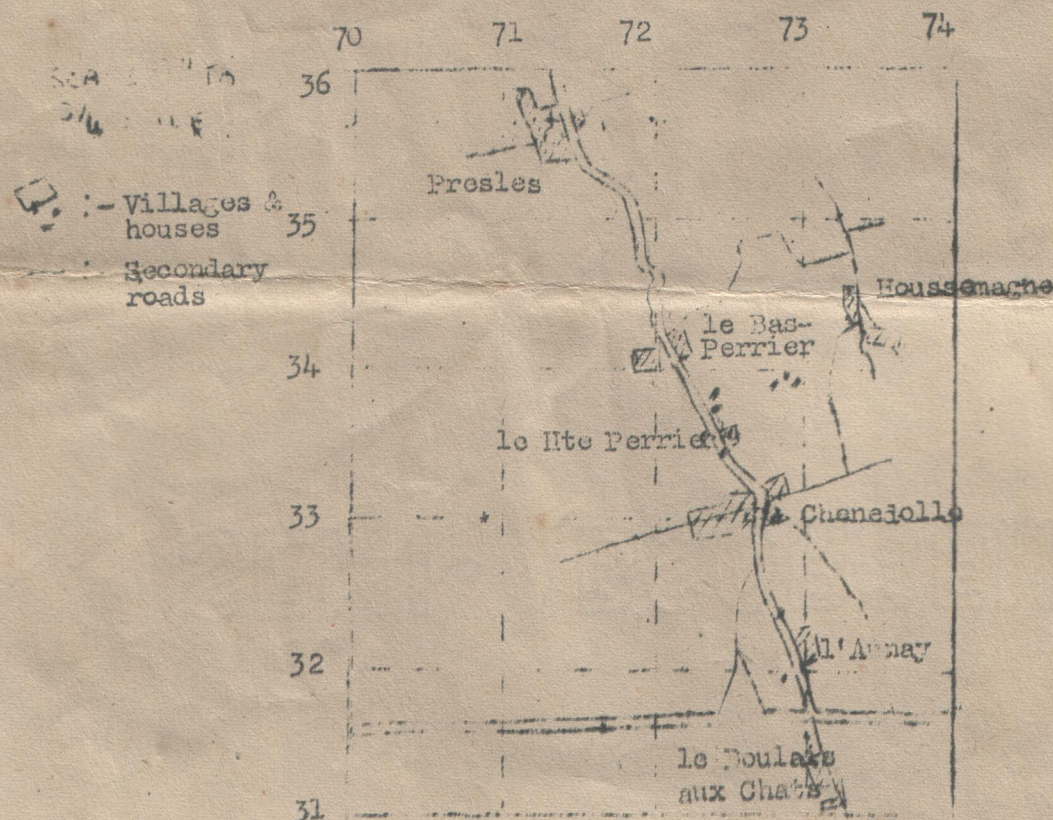


The Battle of Houssemagne.



Late on the evening of 9 Aug 44 the Prince of Wales Coy moved up from COURTEIL by march route to LE BAS-PERRIER, a distance of eight miles. There we took over from a Coy of the Herefordshire Regt.

All day on 10 Aug we remained as concealed as we could in our trenches as we were under observation from the enemy and Coy W was registered by their 150 mm guns. That evening we were told that the Bn. was to do an attack the next morning. The plan was as follows:-

At 0600 hrs 3 Coy on the right and 2 Coy on the left each supported by a Sqn of 3 S.G. (Churchill tanks, were to capture Pt 242, 7233 and 729336 respectively.

At 0630 hrs 10 Coy on the right supported by a Sqn of 2 I.G. (Sherman tanks) and 4 Coy on the left supported by a Sqn of 3 S.G. were to capture the village of HOUSSEMAGNE and the high ground at 733348 respectively.

After that 5 Coln Gds were to take CHANAIOLLE and exploit as far as the main road on the South.

A careful tie up took place with the I.G. for the closest tank infantry co-operation. (This we have now learnt much about and have found that the initial tie up down to Pl. - Tp level is by far the most important part.)

When the barrage in front of 2 and 3 Coys started coming down at 0645 hrs the enemy replied with their 150 mm guns onto my Coy area. They mixed smoke with FM which added to the confusion. In order to get onto our start line we were obliged to come out of our trenches while this was going on. We therefore suffered considerable casualties before crossing the start line. Going to the smoke the tanks were unable to see and so an order came that zero hour was to be postponed. This I did not receive in time and the Coy had already gone. With difficulty in the smoke they were got back and just as they were arriving in the Coy area the order to go at once, came.

Our start line was the road from PRESLES to LE BAS-PERRIER at 719343. We advanced with No. 1 Pl. on the right, objective the Southern half of the village, and No. 3 Pl. on the left, objective the Northern half. There was no reserve platoon owing to previous casualties. Each Pl. was supported by a troop of tanks, with one troop in reserve at Coy Hq and the fourth at Bn. Hq.

We were all determined to keep as close as we could to the tanks. The leading infantry realized that they must keep ahead of the tanks

and they found that if they did this the tanks would do almost anything to help them.

We kept well ahead and went as fast as we could for the first three hundred yards in order to get clear of the shelling, and then we waited for the tanks to come up.

All went well for the next five hundred yards and then No. 3 Pl. was held up by a MG post on the left. After a little delay they knocked this out. Shortly afterwards they knocked out another one. No. 1 Pl. had managed to get half way to their objective and were held up by MG fire and some mortaring from the village. No. 3 Pl. was also held up. The tanks at this time were firing their besa into every hedge and giving us the maximum support. I then discovered that No. 4 Coy had got on our right and they should have been on our left. I therefore waited for them to cross over. No. 3 Pl. followed them and almost reached the road running North from the village. No. 1 Pl. pushed on but were heavily mortared four hundred yards from the village. The three senior members of the Pl. were wounded and I had to send the C.S.M. forward to re-organise the Pl. Even after support from the tanks and our own 3 in mortars they were still unable to get forward. I therefore decided that as I had no reserve pl. I must disengage No. 1 Pl. and send them round on the right flank supported by the reserve tp of tanks. I sent Capt. Pomeroy to fetch them, but he was unable to find them and was slightly wounded by a mortar bomb. I next sent a runner who was away a very long time and eventually returned with No. 3 Pl. having delivered the message to the wrong pl. At last I got No. 1 Pl. by again sending the C.S.M. and I arranged to take the whole Coy round on the right. We reached the outskirts of the village successfully. No. 3 Pl. started to clear from the North and had considerable difficulty in mopping up the enemy. Coy H. I took down to a point where the stream crossed the road (735342) and told them to consolidate. I then waved the tanks on. As soon as they appeared an 88 mm opened up and three were knocked out. No. 1 Pl. tried to reach the Southern end of the village (735340) but were pinned down by 88mm and MG fire from the East. I therefore decided to take No. 3 Pl. right round on the West and attack from the South. This we were able to do, but there was still MG fire coming from the East and this prevented us from digging in. I therefore sent a patrol of three men to deal with the enemy. They drove off one MG section and knocked out another one, but two of the men were killed.

We then consolidated in a lane on the South of the village supported by the remaining tanks (six having been knocked out). The Commanding Officer also sent up a troop of SP guns and a Pl from No. 2 Coy. By this time it was evening. The Herefords had come up behind us and were digging in. The Commanding Officer sent for me and said that we were to withdraw after dark to the area of the Command Post at LE HAUT PERIER (725336). This we did and by the time we had found our new positions and installed ourselves it was nearly 0200 hrs when I reported that the remnants of Prince of Wales Coy were in position.

We had been on the go and almost continuously in contact with the enemy from the time we first crossed our start line at 0630 hrs on 11 Aug until 0200 hrs on 12 Aug. The men had fought to my complete satisfaction and the Irish Guards tanks had supported us magnificently. We had started with two pls and suffered thirty casualties at the end of which the Coy was thirty five strong. Our opponents were mostly from the Div. Def. Coy of the 9th SS Pz Div.

The senior members of the Coy were:-

Coy Comd.	-	Maj. J.M. MILLER.
2-in-C	-	Capt. Hon. R. POMEROY. (Wounded)
No. 1 Pl. Comd	-	34 Sjt. SCOWROFT (Wounded)
Pl. Sjt.	-	86 Sjt. WILLIAMS (Wounded)
No. 3 Pl. Comd	-	Sjt. SEMARK.
Pl. Sjt.	-	Sjt. RANDALL. (Wounded)

C.S.M. 04 DAVIES.

only means of escape. He did not want to leave a wounded man and so I went and he was to follow. I got across although both tanks opened up, but Sir R. Powell received a glancing blow on the forehead which knocked him out. I eventually got back to the village with one wounded man.

I managed to find Lt. D.A. Rogers and about twenty men who had been overrun by the tanks and split up. I sent them back to the Command Post to report, while I looked for more of the Coy. Meanwhile I learnt that 2 Coy on our right had reached their objective but were being heavily counter-attacked. I collected a few more of my Coy and returned to the Command Post for orders from Major G.G. Fowler, who had taken over command of the Bn. I was told to reform the Coy in our original position.

There is much to tell of the exploits of the other Coys, but that will be written by somebody more qualified than myself.

Sir R. Powell together with three wounded Gdsm were taken prisoner. This Officer was quite magnificent throughout the battle and I cannot say enough in his praise. I am glad to say that he has since made a most wonderful escape and the Gdsm have been recaptured from the Germans.

Before first light next morning I moved the Coy from the forward slope of the hill to a better position. They had fought magnificently but it was impossible to fight tanks without anti-tank guns, which had not been available.

Our total casualties that day were thirty eight, most of them men who had served in the Coy for more than four years.

The senior members of the Coy were:-

Coy Comd.	-	Major J.M. Miller.
2-in-C	-	Capt. Sir. R.G.D. Powell, Bt.
No. 1 Pl Comd.	-	Sgt. Thompson, B.E.M.
No. 2 Pl Comd.	-	Lt. D.A. Rogers.
No. 3 Pl Comd.	-	Sgt. Semark.
A/CSM	-	C.Q.M.S. Lewis.