

Second World War Unit War Diary - 1st Bn. Irish Guards, April 1943 –Lieut. Mahaffy

The following is from the National Archives WO 175/488

Summary of Events and Information.

References to
Appendices.

2100 hrs. The Bn was ordered to attack Hills 151 and 187, zero hour to be 0200. It was already dark and nobody had seen these hills, nor could we discover from anybody, even the I.S.G, who were the nearest to them, which these hills were. Nos 1 & 4 Coys marched up to the Scots Guards Bn H.Q. in the hope of getting information, but found that they knew nothing, and furthermore that there was a S.G. Coy, with whom there was no communication, lying between us and the objective, who would certainly have fired on us in the dark. The Commanding Officer then got in touch with the Bde Comd and the attack was postponed.

Sun. 25 Apr. Place: TELLIA SEFRA.

Coy Comds spent the day making a recon for the attack, while the Bn, from safe seats, watched a tank and infantry attack going in onto the hills on our right. A certain amount of mortar and shell fire fell in and around our positions, but caused no damage.

Mon. 26 Apr. Place:- Pts 151 and 187.

The Bn attacked Pts 187 and 151 at 0500 hrs and took these hills with no casualties and little opposition. One complete German section was captured. Nos 1 & 4 Coys took up position on Pt 187, No. 2 on Pt 151 and No. 3 behind them, with Bn H.Q. in the valley between pts 151 and 145. Immediately after dawn, the Germans began shelling. This fire was very accurate and caused a good many casualties. No movement at all was possible on these hills, which were overlooked by the enemy on both sides. A German O.P. was spotted forward of Pt 212. 2200 hrs. A strong patrol from No. 4 Coy led by Lieut D.C. Attlee was sent out, which captured one German officer and two Sergeant Majors. The officer wept copiously on being reminded of his home town.

Tues. 27 Apr. Place:- Pts 151 and 187.

DYEBEL BOU

The Bn was preparing to take part in a Bde attack on the hills to the East of us, our objectives being Pts 212, 214, 181 and 128, zero hour 1900 hrs, when the time was put forward by Division and the zero hour became 1600 hrs. 1530 hrs. The Bn began to move out of its positions, so as to reach the Start Line, the forward edge of Olive Grove, East of Pt 187. This movement was observed by enemy O.Ps. and from then until Pt 212 was finally captured, the Bn was subjected to

/Contd

Date.

Summary of Events and Information.

References to
Appendices.

27 Apr.
(Contd)

continuous fire from shells, M/Gs, mortars, and, peculiarly unpleasant, six-barrel mortars. The Bn advanced, in broad daylight, across an open yellow cornfield and finally reached the Olive Grove. This grove gave little shelter, and was in addition, a German registered mortar task. Casualties up to date had been heavy, Captain J.B. FitzGerald, Lieut J.G.A. Pym, and R.Q.M.S. Peilow being killed, Captain I.H. Powell-Edwards, Lieuts C.A. Larking, D.C.W. Lloyd-Thomas, and D.C. Attlee being wounded. Bn H.Q. had been established on the forward edge of the olive grove - the Start Line - and from there the C.O. kept control of the battle, as far as communications would allow.

1900 hrs. By now the Coys were very weak - the cornfield and olive groves were strewn with wounded men, and groups of walking wounded were making their way back to the R.A.P. It was now obviously impossible to carry out the original plan. Nos 1 & 4 Coys were being held up in front of pt 212; Nos 2 & 3 Coys, on their way to Pt 128, had suffered heavy casualties, and had run into German Armoured Cars and tanks in the olive groves. The C.O. decided to concentrate on Pt 212. An arty concentration was put down on this pt and on a farmhouse which was blocking the approach to it. Captain O.S. Chesterton, though wounded, led No. 1. Coy into the attack again; some 50 German infy were seen to be leaving the hill in some haste. Bn H.Q. with what men it could collect, advanced to the top of pt 212. Two enemy officers were taken prisoner. Lieut C.D. Kennard with 30 men of No. 3 Coy then arrived, followed by Lieut T.C. Keigwin with 25 men of No. 2 Coy. The force on the hill now amounted to 170 all ranks.

1930 hrs. It was getting dark, and the stretcher bearers were working hard, trying to collect all the wounded men and bring them to the line of the road, where they were collected by the ambulance. The force established itself on Pts 212 & 214 and the ridge connecting them, digging itself in as best as it could in the rocky ground, in preparation for a dawn counter-attack.

2230 hrs. Three carriers with rations, water and amn made their way to the eastern foot of the hill, and a large carrying party brought up the supplies. No sleep was had that night.

Wed.
28 Apr.

Place: PT 212.

0500 hrs. No dawn attack came, and all seemed quiet. 5 G.G. had captured their objective, the hill on our left, but there was no sign of I.S.G. Two Guardsmen of I.S.G. were collected by a patrol of ours

~~See 5.G.G.~~
~~account of~~
~~action att.~~

/Contd

Summary of Events and Information.

References to Appendices.

Date:

28 Apr
(cont)

on Pt 184. These stated that a coy of the Scots had reached pt 184, but had withdrawn on discovering it was not one of their objectives.
0830 hrs. The C.O. left the hill to report to Bde H.Q. He was only just gone when the enemy began infiltrating round the hill, and he was subsequently never able to return.

Bn H.Q. Pt 145. Offr re-inforcements from B Ech consisting of Major D.M.L. Gordon-Watson, M.C, Captains G.B. Ismay, D. Drummond, and Lieut J.C. Dodds.

1400 hrs. A strong German counter-attack was made, with about 20 tanks and supporting infy. The attack was made from the South and came in through the GABGAB Gap, cutting off the force at Pt 212 from the remainder of the Bn, i.e. Bn H.Q. and Sup Gp, reinforced by troops from 1 Div Recce Regt. Bn H.Q. and Sup Gp took up positions on Pts 151 and 145. Three enemy tanks appeared hull down on the crest about 1500 yds to the South of their positions, but M.M.Gs and Mortars got quickly into action and stopped any further progress by enemy infy. Our 6-pdr A/Tk guns were waiting on the reverse slope, but did not get a shoot. One enemy tank was knocked out by a Recce Corps 6 pdr.

The enemy were now attacking pt 212, had broken through to pt 132, between Bn H.Q. and pt 212, and enemy tanks were machine gunning pt 151. There was considerable shell and mortar fire. No F.O.O. was available, but the 2 i/c on pt 151 passed information back on the Mortar Power Telephone to the C.O. who passed it on by 19 set to Colonel Mackay, R.A. O.C. Regt Arty Group. A concentration was finally brought down on enemy tanks and infantry, forcing them to withdraw.

1800 hrs. A Churchill tank attack pushed the Germans back through the gap. During the night carriers tried to replenish pt 212 and evacuated those wounded who had managed to make their way to the bottom of the hill.

Thurs. 29 Apr. Major H.L.S. Young and Lieut B.T. Synge took a M.M.G. up to pt 212 and were both caught there in the battle.

Pts 187 and 132 were taken over by the N. Staffs Regt., 1st Bn Loyals were in the area pt 117. About 40 enemy tanks and supporting infy again broke through pt 132 and the GABGAB Gap and established themselves on pt 117, eliminating the Loyals, German infy took pt 132, menaced 187 and made a half hearted attack on the Grenadiers. 15 enemy tanks were knocked out during this attack. Arty was very active on our side, but the enemy penetration right into our position made targets difficult. At nightfall the enemy infantry and about 15 tanks still lay across the only supply route to pt 212. Three attempts were made to supply pt 212 but none

For Events on Pt 212 & 214
28 Apr - 1 May
see separate account.

/Contd ...

For Week Ending

STRENGTH COUNTING AGAINST W.E. LESS 1st RFTS. (Total to agree with column 3 of P)

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| (ii) OFFICERS ATTACHED IN EXCESS OF W.E. LESS 1st RFTS. | | |
|---|--|--|

(Bde., Divn., Area, etc., with which Unit

