. Lieutenant O'Brien was to lead, accompanied by a recently-joined South African, Lieut. Collett, a German speaker, Corporal Terry, and 12 marine volunteers. A support group was to bring down machine gun and mortar fire on the enemy trenches ahead of the patrol. Marine Wetjen and Terry have described this patrol.

Marine John Wetjen

Late on the 22nd, a 'dummy run' tested out the approach route beside which a thick hedge would offer concealment although deep water-filled ditches at its centre and sides created difficulties. The dummy run went off without incident and the raid was on. At 0330 hours the patrol set out, moving cautiously and silently. All went well until, close to the German lines, an explosion up front rent the night air. Lieut. Collett had trodden on an anti-personnel mine wounding himself and others. Alerted, the enemy opened fire, their fixed line machine guns trained towards the main commando site. As tracer bullets passed just above his head Wetjen reflected with grim satisfaction that they were probably shaking up those back at base! Surprise lost, O'Brien decided to rush the enemy lines. At this point the support group behind laid down fire on the enemy trenches with Bren guns, heavy machine guns and three-inch mortars. As the marines dashed in, firing automatic weapons and throwing explosive and smoke grenades, the outer trenches did not respond; they were either empty or their occupants dead - the marines did not stop to investigate. Reaching the rearward trenches two figures rose up: one was shot, the other an officer, the most desirable of prisoners, was wounded, put his hands up, and was hustled out of the trench. Wetjen and Marine Lloyd were ordered to give covering fire as the raiding party retreated with its prisoner and when the others seemed to be safely away they began to withdraw. But now the Germans were reacting more accurately, bringing down a heavy concentration of fire on the retreating patrol. The two marines had not gone far when they came upon Collett wounded in both legs. They half-lifted him so that his legs were clear of the ground and began dragging him back but had not gone far when a mortar bomb seriously wounded Wetjen in the left leg. Collett, unable to walk, had to be left and Lloyd helped Wetjen along. After about 50 yards they met two of the commando medical orderly/stretchers bearers who had followed up behind the patrol. One of them carried Wetjen (90 kg) with a fireman's lift, the other went back with Lloyd to Collett and carried him back.

At the same time, with several stretcher bearers, I went to the aid of two other members of the raiding party: Sergeant Gutteridge and Marine Warren known to be lying wounded beyond La Grande Ferme du Buisson. Gutteridge had also trodden on a mine and his left foot had been virtually blown off. Warren, nearby, had a compound fracture of his leg. Mortaring was continuing but falling wide. We bandaged them up, gave them morphia and brought them back on stretchers to a point which the medical jeep had been able to reach, thence to the RAP. There were 15 wounded men; 12 out of 14 from the patrol, two from the support group and the German officer. Eight were seriously wounded. Corporal Terry was missing.

Years later, attending a meeting at the Wellcome Institute the Commissionaire checking entrants looked up expectantly from the attendees list. It was Sergeant Gutteridge.

Corporal Peter Terry

Just before D-Day, Peter Terry presented himself with Sergeant Fuller and three Germans - all refugees from the Third Reich and members of 10 IA Cdo - for attachment to 47 Cdo. As a linguist, Terry was in great demand for patrols at Sallenelles but for him patrolling had a sinister risk. As an Austrian escapee with Jewish antecedents his fate on capture, had his origins been recognised, would likely have been that already meted out to two of his captured 10 IA colleagues: interrogation and execution by shooting. Yet he had participated frequently, sometimes almost daily, in patrols, alone or accompanied, going out to La Grande Ferme from where the route beyond was usually along a hedge extending 200 yards outwards to another hedge which it joined at right angles, the so-called 'T junction' (Figure 3). Just beyond were the German forward positions. Only the raid of 18 June had been beyond that point.

Once, Terry observed two Germans, one cleaning his boots. He recognised them as Austrians because of their accents. Taking a risk he called to them from his hiding place. They seemed scared to hear his Viennese voice telling them that if they surrendered they would be sent to a camp in Canada - a magic word among disillusioned German soldiers. After further discussion, perhaps also cognisant of our safe conduct leaflets (Figure 13), they walked unarmed towards Terry's hiding place. Arriving back in the dark, Terry set them digging a new slit trench for himself before handing them over. He was impressed with the skill with which the digging was done, including entrance steps and a shelf for his belongings.

On the morning of 22 July, hearing a rumour that the commando might return to England, Terry got a lift to Amfreville where he had identified a French lady who would launder expertly for a few bars of 'real' soap. From a nearby farm he purchased some Camembert cheese which his father, now in London, greatly missed. Terry then returned for the afternoon 'stand to' in his slit trench - the frequent enemy mortaring at that time of day was always a possible prelude to an attack. That day there was no mortaring, but in the late afternoon the CO sent for Terry, informing him of the patrol and the need to capture prisoners for interrogation. The briefing suggested that this patrol had special significance. Because of his familiarity with the terrain, Terry was to lead the patrol up to the T junction.

Returning to his trench for a few hours sleep, Terry was wakened towards 2300 hours to be informed that he was needed to interrogate two deserters who had appeared at La Grande Ferme. They proved to be Poles who spoke little German. One had cut off the embroidered German eagle with swastika worn above the right breast pocket on the German uniform and was holding this up repeating '*Polski, Polski - nix Nazi*'. They informed Terry that they belonged to the 716th Infantry Division and, significantly, that they had been laying mines along a hedge leading from the forward German positions up to the German side of the T Junction, the very route the patrol was to follow. Terry passed this information through Lieut. O'Brien to Col Phillips, who decided with Brigade HQ that the patrol should still go on. Terry's apprehension was hardly allayed when he was told that he could write an uncensored letter and hand it to the post corporal who would post it if he did not return.

At 0200 hours, faces blackened with camouflage cream and armed with Tommy guns, 200 rounds of ammunition per man, grenades and flares the patrol moved off

from the sandbagged HQ, past the RAP and down the path to La Grande Ferme, secured for the night by an advance group. With some concern Terry noted something he had not seen before - stretchers leaning against the farm wall: this did not help his morale but he felt that at least preparations for rescue were being made. Leaving the farm at 0330 hours, Terry leading, the patrol moved along the hedge to the T junction. It reached this in ten minutes and lay on the ground for a while, listening. It then moved ahead along the outward continuation of the hedge beyond the T junction, Collett now leading. Terry describes what happened:

I was about the middle, behind Lieut. O'Brien. Some minutes later there was a bright flash and explosion at the head of the column. We threw ourselves to the ground and Lieut O'Brien crept forward to investigate. Word was passed back that Collett had stepped on a mine and I heard him crying for help. There was eerie silence for a couple of minutes after which all hell broke loose. Tracer bullets came at us from the right and front, appearing in the darkness to come directly towards one and only veering off at the last second. Then a flare went up and in its light, 50 yards ahead, I saw two Germans running along the hedge away from us. One stopped, turned round and made a movement which I took to be the throwing of a stick grenade. Then the mortar fire began - possibly our support fire as well as that of the Germans. It all seemed to land on us and just as I got up to make for cover I felt something hitting my back and was thrown forward. I remember calling out, 'I'm hit' and realized that I was unable to get up to run to the hedge. Someone pulled me there and I came to rest on an incline inside it. I felt no pain but was fighting for breath. The wet trickle I felt on the left side of my back made me believe that something had pierced my heart and I lay on my stomach thinking I would die. I don't think I passed out but cannot remember anything until daylight.

Looking over the edge of the incline I heard and saw some German vehicles moving along a minor road. I remember calling out, '*Ich bin verwundeter englischer Soldat. Brauche Hilfe*' ['I am a wounded English soldier. Need help']. Luckily they did not hear me and I decided to somehow make my way back to our lines. It seemed that all our chaps had disappeared or possibly were lying dead in the hedge. My main problem was breathing and making my way along the overgrown waterlogged ditch inside the hedge. I was making a lot of noise. After what seemed a long time, the hedge became impenetrable and I decided to risk making my way alongside it by the open field. By this time I was probably nearly half way between the T Junction and La Grande Ferme. I climbed up the incline and just then I heard small arms fire and felt something hitting me below the left shoulder, causing me to let myself fall back into the hedge and come to rest in the water. At that point I gave up. I do not know how long I lay in the water, but at last I heard an English voice calling out, 'Is there anyone down there?' It was the Commando Brigade Major who had gone along the hedge looking for survivors from the patrol. He tried to extricate me from the hedge and called for help which came in the form of my friend Ian Harris of 10 IA Cdo attached to 46 RM Cdo in the same capacity as I to 47. They dragged me out of the ditch and to Captain Forfar's RAP. I remember a cellar with quite a lot of wounded men from the patrol, me on my stomach with the Padre holding my hand while Captain Forfar probed around in my back (Terry had a haemothorax). I was in a bad shape and required all my energy and concentration to keep breathing. When Captain Forfar prepared to give me an injection I feared that it would send me to sleep, preventing me from breathing. When I said this Captain Forfar replied, 'Don't worry. You won't go to sleep unless it is good for you'. It was the single most important sentence said to me and the first to calm me down. Later I found that Captain Forfar had removed such shrapnel pieces as he could but others are still safely embedded in my back and chest. I remember being carried out of the cellar on a stretcher, up the hill past our forward dugouts, from which our chaps called out encouraging words like 'Lucky you - for you the war is over', and then being strapped on the top of a jeep. Below was Collett, in great pain and thought to

have lost his left foot. Someone asked if there was anything I needed from my slit trench. I couldn't speak properly but managed to whisper 'Cheese...Cheese', and a few minutes later my haversack containing the Camembert was placed below my head as a pillow, to remain there with some embarrassing consequences for the best part of a week.

At the casualty clearing station at Douvres a 9mm bullet which had entered below Terry's left shoulder was extracted from his arm above the elbow (it had probably been fired by a member of 46 Cdo who, seeing someone coming from the enemy direction, thought he was a German). Evacuated to England, Terry lay on a stretcher on a nearby beach for several hours, soaking wet in pouring rain; he was taken off in a small craft in heavy seas, reached the comfort of a hospital ship and was admitted to hospital in Southampton to be discharged almost immediately into the top bunk in an improvised hospital train because the first German 'doodlebugs', or V-1 rockets, were falling. In the train, because of orthopnoea, he used the cheese-filled haversack as a means both of propping himself up and retaining the cheese. His proximity to the roof made sitting up and redressing of his wound during the three-day train journey virtually impossible, but he noticed that each time a nurse came near she grimaced and turned her head away - the Camembert was getting over-ripe. Fearing its confiscation he reassured an enquiring sister, untruthfully he admits, that his wounds had not been dressed since Normandy and were the source of the odour. Finally, arrived at Withington Hospital, he called the night nurse, told her the truth and asked her to store the malodorous Camembert in the ward 'fridge'. Breathing fresh air, even with one functional lung, was a relief. A week later, shortly before his parents were due to arrive to see him and receive the Camembert, the patients were served afternoon tea. To his chagrin the first patient served commented disparagingly on the 'smelly cheese' accompanying the biscuits. The prized Camembert for his parents was being distributed in 40 small pieces! Few of the patients ate it but Terry solemnly ate the little piece lying limply on his plate.

A SALLENELLES PAINTING

The basement scene in Maison Chevigny on the early morning of 23 July must have impressed Col. Phillips and Brigadier Leicester when they visited the RAP as the CO had it painted when, after we had left Sallenelles, an official war artist, Leslie Cole, visited the commando (Figure 14). Various soldiers had to re-enact the positions of the wounded but Padre Haw, kneeling beside Sergeant Gutteridge, Hoskins (medical orderly) on my left, Tarbin (jeep driver) holding a torch as I probed Corporal Terry's wound and I were painted as we had been that night. The German officer lies supine, head towards the viewer. The artist then went back to Maison Chevigny and completed his drawings. The painting, entitled *Scene in a Regimental Aid Post in a Filthy Cellar at Sallenelles After Action*, is in the Imperial War Museum.

THE ROYAL RESCUE, CORPORAL TERRY'S ESCAPE FROM AUSTRIA

Corporal Terry's experiences with 47 Cdo were not the first life-threatening events in his life. His father, Dr Tischler, was a Viennese physician who had also qualified in and practised dentistry: his mother, whose father had been awarded the title *Hofrat* (Court Counsellor) by the Hapsburgs for distinguished Government Service, came from a Jewish patrician family. Many of the Middle European élite were Dr Tischler's patients, but he also had a notable British patient, the Duke of Windsor. When in Vienna the Duke usually invited Dr Tischler and his wife to dinner at the Hotel

Bristol. In 1936, on his twelfth birthday, Peter was introduced to the Duke and Duchess. Next day a birthday present - a bicycle - arrived from them.

The Tischlers were anglophile and Peter was sent to a boarding school in England (Frensham) at the age of 12. He returned to Vienna for the Easter holidays in March 1938 in time to hear the Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg announce the German invasion of Austria over the radio: 'I yield to brute force' he said, his voice breaking with emotion. That night Dr Tischler had a telephone call from the south of France: it was the Duke of Windsor asking if he could be of help and urging Dr Tischler to leave the country. Dr Tischler appreciated this 'kind and generous offer' but did not take it up. Two days later, from the balcony of his house, Peter Terry watched the German Army enter Vienna. He did not return to England as his father felt that the family should remain together and hoped that the Nazi excesses would pass.

About the same time another of Dr Tischler's patients, an ambitious 46-year-old Viennese attorney named Seiss-Inquart, sprang to prominence. Having hidden for years, his fanatical belief in a greater Germany and his association with the Nazi party his true colours were now revealed. He was announced as the Minister for Austria. Hitler described him as an 'extraordinarily clever man, as supple as an eel, amiable and at the same time thick-skinned and tough'. When Poland was overrun, Seiss-Inquart became its second-in-command, and when Holland was overrun the all-powerful State Commissioner of that country. As such he presided over a system in which 120,000 Dutch Jews were dragged away to extermination camps (104,000 dying there), 5000 other Dutch men and women died in prisons and concentration camps, 2,800 Dutch citizens, including a few women, were executed and 550,000 Dutch men were forced to work in the Third Reich (30,000 never returning) or in Holland for the Nazis. He implemented a policy which deprived Holland of food and caused the Dutch Hunger-Winter of 1944-45 in which 18,000 died of starvation.⁶ In the end he disobeyed Hitler's final vindictive order to destroy Holland. At the Nuremberg trials (Figure 15), although a barrister, he surprised the Court by showing little will to defend himself and unlike many of his co-defendants, did not seek to blame them and others. In his final testimony he remained loyal to Hitler:

To me he remains a man who made greater Germany a fact in German history. I served this man. And now? I cannot today cry 'Crucify him' since yesterday I cried 'Hosanna'.

Last in the queue of the major war criminals waiting to mount the gallows his final words were:

I hope this execution is the last act of the tragedy of the Second World War, and that a lesson will be learnt so that peace and understanding will be realised among nations. I believe in Germany.⁷

When Vienna was occupied, Seiss-Inquart gave Dr Tischler a document stating that he was not to be molested or his house defaced by anti-Jewish slogans. A few weeks later, assuming protection from this, Peter and his father, walking in Vienna's Prater Park unadorned by the aluminium swastikas which identified non-Jews, were surrounded by brown-shirted Nazi thugs. Glancing arrogantly at Dr Tischler's document the brown-shirt leader declared that it did not apply to Peter and took him away, his father following. Both were forced to join thousands of Jews who had been

rounded up and for several hours were subject to all manner of indignities, including having to stand among a mob screaming anti-Jewish insults at them and being made to scrub anti-Nazi slogans off the streets. Later, the Jews were made to stand facing the Danube canal, threatened that if they turned round they would be shot. When Peter did surreptitiously glance round the brown-shirts had disappeared, replaced by taxis whose drivers saw the prospect of rich takings from people whose one aim was to escape as quickly as possible!

That night Peter's father's said 'Now we must leave', but for Jews it was virtually impossible to obtain a visa. Would the Duke of Windsor still be willing to help? Before that hope could be explored fate struck: on the next day Dr Tischler was arrested and taken to Gestapo headquarters. A male servant he had earlier dismissed because of Nazi party membership had denounced him. In a Gestapo cell Dr Tischler was filled with foreboding. His interrogator always began, 'Are you the Jew Tischler?' Then one morning a miracle happened. The interrogator entered his cell and, as never before, addressed him as 'Herr Doktor'. He then led him through the Gestapo building and out into the street where, to his astonishment, he was ushered into a car flying the Union Jack and taken to the British Embassy. The Duke, enquiring of his predicament, had arranged his rescue. Under the Duke's patronage he completed the formalities necessary to leave the country, travelling about Vienna in a car flying the Union Jack, immune from the molestations of roving bands of uniformed Nazis and their opportunistic camp followers. The Duke sponsored the British immigration affidavit and when the Tischlers reached London they were met at Victoria Station as welcomed and honoured guests by the Duke's Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Thomas. But for the Duke, the Tischler family would probably have perished in Auschwitz. They believe that the Duke's efforts in helping those who would otherwise have suffered death or Nazi persecution have not been adequately recognised. In Britain, Dr Tischler joined McIndoe's plastic surgery unit at East Grinstead where his skill in oro-facial surgery was put to good use.

Peter Terry succeeded in enlisting in the British Army in 1943, and after many frustrations was accepted as a volunteer into 10 IA Commando, being seconded to 47 Cdo just before D-Day. As an escapee from the Nazis he had to have a new name, 'Terry', and a cover story - that his mother was Austrian and his father a former member of the British Consulates in Vienna and Geneva where Peter acquired fluency in French and German. Before joining up he attended, as 'Tischler', the Architectural Association in London where a fellow student was one Stickings. To his consternation, one of the first people he met on joining 47 Cdo was Stickings, now a Lieutenant. He had to beg Stickings never to use the name from which, literally on pain of death, he was trying to dissociate himself.

Post-war, Terry graduated at Cambridge, becoming a successful business man in Britain and the USA where, nearly 50 years later, he heard of an article in the *Proceedings of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* which dealt with Port-en-Bessin where he had been during the War.² Pursuing this, he found to his astonishment that the author was the doctor whose syringe in the basement of Maison Chevigny had filled him with such apprehension. Such is the worldwide presence of the *Proceedings*.

THE LAST OF THE BRIDGEHEAD

On 1 August the commando advanced to Le Plein/Amfreville and on 6 August to Sannerville, close to Troarn, from where it was subject to heavy shelling and mortar fire. Aggressive patrolling and harassment of the enemy was demanded. Lieut Borne

and Marines Griffiths and Rowlinson were killed and 34 wounded. On 16 August the commando entered Troarn. The girdle round the Normandy bridgehead was breaking. On 18 August marching men, motorised transport and clanking tanks began fanning out into the French countryside after a retreating Wehrmacht: on 19 August, 47 Cdo crossed the river Dives on a long bearing to the French coast and Fécamp, 70 miles away. The stage of brinkmanship was over.

CASUALTIES

From 12 June until 18 August, 47 Cdo suffered 117 casualties out of a total strength of 370, 14 (two officers and 12 other ranks) being killed and 103 wounded. Additionally, 23 wounded from other units and four German soldiers were treated at 47 Cdo's RAP. Such was the toll of 'static' warfare. Of 126 British marines and other servicemen seen at the RAP, 88 (70 per cent) suffered from shrapnel wounds (mortars, mines and shells), 19 (15 per cent) from bullet wounds, and 19 (15 per cent) from other injuries (unspecified lacerations [15], burns [3], blast [1]). The 142 wounding sites, leg and/or foot 70 (50 per cent), trunk 30 (21 per cent), upper limbs 22 (16 per cent), head and neck 20 (14 per cent), reflected the frequency of mortar bombs and mines exploding at ground level. There were few physical illnesses. A sergeant and a corporal, and a corporal from another unit, developed hysterical symptoms which in World War I would have been called shell-shock. These necessitated removal from front-line duties.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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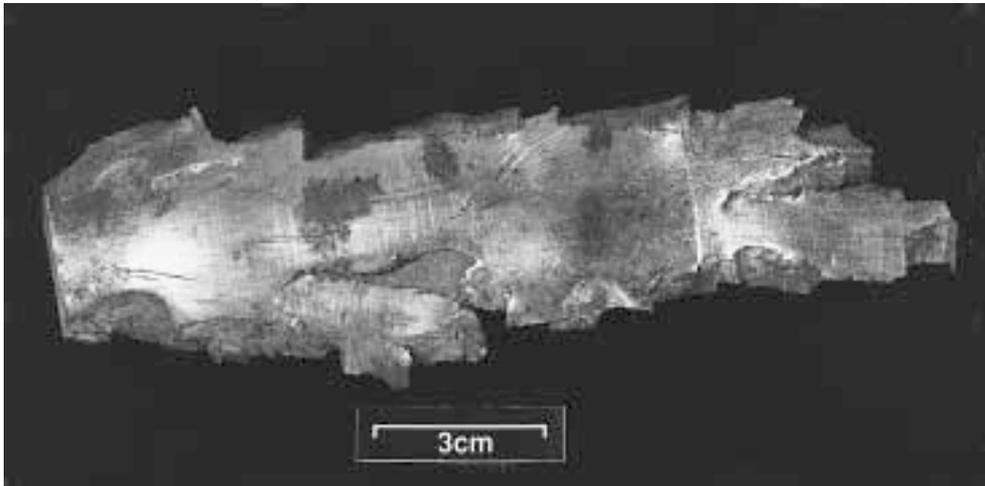


FIGURE 1

Large piece of shrapnel which barely missed one of the medical personnel in the garden of Maison Chevigny. The greater the fragmentation, the greater the risk of being hit: the larger the piece, the more lethal.

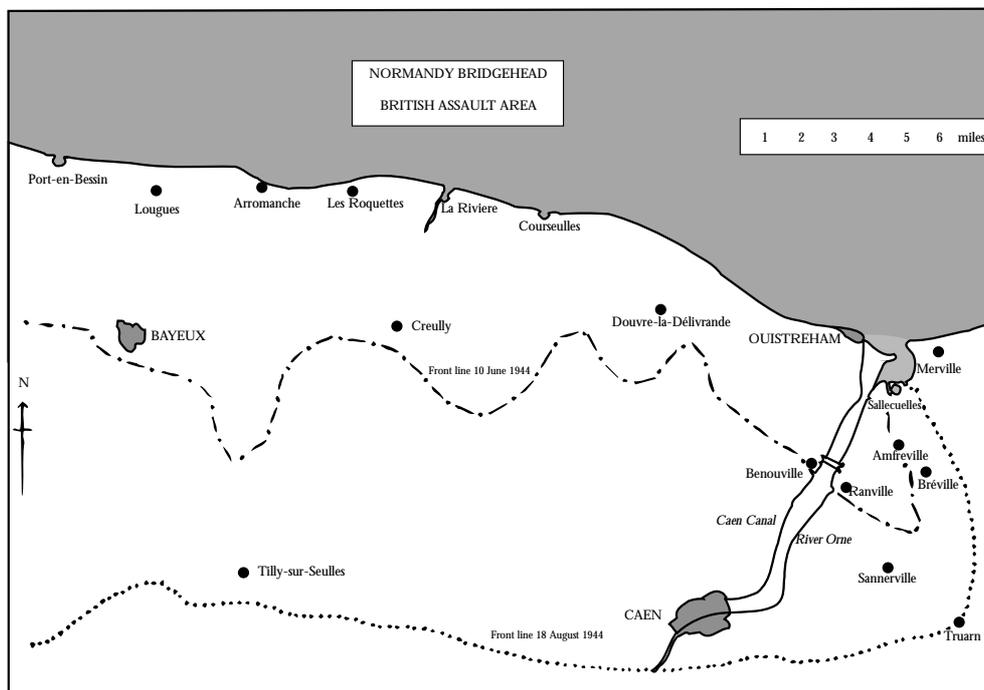


FIGURE 2

The Normandy bridgehead (June/August 1944).



FIGURE 4
The village of Sallenelles.



FIGURE 5
Gliders close to the Orne Bridges (Crown copyright, Imperial War Museum).



FIGURE 6
Soldiers of the Wehrmacht, 'For them the War is over'. (Crown copyright, Imperial War Museum.)



FIGURE 7
Maison Chevigny.



FIGURE 8
The unveiling of the Commando Memorial at Sallenelles by Monsieur Yann de Chevigny, June 1991. Beside him, as interpreter, is his son-in-law Sir Robin Janvrin KCVO, CB, Deputy Secretary to Queen Elizabeth II.



FIGURE 9
A jeep used as an ambulance crossing Pegasus Bridge over the Orne: stretcher lying transversely on the bonnet (Crown copyright, Imperial War Museum).



FIGURE 10
Jeep with raised longitudinal stretcher frame (Crown copyright, Imperial War Museum).



FIGURE 11
The 'Sallenelles Jeep'.



FIGURE 12
Caen after the bombing of 7 July 1944 (Crown copyright, Imperial War Museum).



FIGURE 13
Safe conduct pass dropped on the German lines. In large letters in German on the back: 'A message to each German soldier - The War is almost over. After five years you are still alive. Why die in the last week? The prisoners of 1944 will see their families soon again'.



FIGURE 14
The painting by Leslie Cole (Crown copyright, Imperial War Museum).



FIGURE 15
Seiss Inquart (17) at the Nuremberg trial. Others are: 1. Goering, 2. Hess, 3. Ribbentrop, 4. Keitel, 5. Kaltenbruner, 6. Rosenberg, 7. Frank, 8. Frick, 9. Streicher, 10. Funk, 11. Doenitz, 12. Raeder, 13. Schirach, 14. Sauckel, 15. Jodl, 16. Papen, 18. Speer.

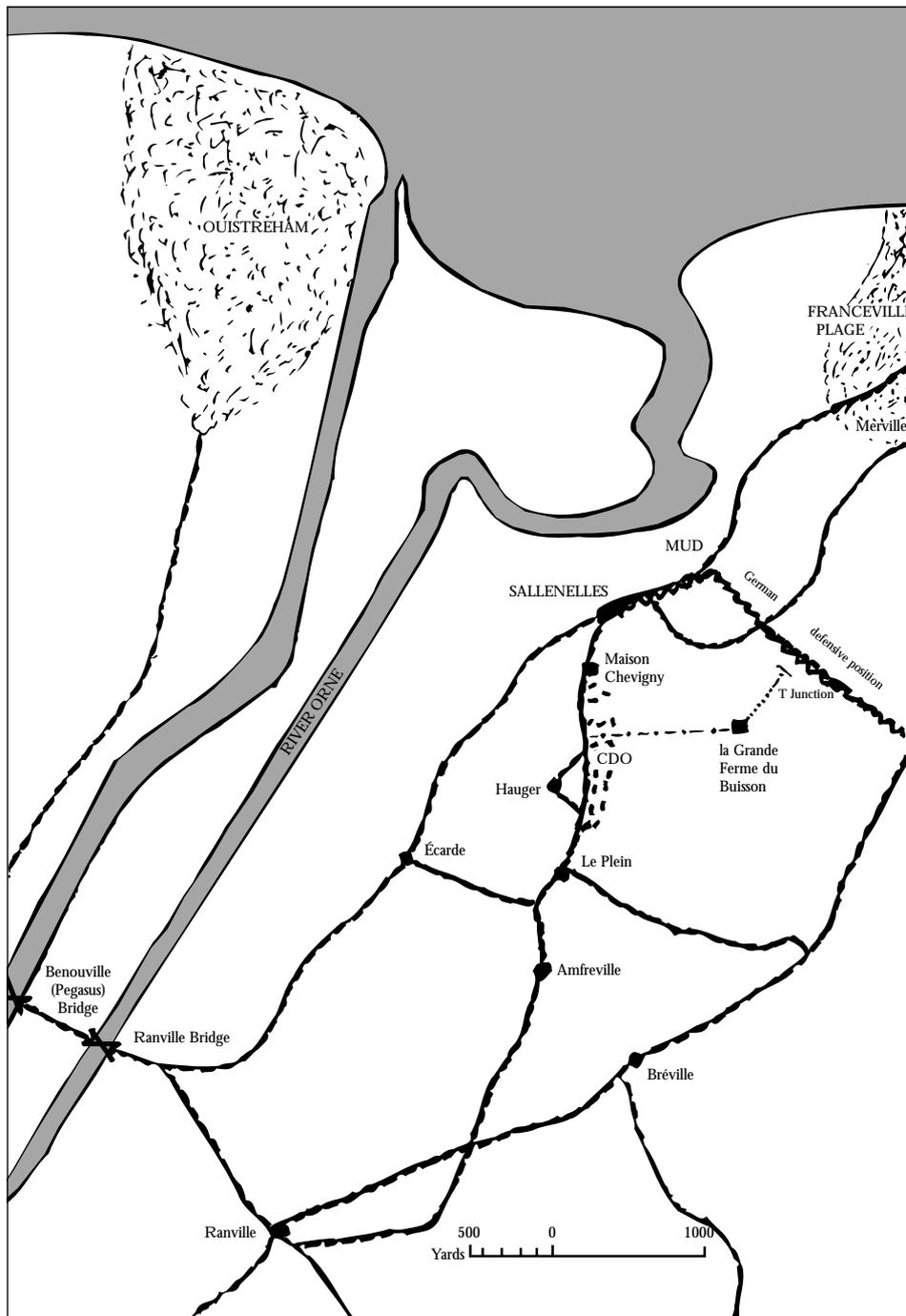


FIGURE 3
The Sallenelles area (June/August 1944).