



33 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
BATTLEFIELD TOUR 16-19 JUNE 2017
'WALCHEREN' GUIDE BOOK



THE FORGOTTEN BATTLE

THE BATTLE OF THE SCHELDT ESTUARY
2ND OCTOBER - 25TH NOVEMBER 1944



Cover Photographs:

Top - White North Beach at Westkapelle, Walcheren 1 Nov 1944.

Bottom - 28 Nov 1944: the first Allied ship to sail into the port of Antwerp after the Scheldt Estuary had been cleared, the Canadian - built Liberty Ship '*FORT CATARAQUI*' , unloads vital supplies.

CONTENTS

Introduction - Air Commodore Paul Lyall , President 33 Squadron Association	4
<u>Itinerary Day One</u>	5
Day One - Historical Background	6
Advance to the Somme and Antwerp (31 Aug - 4 Sep 1944) - Map	7
The Coastal Belt (4 - 12 Sep 1944) - Map	9
Day One Stand One_Merville Airfield	10 - 13
Day One Stand Two_Maldegem Airfield	14 - 15
Day One Stand Three_Adegem Cemetery	16
<u>Itinerary Day Two</u>	17
Day Two - Historical Background_The Breskens Pocket and Op SWITCHBACK	18
Escape of the German 15th Army (4– 23 Sep 1944) - Map	19
German dispositions around the Breskens Pocket (1 Oct 1944) - Illustration	21
Day Two Stand One_Crossing the Leopold Canal	22 - 23
Day Two Stand Two/Three_WO George Roney, Schoondijke	24 - 26
Day Two Stand Four_From Breskens to Vlissingen	27
Taking the Breskens Pocket - Map	28
Day Two Stand Five_From Ternuezen to Hoofdplaat	29
<u>Itinerary Day Three</u>	31
Day Three - Historical Background	32 - 34
Day Three Stand One_Op VITALITY - Sloedam	35 - 37
Day Three Stand Two/Three_Op INFATUATE 1 - Vlissingen	38 - 41
Day Three Stand Four _Op INFATUATE 2 - Westkapelle	42 - 50
Day Three Stand Five _ Op INFATUATE 2 - Domberg	51 - 54
Day Three Stand Six_Op INFATUATE 2 - Middelburg	55 - 56
Vlissingen and Middelburg - Map	57
<u>Itinerary Day Four</u>	58
Day Four - Historical Background	59
Day Four Stand One_Bergen Op Zoom Commonwealth & Canadian War Cemeteries	60
Day Four Stand Two_Flt Lt Godfrey Argument, Schoonselhof Cemetery	61
Day Four Visit to Ypres	62
Appendix 1_Extracts from 33 Squadron Operations Record Book (1 Oct—31 Dec 1944)	63
Appendix 2: 2 TAF (Fighters) Order of Battle (Jan-Dec 1944)	65
Appendix 3_Aviators buried at Adegem, Bergen op Zoom and Schoonselhof Cemeteries	67
The Battle of the Scheldt (1 Aug - 11 Dec 1944)	Back Cover

INTRODUCTION

By Air Commodore Paul Lyall

33 Squadron Association President

Welcome.

Having served in France for the last 4 years - a period that has spanned the centenary events of WW1 and 70th anniversary of D Day - I have had many opportunities to reflect on the military history that we share with our European neighbours. It has been an honour to stand in the places that mean so much to our nation and to commemorate what so many soldiers, sailors and airmen did to secure our future. The scale and ferocity of the events of the World Wars are difficult to comprehend, but it has been remarkable to see how the battles and the individual stories still resonate today. The veterans, their relatives, and the people of France, Belgium and the Netherlands want to remember. And they want to pass their memories to the younger generation. These memories, these ceremonies, and our gratitude, will endure as long as our civilisation endures.

I would like to thank the Association Committee for organizing this inaugural Association Battlefield Tour, for the long and detailed research to produce the informative Readers and Guidebooks, and the liaison with various individuals and organizations across Europe to ensure that all of you will have a wonderful, informative experience over the next four days. Thanks must go to Tracey at Holt's Tours for her helpful and professional approach in arranging hotel accommodation and transport, while my special thanks go to the two guides, Chris Perkins and Jan Westhoeve, both ex-military personnel themselves, who will accompany you throughout the Tour. Chris and Jan have liaised closely since the initial planning and reconnaissance phases in January to ensure that the ground and air perspectives presented to you at each location will be in context, accurate and relevant.

Thank you for coming to visit, thank you for honouring the memory of our veterans and I wish you all an excellent Tour.

Paul Lyall

LOYALTY

ITINERARY_DAY ONE

TIME	EVENT	REMARKS
0600	Depart RAF Benson	
0830	Arrive Dover Ferry Port	
1015	Ferry departs Dover for Calais	
1300	Coach departs Calais	Visit St Omer / Renescure V-1 site
1430-1530	Visit ALG B-53 Merville / Calonne sur Lys Airfield	RV with 33 Sqn Engr Gp and Rob and Trish Roney at L'Hélice Restaurant (Lunchtime hours: Mon-Fri 1200-1500)
1700 - 1725	Visit ALG B-65 Maldegem	
1730 - 1800	Visit Adegem Cemetery	
1830	Arrive at hotel: APARTEHOTEL, Zeedijk 96-103, 8370 Blankenberge, BELGIUM Tel: 0032 (0)50 41 77 52	Blankenberge was the town where 33 Sqn personnel spent their first night back on the continent in Feb 1945 following the Tempest conversion in Cornwall. 33 Sqn Engr Gp hotac: Bruges

STAND DISCUSSIONS - The 33 Sqn Engr Gp participating in the 'Walcheren Loyalty' Staff Ride will leave a day earlier than the 33 Sqn Association Gp and will be conducting a number of briefings at some of the Stands that we will be visiting on the Tour. The Engrs will be visiting the Runnymede Air Forces Memorial before driving over to France for their first night stop in Lens. They will meet up with us at L'Hélice Restaurant at Calonne sur Lys Airfield.

Stand 1 - Lens. As a scene setter for the Staff Ride, briefly explain 33 Sqn's involvement throughout WW2, leading up to its deployment to Northern France.

Stand 2 - Merville. Briefly explain 33 Sqn's deployment to Northern France, leading up to their arrival at Merville, and describe the conditions experienced by its personnel. Compare and contrast the challenges that 33 Sqn currently faces in expeditionary and contingency operations.

Stand 3 - Maldegem. Explain the role that 33 Sqn played as part of 2 TAF during the Battle of the Scheldt. Draw lessons from the past and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of CAS and its relevance today and for the future.

DAY ONE - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Today we start to examine the consequences of Field Marshal Montgomery's gamble on a Narrow Front approach in his attempt to bring the war to a hasty conclusion. 21st Army Group had made rapid advances through Northern France and Belgium, and the capture of Antwerp on 4 Sep 1944 was far quicker than the Germans had expected. As supply problems were already influencing Allied operations it was vital to open Antwerp to shipping as quickly as possible, but in order to do that the Allies would have to clear the enemy from the 30-mile long Scheldt Estuary, an aspect that had been overlooked by the majority of the Allied planning staff. The only voice of dissension had been Admiral Ramsay, mastermind behind the evacuation at Dunkirk and the invasion of Sicily.

On 6 Sep 1944 4th Canadian Armoured Division had resumed its advance towards Bruges and Eecloo, arriving at the Ghent Canal on 8 Sep. The Germans had destroyed all of the bridges in an attempt to slow the Allied advance towards Antwerp and the south bank of the Scheldt as the evacuation of Van Zangen's 15th Army began. On the evening of 8 Sep the Canadians launched an attack across the Ghent Canal at Moerbrugge, five km south of Bruges, and a narrow bridge-head was established. Gradually the bridgehead was extended, but difficult terrain and fierce enemy resistance slowed progress.

On 9 Sep and again on the night of 10-11 Sep, 1st Polish Armoured Division attempted to create a crossing of the Ghent Canal, halfway between Bruges and Ghent. Encountering heavy German opposition and difficult terrain they were forced to abandon the attack, and were ordered to relieve 7th British Armoured Division in the Ghent area.

The 4th Brigade of 2nd Canadian Infantry Division were able to move north on the 9 Sep occupy the southern outskirts of Bruges, assisting 4th Canadian Armoured Division in that sector. Fortunately, the Germans withdrew without contesting possession of the city. 4th Brigade, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division then turned back and attacked Bergues, a key part of Dunkirk's outer defences, taking the city on 16 Sep 1944.

On 14 Sep, a few days before Operation MARKET GARDEN commenced, Montgomery issued a directive to 21st Army Group, which included the following tasks for the 1st Canadian Army:

"Our real objective is the RUHR. But on the way to it we want the ports of ANTWERP and ROTTERDAM... We have captured the port of ANTWERP but we cannot make use of it as the enemy controls the mouth of the SCHELDT; operations to put this matter right will be a first priority for Canadian Army.

1st Canadian Army. *Complete the capture first of BOULOGNE, and then CALAIS. DUNKIRK will be dealt with later...The whole energies of the Army will be directed towards operations designed to enable full use of the port of ANTWERP...Having completed the operations for opening of ANTWERP, Canadian Army will operate northwards on the general axis BREDA-UTRECHT-AMSTERDAM."*

General Crerar interpreted the directive to mean that the problem of Antwerp would be dealt with after his Canadian Army had taken Boulogne and Calais. Consequently, half of 2nd Canadian Corps would be tied down dealing with the Channel Ports operations, utilising all of the Army-level resources and most of the supporting air and maritime assets. It would be the remainder of 2nd Canadian Corps that would have to execute the Scheldt operations.

On 21 Sep 1944, 1st Canadian Army's armoured divisions moved northwards roughly along the line of the Ghent -Terneuzen Canal. 4th Canadian Armoured Division was given the task of clearing the area that would come to be known as the Breskens Pocket, a fiercely defended area extending along the coast from Zeebrugge to the Braakman Inlet and down to the Leopold Canal, while 1st Polish Armoured Division headed

for the Dutch-Belgian border further east and the crucial area north of Antwerp.

4th Canadian Armoured Division passed through the Moerbrugge bridgehead on the Ghent Canal to find themselves the first Allied force to face the formidable, natural defensive line of the Leopold Canal and Dérivation de la Lys Canal. An attack was mounted in the vicinity of Moerkerke and both canals were crossed, but fierce German counter-attacks and heavy Allied casualties forced the Canadians to withdraw the bridgehead.

Further east, 1st Polish Division enjoyed greater success and, despite stiff resistance and country clearly unsuitable for armour, managed to smash its way to the coast. By 21 Sep the Poles had occupied Terneuzen and were clearing the south bank of the Scheldt Estuary eastwards towards Antwerp. The Germans were sealed in the Breskens Pocket, yet the evacuation of von Zangen's 15th Army continued for another 5 days. The Allied failure to block 15th Army's retreat would cost them dearly later in the war.

As we drive around the area you will be able to imagine how the unique geography of this region of the Netherlands is well suited for defence and would make subsequent Canadian operations even more daunting. The south bank of the Scheldt Estuary was 'polder country' - flat floodlands below sea level and enclosed by dykes, while the north of the Estuary - South Beveland and Walcheren - was a well-armed and well-defended stronghold. The German defensive plan was based upon judicious flooding of the land. It was not necessary for them to flood the whole landscape, as that would have restricted their own ability to resupply and reinforce, but by making fields sodden they denied the Allies the use of their wheeled and tracked vehicles.

The flooding constrained the Canadians to moving on foot, using roads and dykes that canalised their advances along very narrow fronts, following routes that were covered by machine guns and pre-registered artillery. The flooded terrain concealed the enemy from the infantry, making aerial reconnaissance of enemy positions a necessity. The Canadians were about to become experts in this new form of infantry warfare - polder fighting - and would write the British Army textbook after the war, but at the expense of many costly and painful lessons.

The provision of strategic and tactical air support during the Battle of the Scheldt was provided by Bomber Command, the Allied Expeditionary Air Force and 2nd Tactical Air Force (2 TAF). 33 Squadron was part of 135 Wing within 2 TAF and we will discuss the Squadron's participation over the next few days.

It would be remiss not to mention the support that was provided by the Royal Navy throughout the Scheldt campaign at this point, including naval aviators, ships' crews and Royal Marine Commandos. Of particular note is the bravery displayed by the entire Support Squadron at Westkapelle and their selfless, courageous acts in drawing coastal battery fire away from the amphibious assault troops heading to the landing beaches, with many an action that was fully deserving of a Victoria Cross. Survivors said that the hours in action at Westkapelle were far worse than anything that they had encountered on D-Day.

Day One Stand One_ALG B-53 Merville-Calonne sur Lys Airfield

Merville-Calonne airfield was built as an air base for the Armée de l'Air in 1936. It was used by the RAF during the Phoney War of 1939. After the Battle of France in 1940 the airfield was taken over by the Luftwaffe and it was described in an official report as sprawling grassland with little or no fixed buildings: "Apart from a few dirty, overheated sheds there is nothing here at the airfield. The English destroyed or burned everything and dogs wandered everywhere. We can't even find water. All the sources have been cut off or poisoned by animal carcasses." Fighter, fighter-bomber and bomber units were rotated through Merville, and the Luftwaffe carried out a wide range of repairs, using units of the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, young Germans conscripted into work and using the railway to bring in the necessary construction material. In Autumn 1941 work began on three 1600 m runways, hangars for bombers, operational buildings and airfield defence, much of which is still visible today on the south eastern part of the airfield. Steps were also taken to improve the drainage, as the airfield had been set up on a marshy piece of ground. At the height of the construction period it is estimated that nearly 3 000 workers were on site each day, with local farmers enlisted to help transport material from the station and canal close to the airfield. About 40 hangars were built, capable of housing a bomber or several fighters, and the Germans were careful to build the new installations away from the existing infrastructure in order to keep the airfield operational. The period of construction lasted until the bombing attacks in 1944.

In Oct 1942 the airfield became home to the four squadrons of II. Gruppe of Jagdgeschwader (JG)2 for a month, until they were ordered to Silesia on 17 Nov. In the first 4 months of 1943 III. Gruppe/ JG 54, based at Vendeville (now Lille-Lequin) used the base for maintenance. On 20 Jun 1943 V. Gruppe/ KG 2, a night bomber/destroyer unit equipped with Me.410 arrived, but aircraft were regularly detached to Evreux to fly missions over England. On 10 Aug 1943 V./KG 2 moved to Vendeville and flying activity at Merville reduced.

The lull in operational activity at Merville did not reduce Allied interest in the airfield, which was subject to several daylight aerial bombardments by USAAF B-17s and B-26s from Jul through to Sep 1943. These attacks may have been part of Operation STARKEY, the Allied diversionary plan to convince the Germans that an Allied invasion would take place in the Pas-de-Calais region. However, despite these attacks, reports continued to come back that the airfield remained in a good state. Lack of effective bombing may have been prevented by the German use of '*Scheinflugplatze*' - dummy airfields. It is a known fact that they used numerous fake airfields across Europe, and Merville's dummy airfield was about 7 kms west near the village of Saint Venant, to the left of the road leading from Saint Venant to Bethune. That area is marked on modern maps as '*Champ d'Aviation*'—the field of aviation. Local stories recall that there were a dozen wooden aircraft positioned around the field, and people recall watching German soldiers moving the dummy aircraft around the field to mimic activity.

An unfortunate result of the work up to, and post, D-Day 1944 for the residents of Merville and the surrounding villages was the renewal of the aerial bombing campaign as the Allies tried to disrupt and destroy as much infrastructure being used by the Germans as possible. As modern aviators we appreciate that 1944 technology did not allow precision bombing to be carried out with the degree of accuracy we expect today, and a number of locals lost their lives as part of the liberation process.

Merville was liberated by the Allies at the beginning of Sep 1944, and was quickly repaired and taken into service by the RAF as ALG B-53. On 11 Sep No.123 Wing (164, 183, 198 and 609 - all rocket firing Hawker Typhoon fighter sqns) flew in and based themselves on the northern side of the runways, close to town. The following day, No.135 Wing arrived (33,222,349 and 485 - all Spitfire fighter bomber sqns) and based themselves to the south of the runways around L'Épinette, probably around the area where L'Helice



KITES ON
DISPERSAL AT
MERVILLE.



ERK'S COOKHOUSE
AT MERVILLE.
BELGIUM

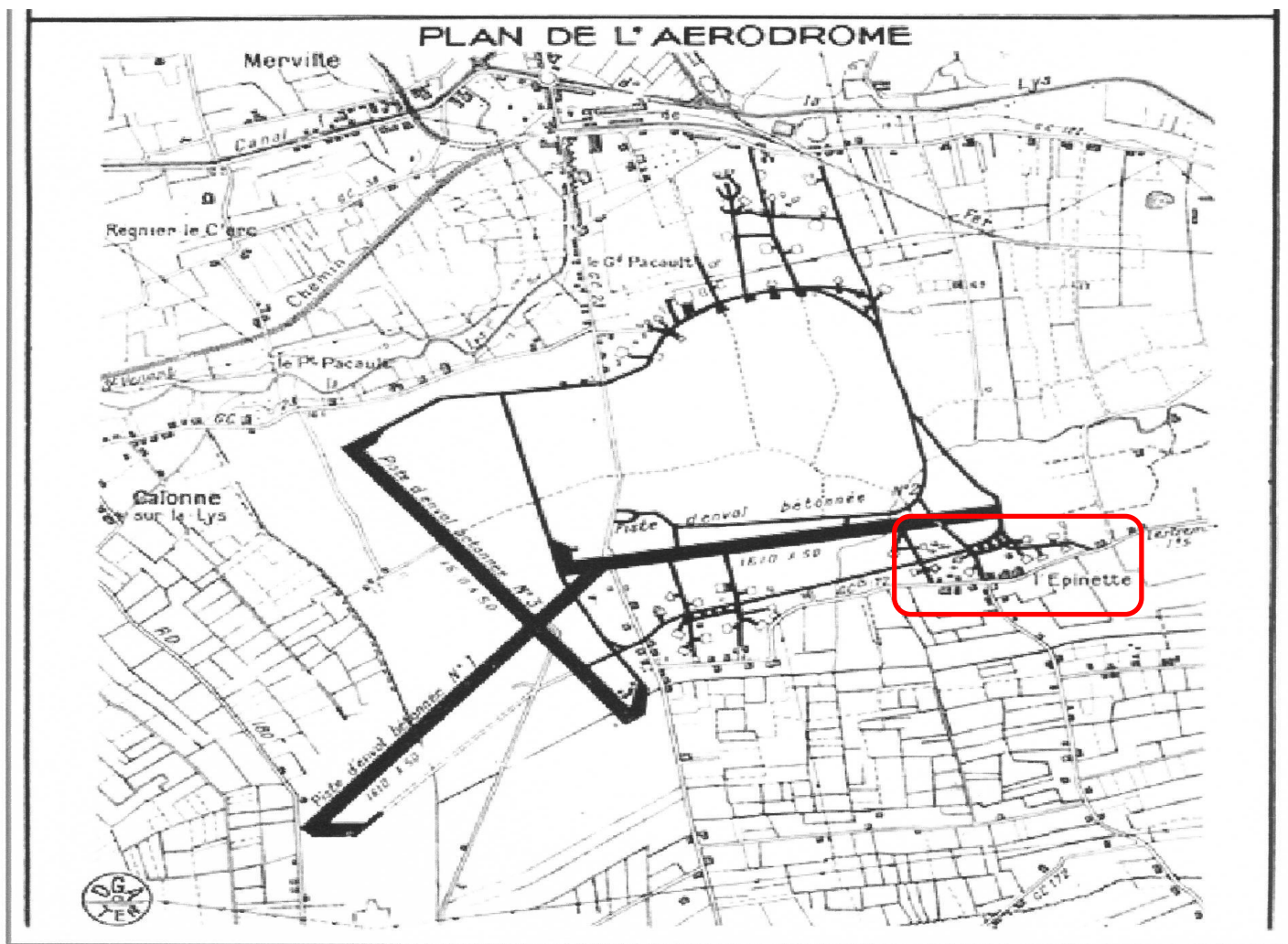


OUR LIVING
QUARTERS.
(MERVILLE)

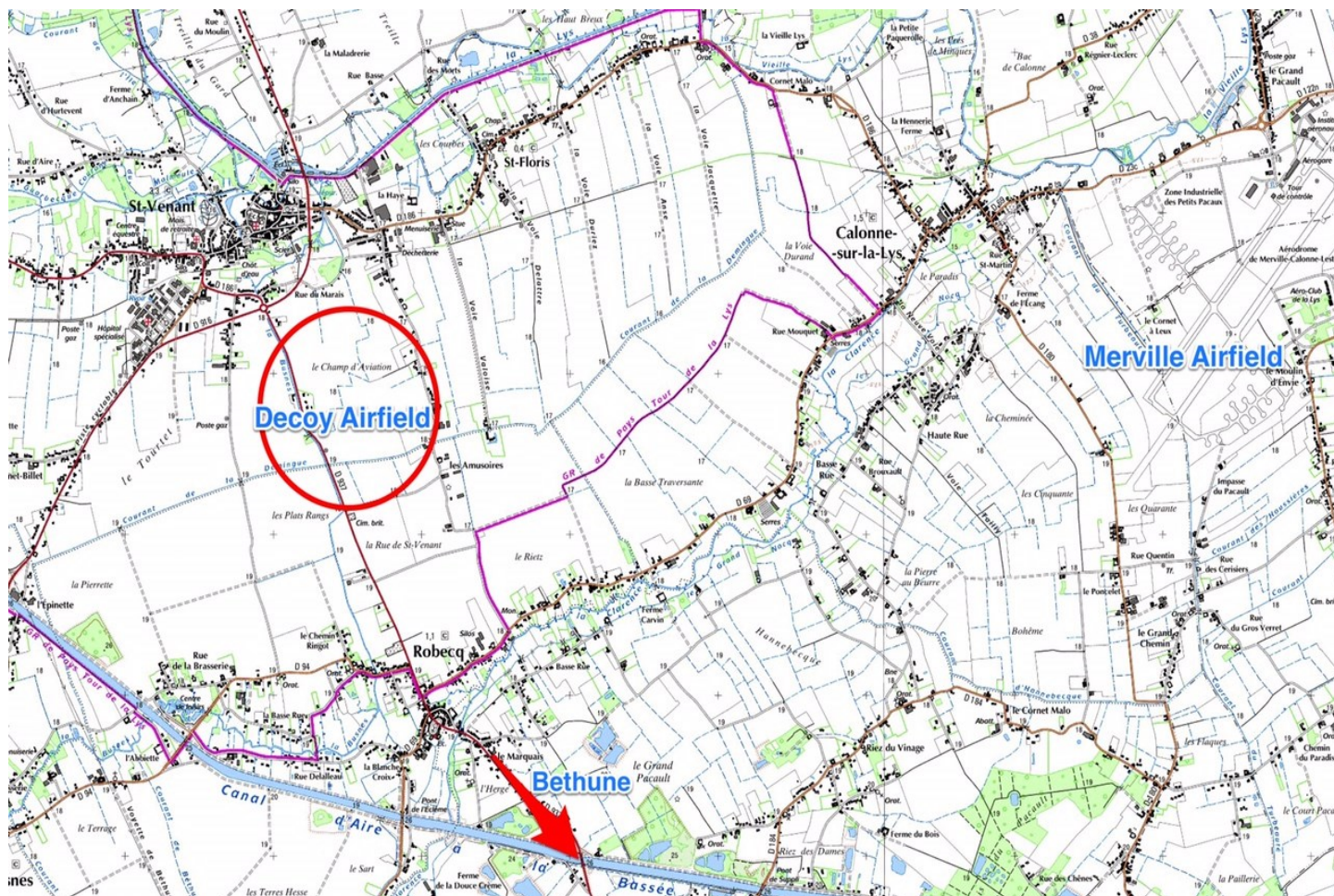
Restaurant and the Aero Club de la Lys is today. As recorded in the accounts of LAC Hands and Fg Off Jan Linzel, and from the photographs in the 33 Sqn History books, conditions at the airfield were not comfortable, with the majority of the personnel sleeping in tents. Conditions slowly improved as the Mayor of Merville began to donate furniture and stoves, the latter being particularly welcome in the damp Autumn weather for anyone under canvas. The Sqn ORB recorded on 15 Sep 1944: "We now begin close support work for the Army". Until the start of SWITCHBACK on 6 Oct 1944, many of 33 Sqn's missions from Merville were flown against the German garrisons in Dunkirk and Calais, bypassed by the Canadians in their effort to comply with the directive to open the Scheldt Estuary to Antwerp, and some armed recce missions into the Netherlands looking for infrastructure targets eg railway yards, and V1 / V2 launch sites. The focus shifted once the Canadians encountered the determined German defence in the Breskens Pocket and close air support missions were recorded in Breskens, Walcheren and South Beveland until early Nov.

On 1 Nov 1944 33 Sqn was tasked to provide the fighter escort to Force T as it sailed to Westkapelle, and on 2 Nov it conducted a 12-ship bombing and strafing mission to Veere while the rest of the aircraft flew to the new base at ALG B-65 at Maldegem. The departure of the 84 Gp assets spelt the end of operational flying activities at Merville. In Dec 1944 it became a logistic support base and the USAAF's 5th Strategic Air Depot (5th SAD) was set up. Being out of reach of the enemy, having plenty of available space and well connected with communications, the unit was put in charge of repairing damaged USAAF aircraft. Some changes were necessary as the Germans had destroyed much of the infrastructure they had built, just as the RAF had done in 1940, notably the hangars, buildings and drainage system. They had blown up the runways but the damage was repaired very quickly as they had not had time to carry away the rubble. New hangars, workshops, an air traffic control tower and a parachute tower were constructed, repairs were made across the camp and before long there were over 200 aircraft at Merville, including B-17s, B-24s and P-51s. The new infrastructure was developed at the expense of personal comfort for the personnel based there, with a large number of them continuing to live in tents without access to barracks or bathrooms. Several buildings were requisitioned in Merville and, for several months, the US military lived alongside the locals.

5th SAD remained at Merville until Nov 1945 and then handed the airfield back to the French Air Force.



Merville, direction du Génie de l'Air, bureau terrains, mars 1946
Archives Service technique des bases aériennes. DGAC / Droits réservés



Day One Stand Two_ALG B-65 Maldegem Airfield

Maldegem airfield was established in 1939 by the Belgian Air Force. After the Battle of Belgium, the Luftwaffe took over the airfield and began expanding it, putting down a concrete runway. Between Oct 1940 and Apr 1941 the airfield held a key post in the Third Reich as it attempted to bring Britain to its knees. Fiat G.50s of the Corpo Aereo Italiano, and Luftwaffe squadrons III. Gruppe/Jagdgeschwader (JG) 53 and II. Gruppe/JG 26 operated from the airfield. But once that battle was lost, and German attention turned towards Russia, Maldegem, Ursel and Aalter had a fairly dormant existence for about three years.

After the liberation of the region in Sep 1944, Maldegem's 750m German concrete runway was extended by 550m, work carried out by 217 Airfield Construction Company RE. The airfield was re-designated ALG B-65 and was operational after just six weeks. In Oct 1944, Albacores and Ansons of 119 Squadron (157 Wing Coastal Command) and, from 11 Nov - 14 Dec, Fairey Swordfishes of 819 Squadron FAA became responsible for the monitoring of the Channel and the estuaries of the Scheldt. 819 Squadron moved to to Knokke-Zoute Airport on 14 Dec 1944, where they stay until the end of the war.

On 1 and 2 Nov, the air above Maldegem shook when dozens of Spitfires of No. 135 Wing moved forward from French and Belgian airfields. The four sqns - 33, 222, 349 Belgian and 485 New Zealand - were commanded by Wg Cdr Raymond Harries DSO DFC, a 28-year-old Welshman with an impressive record of 15 kills. The pilots did not have time to settle in, as they had missions to protect British vessels at Walcheren. Compared to Merville the difference for the pilots and the ground crew was very noticeable. Maldegem was a fully serviceable base, the cafes of Maldegem and Eeklo were nearby, while Bruges and Ghent were close enough to enjoy some time off. Some of the personnel were stationed in the village school of Adegem, some pilots stayed in a school in the Stationsstraat. Evenings could be spent in Cinema Cecilia, where the entire 135th Wing was invited by the mayor of Maldegem. The Wing Band played music, the guests had to pay for their own drinks and sandwiches, given the high price of food. In the last week of Nov they saw three films and two ENSA shows.

On 15 Dec 1944 33 left Maldegem for Predannack, followed two days later by 222, where both sqns would exchange their Spitfires for Hawker Tempests. 349 and 485 Sqns would be part of the last chapter of Maldegem's operational history. Once the Battle of the Bulge had begun, everyone carried a weapon outside the base. But in the air there was almost nothing to do. That changed on 1 Jan 1945, the Luftwaffe had been preparing its last major battle. Virtually all available fighters were deployed to destroy the Allied airfields in the Netherlands, Belgium and France. The Allies a foothold on the continent, they were masters over the front area moved increasingly towards Berlin, and the German high command hoped an unexpected and massive attack would slow down the Allied offensive for a while. That morning Maldegem had freezing weather and the runway was unusable due to about fifteen cms of snow. The first mission of the day was planned for 0845, but it was cancelled due to ice. At 0900 the groundcrew had the Spitfires ready and heard they heard aircraft coming from the Netherlands. Nearly ten minutes later a dozen Messerschmitts of III. Gruppe flew over the airport. During the first pass no shots were fired. The ground staff looked surprised, they had not immediately recognized the German aircraft and wondered whether they were American Thunderbolts, or were Mustangs. There was no anti-aircraft fire either, a few days previously all anti-aircraft guns were pulled out. With the sun at their backs the Germans commenced their attack. From the mess building across the street (the Commanderie) men fired with revolvers at overflying aircraft. The Belgians were lucky, their aircraft were lined up behind the hangars, but most of the 485 Sqn Spitfires were destroyed, In their war diary the New Zealanders wrote: "Our squadron began the new year with only five aircraft. While a huge pillar of fire and smoke rose above the airport our pilots shot with revolvers from the windows and doorways of the homes - our C.I. led the attack with a German Mauser. The combat clothing of the moment was a colorful mixture of pajamas, pull-overs, and underpants." The bad weather prevented flying on 2 Jan 1945, but the ground crew were too busy clearing the airfield and removing fifteen wrecks. There were some small-scale operations flown by the Belgians on 7 and 8 Jan, but the plans were ready for a move to Gilze-Rijen. The Belgians left for B.77 on 13 Jan 1945, five days later 485 Squadron followed them. 33 arrived at Gilze Rijen on 20 Feb 1945. Maldegem was abandoned after the war, and the airfield has been redeveloped into an industrial area.



Day One Stand Three_Adegem Cemetery

In the last week of Sep 1944, the Allies held the city of Antwerp, but the Germans held both shores of the Scheldt estuary, so that the port of Antwerp could not be used. The task of clearing the southern shore of the estuary was allotted to the 3rd Canadian Division, aided by the 4th Canadian Armoured Division and the UK's 52nd (Lowland) Division. As we will see over the next three days, Their operations lasted from Oct until the beginning of Nov 1944; by 3 Nov the Germans had been cleared from the north-west corner of Belgium and the south shore of the Scheldt was free.

The majority of the men buried at Adegem died during the operations for the clearance of the south bank of the Scheldt, but many Canadians who lost their lives elsewhere in Belgium were also brought here for burial. A number of isolated graves from various communal cemeteries and churchyards in Belgium have also been brought into this cemetery since the end of the war. Construction of the Cemetery started in Feb 1945 and there are 12 plots, containing well over 1 146 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and one unidentified burial of the First World War. There are also 33 Polish and two French burials. While the majority of the men buried here are Canadian and British soldiers, 849 and 256 respectively, there are a few sailors and a 127 airmen: 81 RAF, 41 RCAF, 3 RAAF and 2 RNZAF. From the grouping and details on the headstones it is easy to identify the Bomber Command crews who died together on their way to Germany or on their way home.

A ceremony was held at Adegem last year was for Private Kenneth Duncanson, a member of the ill-fated Algonquin Regiment, who had courageously fought their way across the canals at Moerkerke and through to Molentje before having to retreat in the face of ferocious German counterattacks. Private Duncanson was one of eight soldiers subsequently listed as missing after that assault. He was finally laid to rest with his companions, having been buried with full military honours and with members of his family from Canada present, on 14 Sep 2016.

3rd Canadian Infantry Division

Cameron Highlanders of Canada (Machine Guns)

7th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Regina Rifles Regiment

Royal Winnipeg Rifles

Canadian Scottish Regiment

8th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Le Regiment de la Chaudiere

North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment

Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

9th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Highland Light Infantry of Canada

Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders

North Nova Scotia Highlanders

4th Canadian Armoured Division

10th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Algonquin Regiment

Lincoln and Welland Regiment

Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada

ITINERARY_DAY TWO

TIME	EVENT	REMARKS
0830	Breakfast	
0930	Depart Hotel	Jackets and ties to be available in the coach for Schoondijke Cemetery
1000-1130	Scene setting visit to 'For Freedom Museum' Knokke Heist	RV with 33 Sqn Engr Gp Light lunch at museum
1200-1300	Visit 'Lievebrug' Bailey Bridge, Boomstraatje, Sint Laureins	Op SWITCHBACK Leopoldskanaal crossing sites
1330-1430	Visit Dekker Farm, Groeneweg	33 Sqn Spitfire crash site 6 Oct 1944
1500-1630	Wreath laying ceremony at Schoondijke Cemetery - WO George Roney RNZAF Wreathes laid in order: Roney Family - Rob and Trish Roney 33 Sqn - Richie Wright 33 Sqn Association - Andy Abbott Gemeente Sluis - Peter Cammaerts	Speakers (in order): Jan Westhoeve Rob Roney Dave Stewart Peter Cammaerts (Burgemeester of Sluis) Chris Perkins 'For the Fallen' Tea and coffee available in church after the service, courtesy of 'De Verbinding'
1645 - 1715	Visit Breskens viewing point	Discuss capture of Breskens and amphibious assault on Vlissingen (Flushing)
1730-1800	Visit Biervliet / Hoofdplaat	Amphibious assault landing sites
1830-1900	Arrive hotel: HOTEL TERMINUS, Stationsplein 1, 4461 Goes, NETHERLANDS Tel: 0031 (0)113 23 00 85	33 Sqn Engr Gp Hotac: Middelburg

STAND DISCUSSIONS

Stand 4 - Bailey Bridge at Leopoldskanaal. Explain the strategic significance of the Battle of the Scheldt and the importance that Op SWITCHBACK played in its success.

Stand 5 - Breskens. Outline the strategic, operational and tactical level decision-making in the lead up to, and during, the fight for the Breskens Pocket. Are there lessons to be learned in terms of modern leadership?

DAY TWO - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Today we retrace the steps of the Allies as they focus on the task of clearing the Scheldt Estuary after the failure of Operation MARKET GARDEN (17-25 Sep 1944). In 1946, in his book on the 21st Army Group, General Montgomery described the plan in three phases:

1. Seal off the isthmus by a thrust from Antwerp together with the clearance of the Breskens Pocket.
2. Clear South Beveland by an advance along the isthmus in conjunction with a waterborne assault from the south.
3. Capture Walcheren by concentric assaults from the east, south and west, entailing a second crossing of the estuary to seize Flushing and a seaborne expedition from one of the Channel ports.

Consequently, six concurrent operations were undertaken between 02 Oct and 25 Nov 1944 (refer to your map on the back cover):

02-23 Oct: Clearance of the eastern approaches to the River Scheldt from Antwerp to Woensdrecht.

06 Oct—03 Nov: SWITCHBACK - elimination of German positions in the Breskens Pocket, on the southern bank of the Scheldt Estuary.

20 Oct—07 November: SUITCASE—securing of the north-eastern flank of the 1st Canadian Army, between Antwerp and the River Maas.

24-31 Oct: VITALITY—the capture of South Beveland, including the Causeway across to Walcheren.

31 Oct-07 Nov: INFATUATE 1& 2 - two amphibious assaults on the heavily defended island fortress of Walcheren, with landings at Vlissingen (Flushing) and Westkapelle.

03-25 Nov: CALENDAR—Clearances of mines from the Scheldt by RN minesweepers.

Planning for INFATUATE began on 13 Sep 1944, with a conference at 21st Army Group Headquarters, at which both the Maritime and Land component commanders were represented. Airborne and amphibious assaults were discounted and subsequent Canadian Army planning recommended an approach from the east along the Beveland isthmus. However, General Simonds, now in command vice an unwell General Crerar, strongly disagreed with the planning staff's findings:

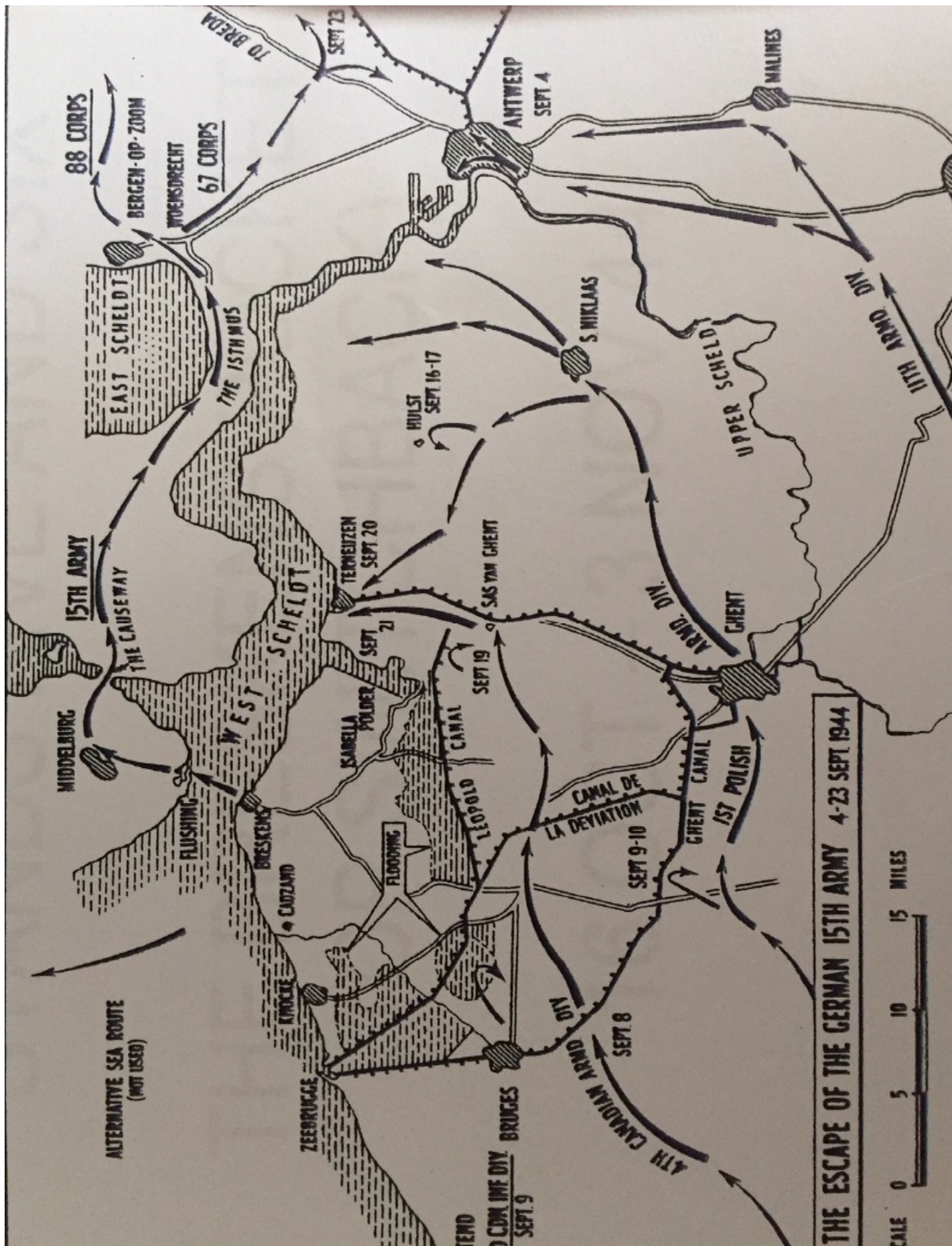
"As I understand it the object of the operation is NOT 'to capture the islands of Walcheren and Zuid Beveland' but to destroy, neutralize or capture enemy defences which deny us free passage through the West Scheldt to the port of Antwerp'...the land approach appears attractive but may well turn out to be an approach down a single stretch of road some five miles in length, bordered by impassable ground on either side...on which the whole firepower of the defence could be concentrated. I consider that the project of an assault across water cannot be ruled out if Walcheren Island must be taken. It may be the only way of taking it...I am strongly of the opinion that the necessary military and naval forces should be earmarked, married up and trained against the contingency that they might be required."

Simonds then offered a striking and original solution which would overcome the German defensive advantages, producing a marvellous example of a commander thinking at an operational level:

"I consider that the technique for the capture of Walcheren Island should be as follows:

a. Bombing operations should be undertaken to break the dykes and completely flood all parts of the island below high water level.

b. Those parts of the island which remain above water should then be systematically attacked by heavy air



bombardment, day and night, to destroy defences and wear out the garrison by attrition. RDF stations should have an early priority as 'point' targets.

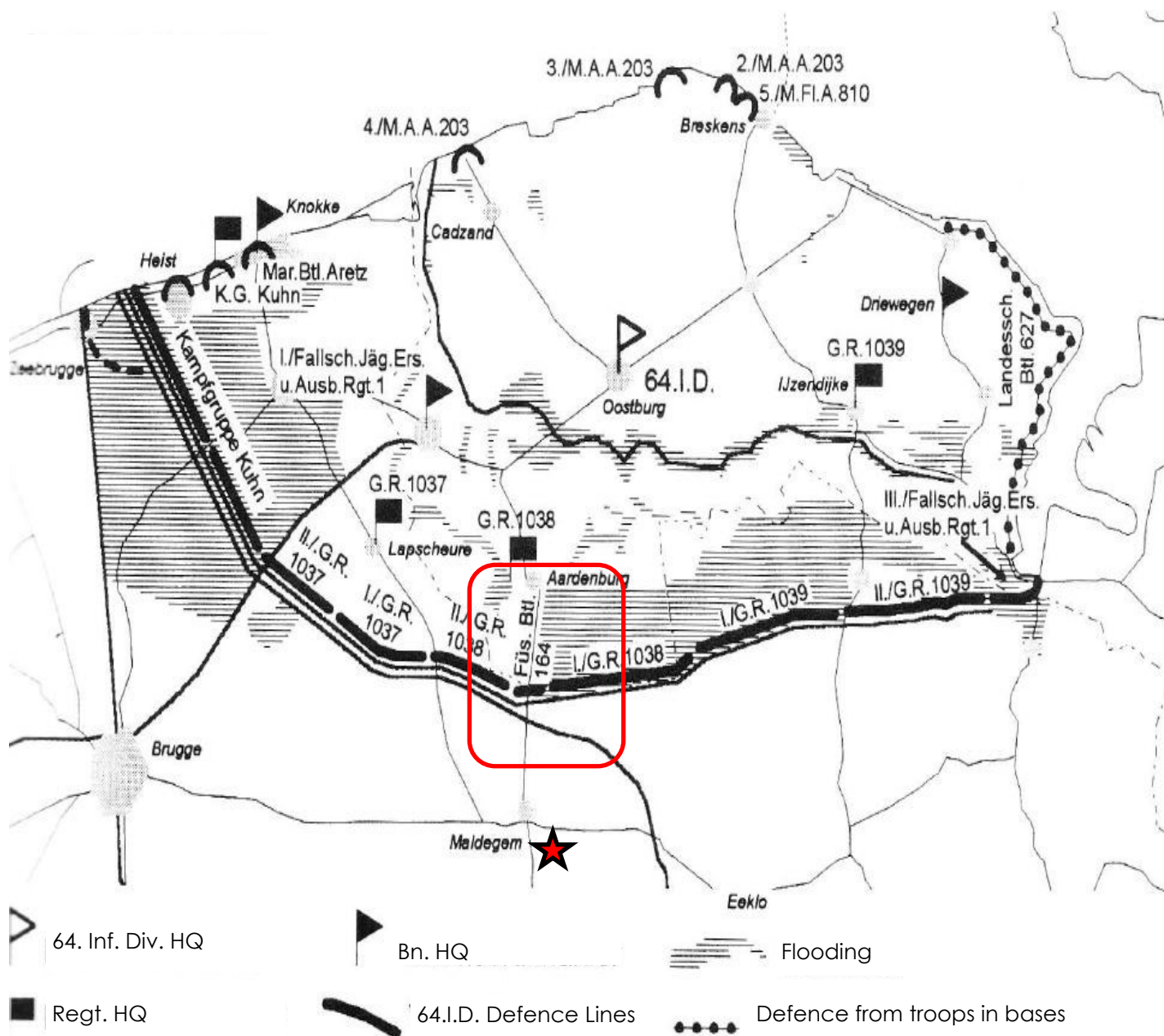
c. Whenever possible, heavy bombers proceeding to or from targets in Western Germany by day or night should be routed over Walcheren so that the garrison can never tell whether the approach of large numbers of aircraft indicate attack or not. This combined with heavy bombing attacks will drive the enemy to cover on approach of large aircraft formations and will help to cover an eventual airborne landing.

d. When it is considered that the morale of the garrison has sufficiently deteriorated, waterborne patrols may be sent to determine the situation.

e. If found to be ripe, airborne, followed by waterborne, troops should be landed immediately following a bombing raid (when defenders have been driven to ground) and mop up and take the surrender."

We will see some of the effects of the resultant bombing offensive tomorrow when we are on Walcheren, notably at Westkapelle, but today we start by visiting the For Freedom Museum at Ramskapelle. A British Normandy veteran married a Knokke-Heist girl in 1947. Their sons, Danny and Freddy Jones, having listened to their father's war stories for years, were instrumental in setting up this museum, which opened in Apr 2009 in the former Ramskapelle school. Many of the uniforms and personal effects on display have been donated by Canadian veterans and their families, and each figure has a personal story. The museum covers the period 10 May 1940, the day the Germans invaded the Netherlands and the day that 33 Sqn veteran Jan Linzel was flying for the Dutch Air Force against the Luftwaffe, until 3 Nov 1944, the day that the guns finally fell silent in this part of Europe.

After a guided tour and a quick lunch we will head to the Leopold Canal, stopping at the 'Lievebrug' bailey bridge that marks the crossing zone used by the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade on 6 Oct 1944. The bailey bridge is a genuine WW2 bridge and is still used by drivers to cross the waterway. From the bridge near Sint Laureins we will cross the Belgian border into the Netherlands and drive to the Dekker Farm on the Groeneweg near Schoondijke where, on the first day of Op SWITCHBACK - 6 Oct - one of 33 Sqn's Spitfires crashed, killing the pilot. From the Groeneweg we will drive to the Schoondijke Cemetery for a short service to pay our respects to the young New Zealand pilot who was killed in the crash, George Roney. From Schoondijke we head north to a viewpoint overlooking Breskens and the Scheldt Estuary, providing us an excellent view of the VITALITY and INFATUATE objectives: South Beveland, Walcheren, Vlissingen. After that stand we will drive east along the coast towards the amphibious landing areas near Hoofdplaat, our last stand for today. Unlike the journey faced by the troops in 1944, we will make a very quick journey *under* the Scheldt, taking the toll tunnel route from Terneuzen onto South Beveland. Once on South Beveland the two parties will part company for the evening and head to their respective hotels at Goes and Middelburg.



The map above shows that Major General Eberding had turned his back on the North coast of the Pocket, knowing he maintained lines of communication with 70th Infantry Division on Walcheren, where heavy artillery support was also available. Thus he lined up three Grenadier Regiments in depth along the Leopold Canal.

"We really anticipated that the water would be our greatest defence. You would therefore be forced to advance on the surfaced roads at the top of the dykes, a very difficult thing to do. We felt that you would try to cross the Leopold Canal. We had you cold as far as the canal was concerned as we had it heavily defended.

Every potential attack point was defended and we had our artillery sighted to bring fire to bear on every position there. If your forward troops tried to establish a bridgehead, no matter where it was, we didn't have to range in our guns. That had all been done long before. We could drop shells on you wherever you were".

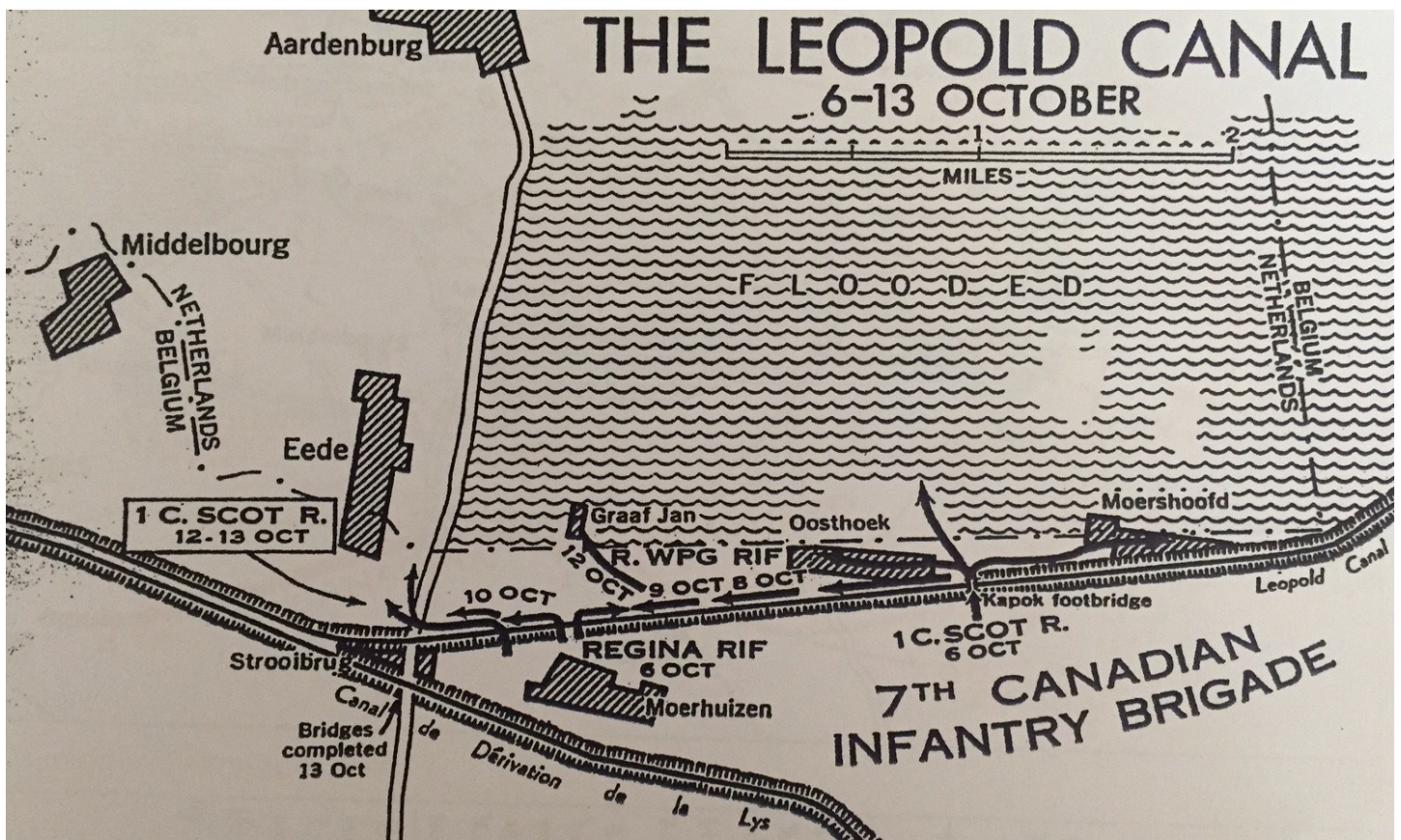
Lieutenant Colonel Siegfried Enfirth, CO 1039th Grenadier Regiment (PRO AL2795, from a text entitled "Encircled").

Day Two Stand One_OP SWITCHBACK Crossing the Leopold Canal

The ferocity of the German defence displayed at Moerbrugge should have been a warning to the divisional commander, General Foster, to proceed with caution. That he failed to read the signs was evident five days later when he tried to force a crossing of the Leopold Canal and Canal de Dérivation de la Lys at Moerkerke, which lies to the west of this stand. The men of the Algonquin Regiment paid a heavy price for that failure, as was evident at Adegem yesterday. One consequence of the rebuff at Moerkerke was Simond's decision to call a halt to offensive operations along the Leopold Canal. The priority for the Corps in this sector now was to concentrate on tidying up the battlefield as a precursor for the inevitable set piece assault to take the Breskens Pocket. In addition to the formidable German defences on both the Leopold Canal and the Canal de Dérivation de la Lys, much of the approach area was flooded.

The task of reducing the Breskens Pocket was given to Major-General Dan Spry's 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. The Division had recently captured Calais and then had been rushed in to Belgium. Not only was time for planning limited but the troops would also have to forego much needed R&R. There would be little or no time to maintain their vehicles and equipment or rehearse for the difficult and dangerous water obstacle crossing. Spry's plan was to assault across the Leopold Canal to the east of Moerkerke where the Algonquins had been rebuffed. Spry allocated the task to 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade. Once 7th Brigade had secured a bridgehead the 8th Infantry Brigade would pass through for the breakout. Spry tasked his third brigade, 9th Infantry Brigade, with assaulting the German defences from the exposed maritime flank. There was no intention, at least at the outset, to view the operations in the south as a fixing operation, and those in the north as a striking operation, but that was how the plan eventually developed.

It was decided that the best place for an assault would be immediately east of where the two canals divided. This was a narrow strip of dry ground beyond the Leopold Canal, a long triangle with its base on the Maldegem-Aardenburg road and its apex near the village of Moershoofd some 5 km east. The strip of ground was only a few hundred metres wide, even at its base, and its northern boundary coincided with the border between Belgium and the Netherlands.



A two-pronged assault commenced on 6 Oct 1944., with 7th Brigade of 3rd Canadian Division, supported by massed 'Wasp' flamethrower tanks and artillery, making the initial assault across the Leopold Canal. Meanwhile 9th Brigade mounted an amphibious attack from the northern, or coastal, side of the Pocket. The 'Wasps' launched their barrage of flame across the Leopold Canal, allowing 7th Brigade's troops to scramble up over the steep banks, launch their assault boats across the Canal and establish two precarious footholds. Unfortunately for the Canadians, Major-General Kurt Eberding's 64th Infantry Division recovered quickly from the shock of the flamethrowers and counterattacked. Possessing an infantry combat strength of about 2 350 men, General Eberding also had about 6 650 support and miscellaneous troops available. Many of them were veterans from the Russian Front and they were well supplied with machine guns, mortars and artillery.

For three days the situation at the Canadian bridgeheads was perilous, the conditions for the troops were horrendous. However, they clung on to their extremely vulnerable positions with grim determination and by 9 Oct the gap between the bridgeheads was closed, allowing elements of 3rd Canadian Division to stage an amphibious assault from Terneuzen. By early morning on 12 Oct a position had been forced across the Aardenburg road, but it was not until 14 Oct that substantial progress was made after a few tanks were able to cross the Canal. By mid-Oct 1944, after nearly two weeks' hard fighting, about half of the Breskens Pocket was still in German hands.



Soldiers crossing a river using a kapok footbridge. Kapok was a light cotton-like substance that remained afloat even when punctured with rifle fire.



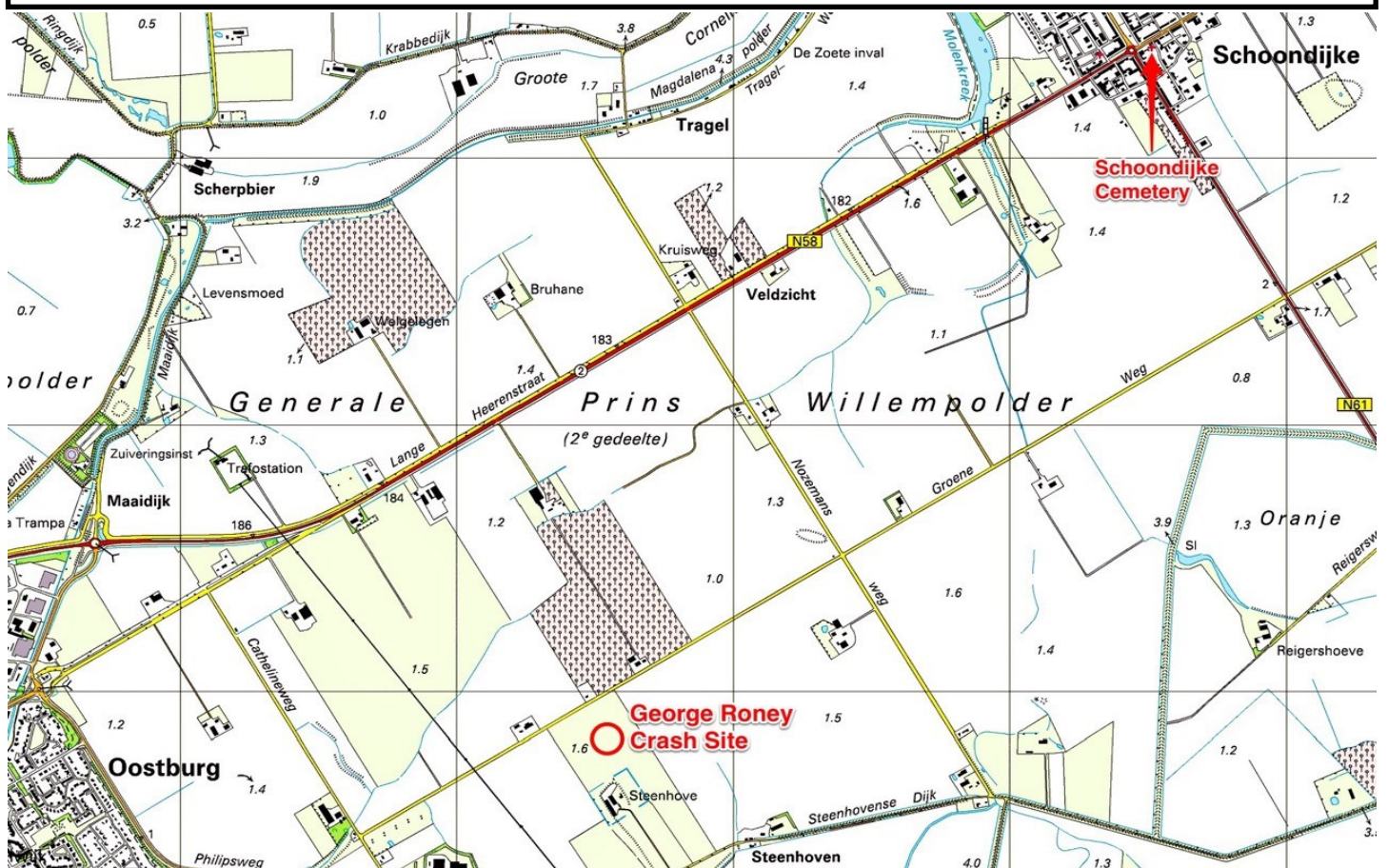
Schoondijke lies about 3 miles (5kms) south of Breskens, now part of the Sluis municipality in Zeeland. Allied Expeditionary Air Force (AEAF) and Air Defence Great Britain (ADGB) operational records for 6 Oct 1944 show that the fighter planes and fighter-bombers of both commands carried out more than 1 000 flights above the occupied part of Netherlands that day. In Zeeland, air support was provided for the Canadian ground troops' attack across the Leopold Canal. Air attacks were carried out on German targets near many places in Zeeland -Flanders, including Biervliet, Oostburg and Hoofdplaat in the Breskens Pocket.

The Air Branch War Diary of 1st Canadian Army for 6 Oct 1944 states, "Friday—weather was good and a record number of sorties were flown today. On the ground the fighting around Tilburg and above the Leopold Canal has been very heavy. Operation SWITCHBACK began today and we now hold a small bridge-head over the Leopold Canal and most air support was directed into these areas...No 84 Group flew 719 sorties (armed recce 267, pre-arranged support 355, immediate support 8, tactical reconnaissance 42, photo recce 39 and artillery recce 8) and 123 Wing carried out most of the air support for Operation SWITCHBACK . Claims for barges, MET and armoured fighting vehicles were numerous as well as ships destroyed and/or damaged to some extent."

On the day that SWITCHBACK began WO George Roney, a young RNZAF pilot who had joined 33 in Aug 1944, had taken part in a 12-ship bombing mission to Dunkirk in the morning. He returned to Merville and was briefed for his next sortie, a bombing and strafing mission against enemy positions at Breskens. Good weather was reported above the Breskens Pocket, which also favoured the German air defence batteries, and very heavy flak was reported during crew debriefs. That afternoon, three 33 Sqn Spitfires were shot down. Pilot Officer R.R. Clarke RAAF was hit by flak during attacks on targets in Breskens, after which his Spitfire (NH480) crashed in an as yet unknown location. Clarke had time to bale out and managed to avoid capture. Sgt J. McNee was also affected by the flak but managed to perform an emergency landing near Kortrijk in Belgium. WO. Roney's Spitfire (PV160) was seen by his section as it reformed south of Breskens to fly back to Merville, but he never joined the formation and his colleagues assumed that they would see him back at the base. It was later reported by locals that a Spitfire had crashed on the Groeneweg in the Prince William polder near Schoondijke. Due to the very heavy fighting taking place in the area it was not possible to mount a salvage operation; consequently there would be no word of George's fate for another 4 years, when a request from Mr Dekker to remove an aircraft from his land triggered an excavation.



Above: Schoondijke. Official post-war Dutch records state that Schoondijke was virtually destroyed in 1944, along with several others in the Zeeland province that we will be passing during this Tour, including Breskens, Hoofdplaat, Oostburg, Vlissingen, Oostkapelle, Veere, Sint Laurens, Westkapelle and Zoutelande,



On 9 Jun 1948 a local team of volunteers and gendarmes recovered a body from the wreckage, along with a paybook, identity card and other personal effects that identified the pilot as George James Roney, the son of George and Anna Roney of Oamaru, Otago, New Zealand, who was just 22 years old when he died. After 4 long years the Roney family were finally informed officially that George had been killed in action. George was buried at Schoondijke Cemetery on 12 Jun 1948, with no military representation in attendance.

Today we, as proud former members of 33 Sqn, are honoured to stand with members of George's family as we pay our respects, along with serving members of George's Squadron, and with representatives from the local community that has tended and cared for George's grave for the last 69 years. Loyalty indeed.



George Roney in his flying kit, location unknown.

33 Squadron R.A.F,
B.L.A.
23/10/44

Dear Mr Roney,

Before you receive this letter you will have been notified by the air ministry that your son was reported missing on the sixth of this month. I hope you will forgive my not writing before but owing to communications being rather difficult at present, it is quite some time before we manage to find out any particulars and I have been postponing this letter in the hope that some news of your son would be forthcoming but unfortunately we have received none at this present time.

The squadron was detailed to bomb and strafe enemy positions and had successfully carried out the operation and was reforming when it was noticed that your son's machine was missing. The section leader called him on the R/T several times and when he received no answer went back to the area to look for him but unfortunately failed to find him.

George was one of the most promising airman pilots in the squadron, and would shortly have been recommended for a commission which I am confident he would have received and his presence among us is very much missed. The other pilots wish to join with me in offering you our deepest sympathy on your very great loss.

I hope that by the time you receive this letter we will have some more definite news but if in the meantime I can do anything more to help you please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours very sincerely

Ian Matthew

S/Ldr

OC 33 Squadron

Day Two Stand Four_ OP SWITCHBACK & OP INFATUATE 1 - From Breskens to Vlissingen

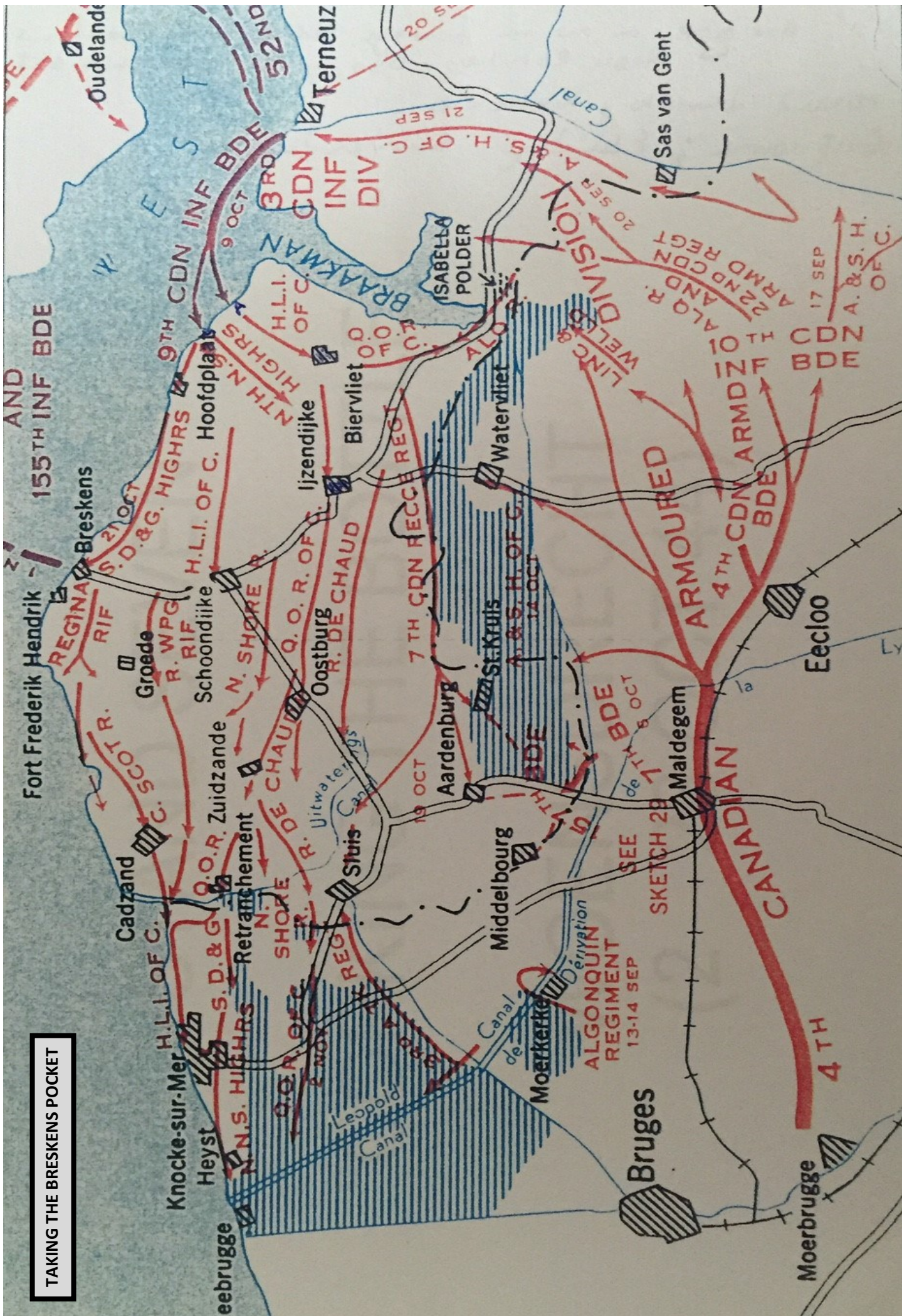
The Breskens Pocket held a strong, concentrated force, in the main consisting of the 15th Army, which had been waiting for the Allied invasion along the Pas de Calais. Although some divisions and weapons had been detached to Normandy, much of the 15th Army had continued to guard the coast against the feared second Allied landing. The swift British armoured thrust in early Sep 1944 which captured Brussels and Antwerp had trapped the 15th Army against the coast. When counterattacks failed to break the British cordon, the only escape route available to the Germans lay to the north across the Scheldt Estuary.

It was from Breskens Harbour that the Germans had managed to evacuate a large proportion of the 15th Army, achieved in a joint operation arranged by Lieutenant-General Eugen-Felix Schwalbe, CO 719th Infantry Division, and Kapitän Herman Knuth, CO 1st Security Division *Kriegsmarine*. Having left contingents to hold the Channel ports, General von Zangen began withdrawing the bulk of his Army towards the Scheldt. On 4 Sep Hitler ordered that Walcheren Island was to be held as a fortress, and a permanent bridgehead was to be maintained on the south bank of the Scheldt. General von Zangen assumed command of the South West Netherlands sector, adjacent to General Kurt Student's 1st Parachute Army. Von Zangen left the 64th Infantry Division to defend the southern bank of the estuary, installed 70th Infantry Division on Walcheren Island and 245th Infantry Division on the South Beveland peninsula. Instead of the divisions operating with their own Corps Headquarters they were directly subordinate to 15th Army Headquarters.

The 15th Army had been able to conduct its withdrawal to Walcheren under surprisingly minimal Allied attacks, moving soldiers and their equipment from Breskens across the Western Scheldt. On 11 Sep 1944 the town had been carpet-bombed by Allied forces, leaving very little of the historical centre, which dated back to 1510, intact. The air attacks damaged Breskens so severely that daily shipping capacity was reduced by 40%, while crossing the 3-mile wide estuary was impossible during daylight, except under the foulest weather conditions.

By 22 Sep, the evacuation of the 15th Army was complete. In two and half weeks the Germans had staged another 'little Dunkirk', just as they had done in Sicily. Some German estimates suggest that the final numbers evacuated were around 120 000 men, 7 000 vehicles, 7 000 horse-drawn vehicles and 700 guns for the loss of 20 vessels. Completion of the withdrawal left the responsibility for the Breskens Pocket to Major General Eberding and his 64th Division, who would hold the area for another month before the Canadians finally gained control. Canadian intelligence assessments seriously underestimated the fighting force facing them, both in numbers and fighting qualities, qualities that were underpinned with a threat from Higher Command that any signs of cowardice or poor performance would result in repercussions against not only the individuals concerned but also their families back in Germany. The Canadians would have to fight for every inch of ground, with limited manpower, untrained reinforcements, hampered by poor weather which disrupted air support, a lack of armoured support and an enemy who had every inch of the Pocket covered by firepower that included the coastal batteries over on Walcheren.

However, the Pocket was eventually taken and once in Allied hands, Breskens would become the launching point for INFATUATE I, the amphibious assault on Vlissingen (Flushing) that can easily be seen across the Scheldt on Walcheren.



TAKING THE BRESKENS POCKET

Day Two Stand Five _OP SWITCHBACK - The Amphibious Assault from Terneuzen to Hoofdplaat

SWITCHBACK's initial attack was launched from the south across the Leopold Canal. From the German point of view this was the most likely enemy approach; indeed, they thought that it was the only avenue of approach. An amphibious assault from the west along the North Sea shoreline was impractical given the strength of the defences along the Atlantic Wall. But the Germans had also discounted an amphibious approach from the north, due to their gun batteries along the northern shore of the Scheldt Estuary and the difficult mudflats and dykes on the southern shore. General Simonds' appreciation of the battlespace was rather different.

On 6 Oct 1944, 50 Buffalo amphibious land craft troop carriers were delivered to 9th Brigade, leaving the troops less than 24 hours for familiarization and rehearsals before the attack was due to commence in the early hours of 8 Oct. As there were insufficient vehicles to attack in a single wave, the plan was to attack with two battalions up. The Buffaloes would then have to return to the launch point to pick up the Brigade Headquarters and the reserve battalion for the second wave.

On 7 Oct the Buffaloes left Ghent and travelled up the Terneuzen Canal towards Terneuzen. Powered by aircraft engines the Buffaloes made so much noise that the German air defences 20 miles away in Vlissingen (Flushing) thought they were under air attack and began shooting into the sky. At Terneuzen one of the lock gates connecting the canal with the Scheldt failed, which imposed a 24-hour delay on the operation, due to launch in the early hours of 8 Oct.

Just after midnight on 9 Oct the attack launched as planned, sustainable only if the Buffaloes could transit back to Terneuzen in daylight hours and bring in the follow-on forces and supplies. To provide cover for this, the chemical warfare section of the 1st Canadian Army used over 250 tons of smoke-generating equipment which was placed on barges and towed out into the middle of the Scheldt, shrouding the allied activity along the southern shore. For seven days, until a land route was established into the Breskens Pocket, the chemical warfare section ensured that a thick smokescreen was in place. Enemy artillery on Walcheren was reduced to firing blind, although the smoke barges made attractive targets.

9th Brigade crossed the mouth of the Braakman Inlet and landed to the east of Hoofdplaat, a tiny hamlet in the rear, or coastal, side of the Pocket, thus exerting pressure on the German defensive force from two directions simultaneously. The Germans were taken by surprise and a Canadian foothold was established, but once again German troops recovered quickly and counter-attacked with ferocity. 9th Brigade dealt with the counter-attacks successfully, while 10th Brigade ,4th Canadian Armoured Division crossed the Leopold Canal and advanced across Isabella Polder. 8th Brigade was able to move southwards from the coast, opening up a land-based supply route into the Pocket.

Despite these successes, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division still had to fight hard to free the other towns along the coast: Breskens, Fort Frederik Hendrik, Oostburg, Zuidzande and Cadzand. It would be almost a month after the launch of SWITCHBACK before 1st Canadian Army liberated the Belgian towns of Knokke and Zeebrugge.

The text on the brick memorial column at Hoofdplaat indicates that it is the first of eighteen markers along what is known as the 'Canadian Liberation Route', lining the 21 mile (33 km) route which the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division followed in Oct and Nov 1944 during SWITCHBACK. An annual two day march is traditionally held in the first week of Nov during 'Canada Week' in Knokke-Heist. The last memorial column can be found in Alfred Verweerplein in Knokke.

Flight Magazine, 26th October, 1944

War In The Air

Air Blows in the West

“Despite deplorable weather the Canadians were busy all last week in trying to clear the water approaches to Antwerp. The main obstruction was the little place named Breskens, on the mainland just opposite Flushing. This was stoutly held by German parachute troops and infantry; but theirs must have been a depressing fight, as they knew that no relief could come to them. Their only consolation was that while the Allies could not make use of the port of Antwerp they were handicapped, and probably delayed in their plans for breaking through into Germany. Actually the Americans and British did start fighting on German soil before the Russians managed to cross the frontier into East Prussia. Now the Reich has experienced foreign invasion on both its West and East Fronts. At first the invasion was on a small scale; but it is bound to increase to great proportions before long.”

ITINERARY_DAY THREE

TIME	EVENT	REMARKS
0730	Breakfast	
0830	Depart Hotel	
0845-0915	Visit Op VITALITY Memorial at Sloedam	RV with 33 Sqn Engr Gp
0935-1000	Visit camouflaged German Bunker on N661	Example of German deception efforts
1015– 1115	Vlissingen - Uncle Beach, Oranjemolen, German OP, Memorials	Op INFATUATE 1
1145 - 1415	Westkapelle - 'The Gap', W15 battery, Sherman tank memorial, Polderhuis museum, the lighthouse 'Vuurtoren'	Op INFATUATE 2 Lunch in Westkapelle, various options
1430-1500	Drive through and visit Domberg - W17, the water tower	
1520-1620	Visit Middelburg	Gen Daser's HQ, 6-8 Damplein
1645-1745	Visit 'Wings to Victory' Museum, Midden Zeeland Airfield	Home of the local Aviation Society, who are looking into another excavation of the Groeneweg crash site.
1800	Arrive hotels	
1900	Rijsttafel	33 Sqn Association Gp meal, with Jan Westhoeve and the Roneys. All you can eat buffet with some drinks -

STAND DISCUSSIONS

Stand 6 - Vlissingen. Discuss the collaborative land, littoral and air planning and operation at the strategic, operational and tactical levels in relation to the taking of Vlissingen by the Allies. Compare this to the joint and combined operations of today.

Stand 7 - Westkapelle. Briefly outline the allied plans for Op INFATUATE 2. Considering the moral component, what role did Air Power play in its success and how could modern Air Power and structure improve the chances of success?

DAY THREE - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The plan for opening the Scheldt Estuary involved four main operations. The first operation cleared the area north of Antwerp and secured access to South Beveland. SWITCHBACK, which we looked at yesterday, cleared the Breskens Pocket north of the Leopold Canal. The third operation— VITALITY—would capture South Beveland, and the fourth operation—INFATUATE—would capture Walcheren Island.

From a bridgehead across the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal northeast of Antwerp, the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division opened the decisive phase of the Battle of the Scheldt on 2 Oct 1944. Against the German 346th Division, the Canadians began the advance north from Antwerp to reach South Beveland, from where they would advance northwest to seal the isthmus. For the first few days the Canadian infantry made steady progress, despite stiff opposition. But as they approached Woensdrecht the stalemate settling over the MARKET GARDEN salient permitted the Germans to send in reinforcements. At Woensdrecht they committed Colonel von der Heydte's 6th Parachute Regiment and part of *Kampfgruppe* Chill. By 6 Oct, with Woensdrecht less than 5 km away, the objective of the first phase appeared to be within the Canadians' grasp. The Germans, however, were determined to hold the town, realising that it controlled direct access to South Beveland and Walcheren. The Canadian infantry was forced to attack well prepared defensive positions over open, flooded land; driving rain, booby traps and land mines made the advance very difficult. On 13 Oct, on what would come to be known as 'Black Friday', the Canadian 5th Infantry Brigade's Black Watch battalion was virtually wiped out in heavy fighting.

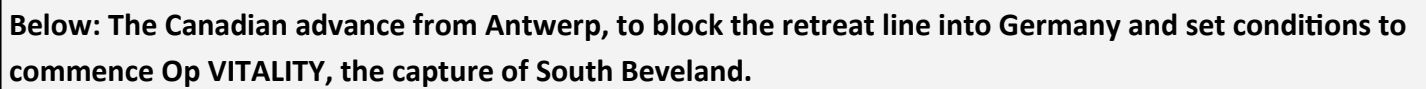
It was not until 16 Oct that the Canadians were ready to launch an all-out attack on Woensdrecht, this time supported by an immense artillery barrage. As Allied artillery brought down a heavy concentration of fire, often within metres of their own troops, the Germans slowly fell back. Two weeks after the start of this operation, Woensdrecht was finally in Canadian hands; South Beveland and Walcheren were now cut off from the Dutch mainland. The first objective was secure, but the Canadians had suffered heavy casualties.

At this point the challenge and opportunity was clear to all, and Montgomery issued a directive that made the opening of the Scheldt Estuary the top priority. To the east, the British 2nd Army attacked westwards to clear the Netherlands south of the River Maas, helping to secure the Scheldt region from an German counterattack. Meanwhile, Simonds concentrated on the area north of South Beveland. 4th Canadian Armoured Division, which had been engaged at the Leopold Canal, moved north of the Scheldt and drove hard for Bergen-op-Zoom. By 24 Oct, access to South Beveland was sealed off.

VITALITY opened on 24 Oct 1944 when 2nd Canadian Infantry Division established bridgeheads into South Beveland. They hoped to advance rapidly, bypassing opposition to seize crossings over the Beveland Canal, but they too were slowed down by mines, mud and strong German defensive positions. An amphibious attack was made across the West Scheldt by the 52nd (Lowland) Division to get behind the Beveland Canal defensive positions, and this outflanking manoeuvre allowed the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade to begin a frontal attack using assault boats. Once the engineers were able to bridge the canal on the main road, the defensive Canal Line was broken. The German defence began to withdraw and the Canadians were able to clear South Beveland as far as the crossing point over to Walcheren, where 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade would assault and capture the Causeway on 31 Oct. With 3rd Canadian Division's capture of Breskens. The stage was set for INFATUATE, dual amphibious assaults on Walcheren Island. 155 Brigade would assault Vlissingen from Breskens (INFATUATE 1) and 4 Special Service Brigade would assault Westkapelle (INFATUATE 2) from Ostend.

Walcheren Island was one of the most heavily fortified places in the world. To soften up these formidable defences Bomber Command had attacked the dyke south of Westkapelle on 3 Oct and at Vlissingen on 7 Oct,

7-16 Oct 1944



flooding much of the island and causing many civilian casualties. Unfortunately, as predicted by senior RAF officers, the bombs were ineffective against the heavily fortified coastal batteries, making the amphibious assault highly dangerous, especially around Westkapelle where W15 and W13, north and south of the town respectively, were still active and dominated the approaches.

To clear a path for the assaulting troops a massive preliminary bombardment was planned using bombers and heavy artillery from two Army Groups while 84 Group RAF were to strafe the defenders and lay smoke to shield the landing craft. The final approach was to be made by Captain Pugsley's 'T Force', with HMS *Warspite*, HMS *Roberts* and HMS *Erebus* shelling targets ashore. Specialised landing craft of the Support Squadron provided direct fire support during the final 'run-in', including LCT(R)s with 600 rocket tubes, LCGs with two 4.7" guns, lighter and more vulnerable LCS(L)s with 6-pounder guns and MGs, and LCFs with pom-poms and Oerlikons. The most dangerous job went to the LCG(M)s designed to beach in front of their targets so they could engage them with turret mounted 17-pounder guns. All this fire support was designed to deflect the fire of the deadly shore batteries and allow the LCI(S)s and LCTs of 4 Special Service Brigade to land on the beaches. 41 Cdo, with armoured support, would secure Westkapelle before moving north towards Domberg, while 48 Cdo would beach and head south towards W13 and Zoutelande.

The plan for Vlissingen involved an amphibious assault led by 4 Cdo to an area codenamed Uncle Beach, next to the excellent navigation feature of the Oranjemolen. A Canadian artillery barrage covered the initial waves. Once the landing beach was secure, 155 Bde would follow—4 KOSB, 5 KOSB and 7th/9th Royal Scots. The aim was to capture the town, move east and west to take the batteries, make contact with the forces from Westkapelle and the Causeway and then head inland to Middelburg.

From our location at Goes on the South Beveland isthmus, we will drive over the Sloedam, where the physical separation of Walcheren and South Beveland is no longer the barrier that was presented to the Canadians and Scots in Oct–Nov 1944. The pleasant coastal towns of Vlissingen, Zoutelande, Westkapelle and Domburg that we will see on our route around the island were all completely rebuilt after the war, having all been subject to heavy bombardment and inundation.

Our first two stops are in Vlissingen (Flushing) to view an example of the camouflage used by the Germans to disguise their bunkers and installations from the air, before we look at the landing beaches during the INFATUATE 1 amphibious assault from Breskens. With its strategic location between the Schelde river and the North Sea, Vlissingen had been an important harbour for centuries and it was granted city rights in 1315. In the 17th Century Vlissingen was a main harbour for the world's first multinational corporation and first company to issue stock, the Dutch East India Company (*VOC—Vereenigde Ost-Indische Compagnie*).

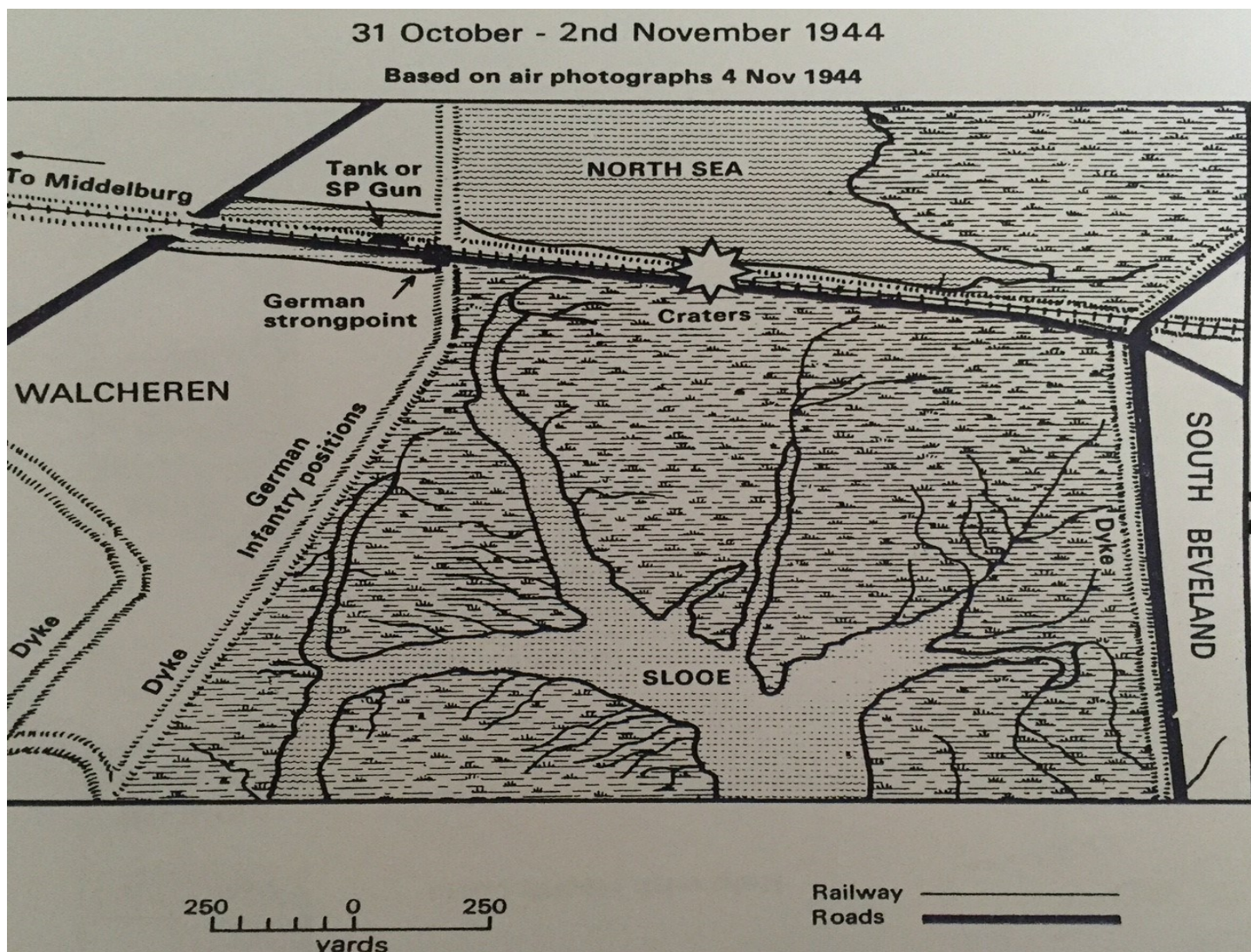
After viewing Vlissingen, Uncle Beach and the unmistakeable landmark of the *Oranjemolen* we will be driving on through Zoutelande to Westkapelle. Along the way we will see many examples of some of the 300+ bunkers that were built on the island as part of the Atlantic Wall, many of which have been restored. The lighthouse at Westkapelle - the *vuurtoren* - can be seen for miles away and was a perfect landmark for the amphibious forces, Bomber Command, and the Spitfires and Typhoons of No 84 Group, 2 TAF. We will be stopping at the Polderhuis Museum at the base of the dyke wall and having a good look at 'The Gap' before heading up to one of the major battery sites at Domburg, one of the objectives for the amphibious landing force once Westkapelle was secured. From Domburg we will head into the capital of Walcheren, Middelburg, to visit the site of the German surrender to the Allied Forces who finally arrived in the town square near to General Daser's headquarters. From Middelburg we will head back to view the 'Wings for Victory' Museum at Midden Zeeland Airfield before heading back to the hotel at Goes.



The view across the Causeway.

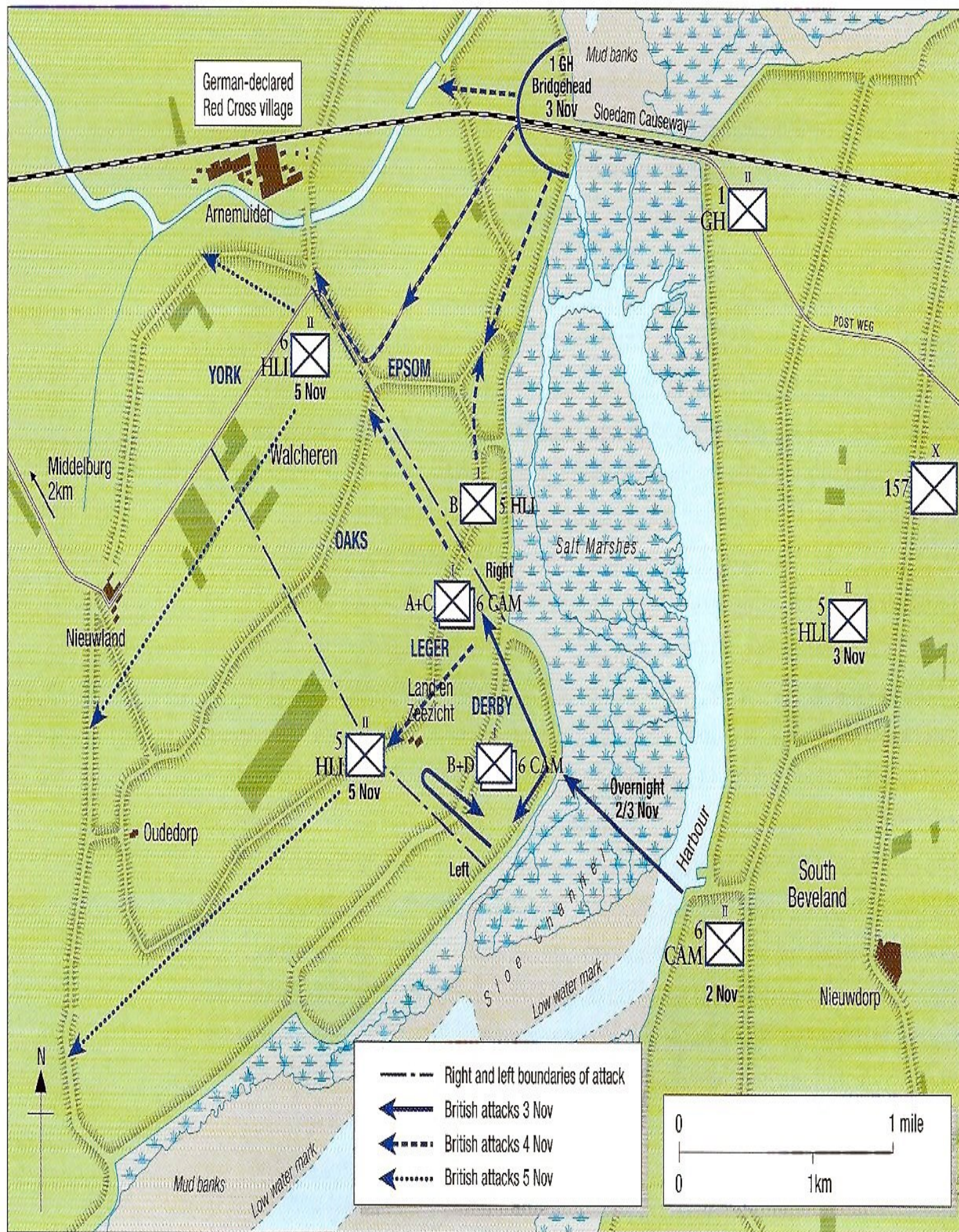
In order to take Walcheren the island was attacked from three directions: across the Causeway from the east, across the Scheldt from the south, and by sea from the west. Walcheren's defences were extremely strong and the only land approach was the long, narrow causeway from South Beveland - 1 200m long, 40 m wide and 7 m above the high tide mark. The Germans had removed the rail tracks, cratered and mined the roads and had the entire Causeway covered with a variety of light and heavy weapons, including a tank and an anti-tank gun. To make matters worse for the attacking force, the flat ground that surrounded the Causeway was considered too saturated for movement on foot yet there was not enough water to support an assault in boats. According to Canadian intelligence and staff planning estimates, a frontal assault across the Causeway was the only course of action, with Canadian troops establishing a bridgehead that would allow units from the British 52nd (Lowland) Div to pass through into Walcheren. The main reliance for seizing Walcheren would therefore rest on the seaborne assaults, assisted by the attack across the Causeway.

At the 31 1000 Oct 'O' Gp the Black Watch was ordered to launch an assault that day to feel out the enemy defences. After a preparatory artillery barrage at 1345 hr C Coy began its advance, followed by A, B and D Coys. Under withering and deadly fire, just one platoon managed to get within 75m of the German defences, the fire being so intense that the armoured support that was in place at 1430 at the eastern end of the Causeway could not advance forward. C Coy withdrew at 1930. Another artillery barrage was laid down at 2340 to cover the 01 0001 Nov assault by the Calgary Highlanders, who managed to establish a small bridgehead by 0930 but took heavy casualties. At the 01 2100 Nov 'O' Gp it was decided that another battalion would be thrown forward, Le Regiment de Maisonneuve, who went forward at 02 0400 Nov with a brief that the men of 1st BN The Glasgow Highlanders would relieve them 0500, just one hour later. The 'Maisies' managed to get just one coy beyond the largest crater near the centre of the Causeway, and just one platoon and the remnants of two more got all the way across. The remains of the 'Maisies' battalion was not withdrawn until 02 1445. At that point the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division was withdrawn from the Battle of the Scheldt. The Division had lost 3 650 men, 1 000 of them in the previous week moving through South Beveland to the Causeway.



Officers of 157 Brigade, 52nd (Lowland) Division who were in the 5th Brigade's TAC HQ had watched with horror as three Battalions had been thrown into a brutal frontal assault, describing the orders as, "... an elementary infringement of a principal of war i.e. a reinforcement of failure." and the CO refused to send the entire 1st BN forward. Consequently CO 52nd (Lowland) Division, Major General Hakewell Smith, who was ordered by GOC 2nd Canadian Corps, General Foulkes, to send the Division forward, went and demanded written orders and threatened to lodge a protest with 21st Army Group HQ. Hakewell Smith wrote, "It was not easy to refuse the direct order of my senior commander. However, I said I did not consider that an attack down the 1500 metres of straight causeway covered by German guns and machine guns dug into the banks of the dykes was a viable military operation, and that we would try to find another route. The Canadian Corps commander said there was no other route and that we had to go in at dawn the next morning. I again protested that it was not a viable military operation, that we would have very heavy casualties and achieve nothing. My Corps commander was insistent, and after further argument he departed, saying that if we did not put in this attack there would be a new commander of the 52(L) Division immediately." However, Foulkes granted Hakewell Smith 48 hours to produce a new plan and having been liaising with the Dutch about a way across the Sloe British sappers had marked a ford in the channel on 1 Nov, resulting in Op MALLARD on 2-3 Nov. 6th Cameronians were able to establish a hold behind the German defences and 52nd (Lowland) Division was finally able to unlock the stranglehold at the western end of the Causeway and begin the advance towards Middelburg.

Operation Mallard: crossing the Sloe, 3 November



Day Three Stand Two / Three_Op INFATUATE 1 - Vlissingen

The men of 155 Bde (Brig James McLaren) had gathered at Breskens at the end of Oct, with 4 Cdo attached to lead the assault. 4 Cdo had had two French troops from 10 (Inter Allied) Cdo attached to their group. At 0200hrs on 1 Nov the men of 4 were roused from billets in the ruins of the town and walked down to the harbour, while shells from 300 guns whistled overhead towards Vlissingen. Around 550 men climbed aboard their landing craft and sailed towards their objectives under persistent low cloud and drizzle that had blanketed the estuary for the past twenty-four hours, but had grounded their promised bomber support. Yet when the first flight of landing craft beached on Uncle Beach and, inadvertently, on the adjacent Oranjemolen (Orange Mill) promontory at 0545, they met with immediate success against a disorganised enemy, still reeling under the effects of an hour's concentrated bombardment by fifteen regiments of artillery. As the men of the obstacle clearance units began to dismantle the steel defence works that still obstructed the approach to the beach, the reconnaissance party fought their way to the harbour entrance. There a small force overran an underground 75mm gun emplacement that threatened the approaching second flight and took twenty prisoners, before regrouping in nearby Oranjestraat where they established a position protecting the exit from the beachhead.

A few minutes later, No 2 Troop disembarked from the second flight of LCAs without casualties and stormed onto the waterfront where a section made a successful attack on a 50mm gun position. The Commandos quickly put the captured weapon to good use and leaving a scratch party to provide them with covering fire, they worked their way eastwards along the promontory in a series of assaults on each of the pillboxes that stood in their way. At the same time a second section made similar exceptional progress on the left flank clearing the way for an advance along Piet Heinstraat.

By 0830, as the first of the next wave of LCAs bringing back the 4th KOSB to Uncle Beach appeared through the smoke, the entire Commando group was consolidated ashore, had established a perimeter around the Old Town and were poised to move against the inland positions that were still menacing their narrow beachhead. The first stage of INFATUATE I had been an outstanding success. German resistance increased throughout the day, which forced the 5th KOSB's wave to turn back to Breskens around 1400 and return under cover of darkness. Brig McLaren, CO 155 Bde, arrived at Uncle Beach just before midnight, received a brief on the situation, and then issued orders for the attacks against 'Brighton', 'Worthing' and 'Dover' early on 2 Nov.

The following day - D+1 - 5th KOSB's were tasked with clearing the New Town and by 1700 they held the entire area west of the Middleburg Canal. 4 Cdo had been directed to clearing the seafront. Having reached 'Bexhill' crossroads they waited for 7th/9th Royal Scots to relieve them, but then received orders to prepare to cross the Nolle Gap and assist 47 Cdo as it advanced towards Dishoek. The Nolle Gap was a very dangerous, fast flowing channel, full of debris, concrete and broken beach obstacles that would have been a serious hazard for the Buffaloes. Fortunately the operation was postponed later that evening because an artillery plan could not be worked out in time. Meanwhile, as D+1 drew to a close, the Royal Scots were ordered to capture the Grand Hotel Britannia on the western side of the town. The Scots were briefed that this well protected, fortified building surrounded by pillboxes, bunkers and trenches, suspected to be the HQ of the Flushing garrison, contained a garrison of fifty men.

At 0145 on D+2 the Scots advanced towards the hotel, approaching from the rear. They were caught up in the supporting artillery barrage, had to ford through freezing cold flood water up to their armpits and then found themselves pinned down by flak cannons on the roof of the hotel and neighbouring buildings. At one point, low in ammunition and taking casualties they were considering withdrawing, but several individual acts of bravery, plus the sight of their CO being shot and lying in the floodwater crying out 'On the Royals' the Scots charged into the bunkers and hotel and captured Oberst Eugen Reinhardt and his 1019th Grenadier Regiment HQ and his 130 strong staff. Once the men in the hotel had surrendered, the Scots discovered they had captured 600 Germans and had killed 50 Germans in the process. The Scots CO, Lt Col Melvill, was wounded but survived, but 20 of his men had been killed and dozens had been wounded.

Flushing was secured by 0810 4 Nov (D+3) and the focus moved to the advance along the Middelburg Canal towards the capital.

[illegible]



**Above: The Oranjemolen (Orange Windmill) and Uncle Beach.
Below: German OP Bunker near the Oranjemolen.**



Day Three Stand Four_Op INFATUATE 2 - Westkapelle

The Dutch island of Walcheren stood guard over the Scheldt Estuary, which in turn controlled shipping access to the port of Antwerp. In the autumn of 1944 Walcheren was still in German hands, and the Allies were desperate to take the island in order to open up Antwerp to their shipping. Unfortunately Walcheren was one of the most complete and heavily defended sections of Hitler's Atlantic Wall. Allied expectations were that the capture of Walcheren would prove difficult and costly, and that would prove to be an accurate assessment.

To hamper the German defence, the RAF breached the island's massive perimeter sea walls and flooded the central area of Walcheren. It was predicted that amphibious vehicles would still be able to operate. Before the amphibious landings of INFATUATE 1 and 2 would commence on 1 Nov, planners had agreed that the island would be bombed repeatedly. On 2 Oct, Bomber Command dropped leaflets warning the civilian population to be prepared for a bombing offensive and to evacuate the island if possible. The bombing offensive commenced on 3 Oct and would last for another 27 days. The objective of flooding the island's low-lying interior and many of the German defensive facilities was achieved, but at a high cost to the Dutch civilian inhabitants. Having breached the wall in four places by 1 Nov much of Walcheren had been inundated for almost a month.

On 2 Nov the seaborne force from Ostend mounted a frontal assault on the strong and relatively undamaged fortifications near Westkapelle. Tidal conditions had dictated a daylight assault, making the assault and landing craft easy targets for the German heavy coastal guns. Weather conditions in the UK delayed the air cover expected to support the assault, and Royal Navy crews displayed exceptional bravery in laying down supporting fire, acting as decoys to divert fire away from the assault craft, and rescue soldiers and sailors from sinking ships. Once the weather at the air bases had cleared, Spitfires and Typhoons were able to strike



Aan Bewoners van de Eilanden in de Monding van de Rivier de Schelde

WAARSCHUWING

**Uitgevaardigd door het Hoofd-
kwartier van den Opperbevel-
hebber van het Geallieerde
Expeditioneleger.**

1) Het is zeer waarschijnlijk, dat de vijandelijke troepen en installaties op uwe eilanden binnenkort aan een hevig en langdurig luchtbombardement zullen blootstaan.

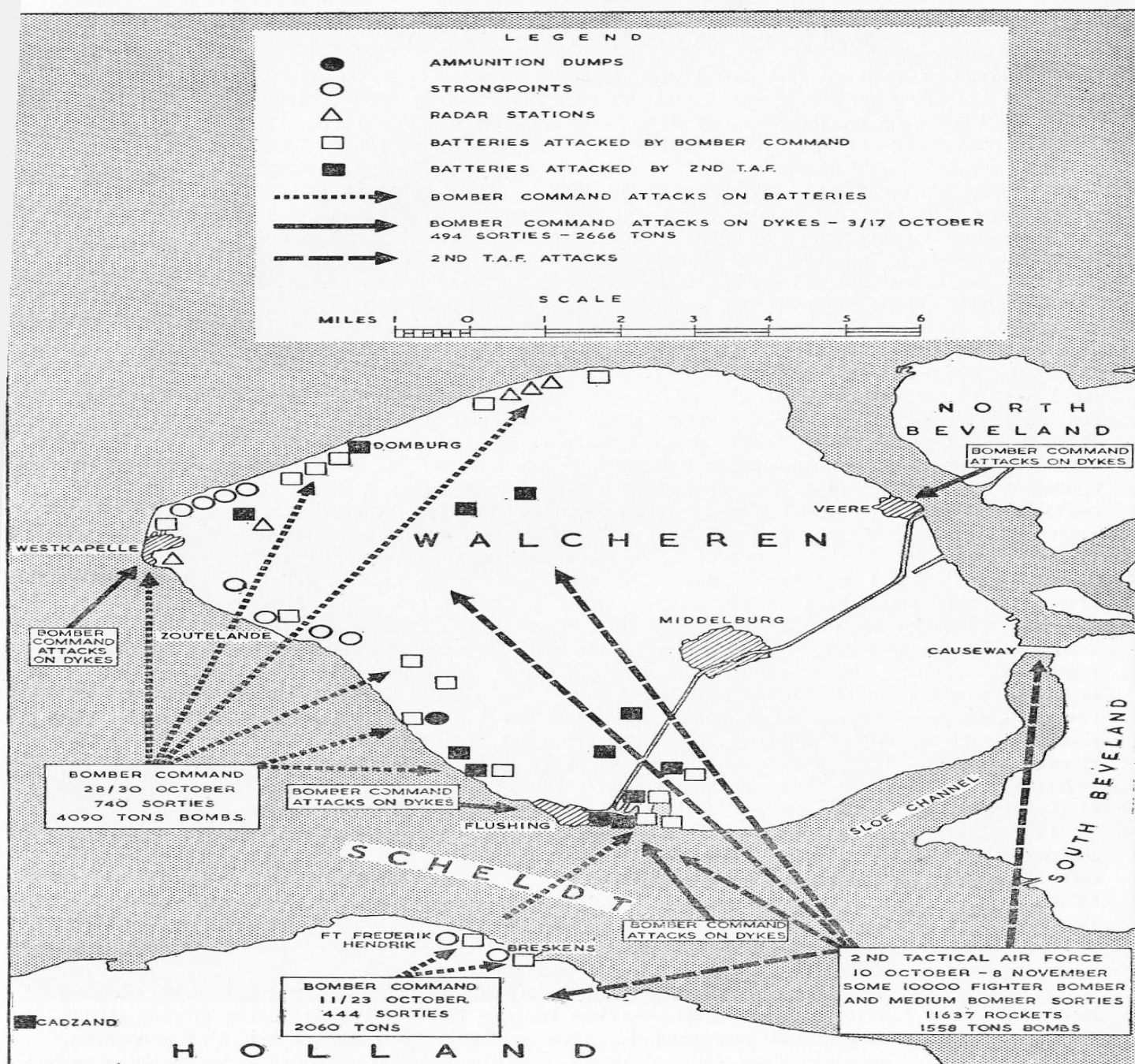
2) Het is de vurigste wensch van het geallieerde oppercommando dat de burgerbevolking zal worden gespaard voor de gevolgen van deze noodzakelijke militaire actie voorzover dit eenigszins mogelijk zal zijn.

3) Niet alleen een luchtbombardement maar het gevaar van overstroming bedreigt eveneens uw leven en dat van uwe families.

4) Verlaat de eilanden of indien dat niet mogelijk is, verhuist dan ONMIDDELIJK met uwe families naar een veilige plaats op de eilanden.

Alle militaire doelen — wegen, kanalen, transportlijnen, krachtstations, spoorwegemplacements of loódsen, opslagplaatsen en depots, vijandelijke concentraties van allerlei soorten zijn de middelpunten van gevaarzones : gaat ONMIDDELIJK uit de nabijheid daarvan.

5) Reist uitsluitend te voet en neemt niets met U mee, dat U niet gemakkelijk kunt dragen. Houdt U verwijderd van de groote verkeerswegen en begeeft U uitsluitend door velden. Reist niet in groote groepen, welke ten onrechte kunnen worden aangezien voor vijandelijke formaties. Houdt U verwijderd van laagliggend grondgebied en van militaire doelen totdat de vijand van uwe eilanden is verdreven.



AIR OPERATIONS AGAINST WALCHEREN, 3 OCTOBER-8 NOVEMBER 1944

Flight Magazine October 12th 1944

The Outlook

Good Bombing

"...Some ten days after the breaching of the (Ems_ Ed) canal our Bomber Command struck another blow which ought to have a most beneficial effect on the Battle of Holland. After a warning by General Eisenhower to the inhabitants, Lancasters breached the dykes at Westkapelle and let the waters of the North Sea flow over the island of Walcheren. While German guns remained active on that island it was not possible for the Allies to make use of the port of Antwerp. To open that supply line to the Allies must greatly facilitate the attack now on the Siegfried Line. If all now goes according to plan, the Allies will owe much to the grand work of Bomber Command."

**To the Inhabitants of the
Islands at the mouth of
the Schelde Estuary**

WARNING

**Issued by the Headquarters
of the Supreme Commander of the
Allied Expeditionary Force**

- 1) It is very likely that the enemy troops and installations on your islands will soon be exposed to a heavy and enduring air bombardment.
- 2) It is the Allied Commander's utmost desire that, as far as is possible, the civilian population will be spared from the results of this necessary military action.
- 3) Not only the air bombardment but also the danger from flooding threatens your life and that of your families.
- 4) Leave the islands or, if that is not possible, evacuate yourselves and your families IMMEDIATELY to a safe place on the islands.

All military targets—roads, canals, transport lines, power stations, railway marshalling yards and warehouses, storage facilities and depot, enemy concentrations of all kinds are the centre points of danger zones; leave the vicinity IMMEDIATELY.

- 5) Leave the area on foot without delay and do not take anything with you that you cannot carry easily. Avoid using the main carriageways and only travel through the fields. Do not travel in large groups which could possibly be mistaken as an enemy formation. Keep away from low lying ground and from military targets until the enemy has been driven from your islands.

the coastal defences, assisting the commandos to fight their way ashore. With the successful landings around Westkapelle, the fall of 'Fortress Walcheren' became a question of hard fighting and time.

In the early hours of 01 Nov 4 Special Service Brigade (Brig Bernard Leicester), who had spearheaded the Normandy landings, sailed with Force T from Ostend to take out W15, the 4 x 150mm Gun Battery at Westkapelle, W17, the 4 x 220mm Gun Battery at Domburg, and W13, the 4 x 150mm Gun Battery at Zoutelande. Force T was commanded by Capt Anthony Pugsley DSO RN aboard HMS Kingsmill, and the force consisted of 130 ships, ranging from a battleship to motor launches. With Force T was Bombardment Sqn (Captain Marcel Kelsey RN) with HMS *Warspite* (battleship), *Roberts* and *Erebus* (monitors) and Support Squadron 'Eastern Flank' (SSEF - Commander Kenneth 'Monkey' Sellars DSC RN). The Allies had learned hard lessons in the Med and Normandy, noting shore gunners fired at craft firing at them, therefore the SSEF role was to draw fire from the coastal batteries as the landing craft approached the beaches.

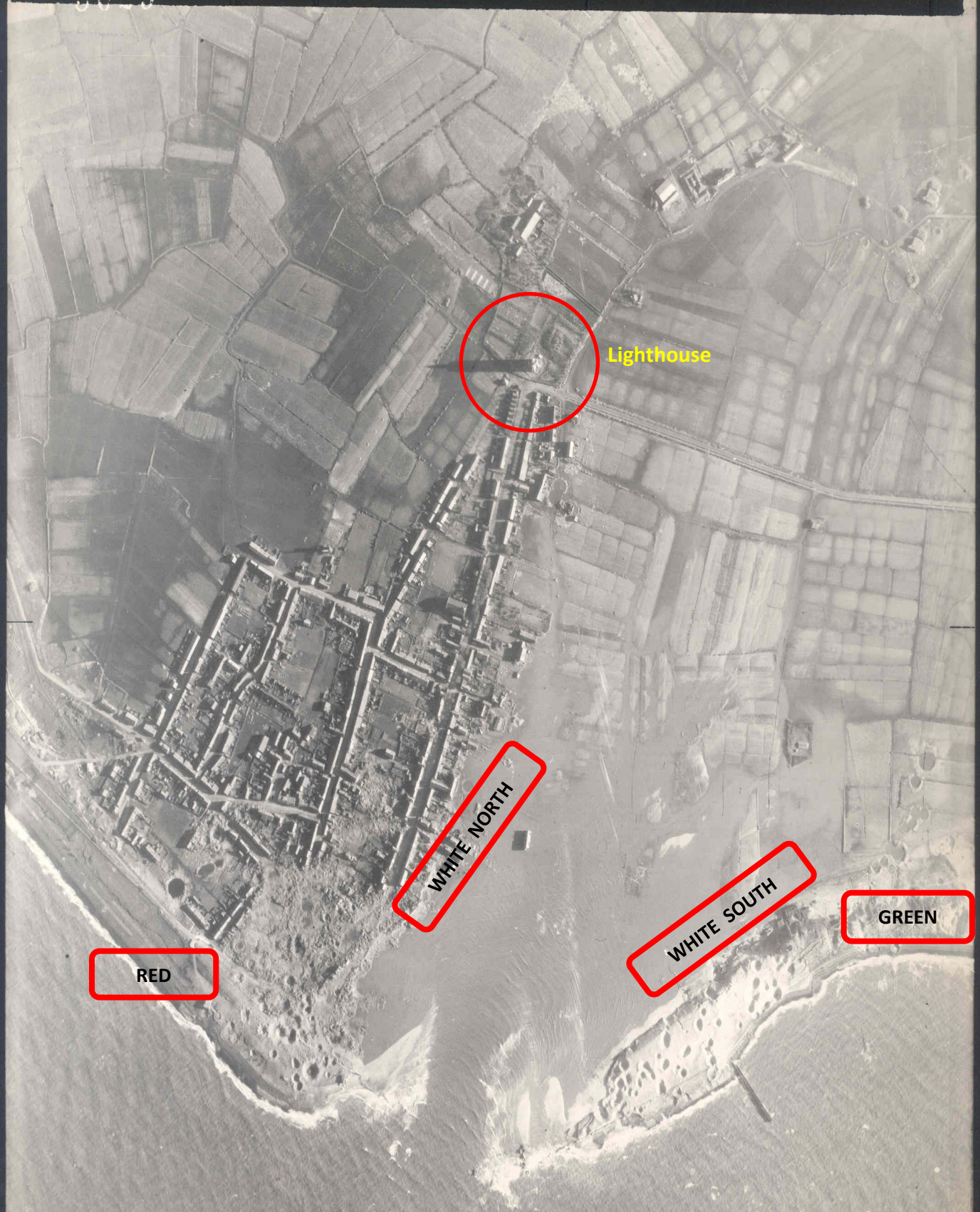
At dawn, with the coastline and lighthouse visible, Pugsley and Leicester were informed that bad weather on the mainland would prevent any preparatory bombing or close air support cover from England. At 0730, after discussion with Brig Leicester, Pugsley sent a message to the Force—NELSON. This meant that despite a lack of air support the assault would go ahead. At 0809 the motor launches sent ahead to mark the sandbanks and safe approach into the Westkapelle Gap were fired on by W15, triggering the start of a massive gun battle. HMS *Warspite* opened fire on W17 at Domburg. HMS *Erebus* was supposed to fire at W15 but had a problem training its gun turrets so HMS *Roberts* was ordered to open fire on the Westkapelle Battery instead. W13 at Zoutelande also joined in firing at the LCAs and LCTs heading for the Gap. It was at this stage, in an incredible act of bravery and self-sacrifice, that the SSEF divided into two groups and sailed forward to draw fire away from the LCAs, resulting in horrific losses - 10 of the 25 SSEF craft were sunk, 172 men were killed or missing, and 125 men were wounded.

Fortune then shone on the force as the LCAs approached Red Beach, W13 ran out of ammunition and the Typhoons and Spitfires of 84 Gp arrived overhead to give support. By 1115 41 Cdo reported that Westkapelle was secure, having discovered that W14 and W22 had been abandoned because of the flooding. On the other side of the gap 48 Cdo was making progress moving south beyond Green Beach towards W13, having cleared W154, W285 and W286. 47 Cdo's landing was less successful, with a strong tide scattering LCAs on both sides of the gap and Buffaloes and Weasels struggling to cross the strong tidal flow. It would take many hours before 47 Cdo was in position to commence the move south to meet up with 4 Cdo moving out of Flushing.

At 1200 41 Cdo was ordered to advance along the dike, take the W15 Westkapelle battery and continue advancing towards W17 at Domberg. By nightfall they had achieved most of their objectives and by nightfall they had established a perimeter in place around Domberg.

4/1145 28 OCT 44 F/36/CA380 & CA401 → ± 1/7600

3629



One of the PRU photographs taken of Westkapelle by the RAF for INFATUATE 2 planning and damage assessment purposes, and the areas that would be used for the amphibious landings zones.



Above: The aftermath of the bombing raid at Westkapelle - Over 150 civilians were killed in the first raid, including the tragedy of 'De Roos Molen' _the Rose Windmill (47 people took cover inside, only 3 survived).



Above: Radar post Monika to the south of Westkapelle. On the left is 'Calais' (Fu.M.O.2), to the right is Wurzburg radar 'Riese' (Fu.M.O.214 (Seetakt)). Only the radar antenna of 'Calais' is visible, the rest of the radar apparatus is behind the large wall to protect it from bomb and grenade shrapnel.



LCTs loaded with troops, Buffaloes and Weasels en route from Ostend to Westkapelle.





Above: Men of 41 Cdo head towards the Westkapelle lighthouse.

Below: Escorting prisoners down the Westkapelle main street towards the beach.



Day Three Stand Five_Op INFATUATE 2 - Domberg

Brigadier Leicester's plan was for three troops of 41 (RM) Cdo to secure Westkapelle. The remainder of 41 Cdo, along with the two No 10 (IA) Cdo troops, would then come ashore, clear Westkapelle and move north. 48 (RM) Cdo would come ashore south of the gap and advance on Zoutelande, two miles to the south. Finally, 47 (RM) Cdo would land and move to meet up with 4 Commando near Flushing.

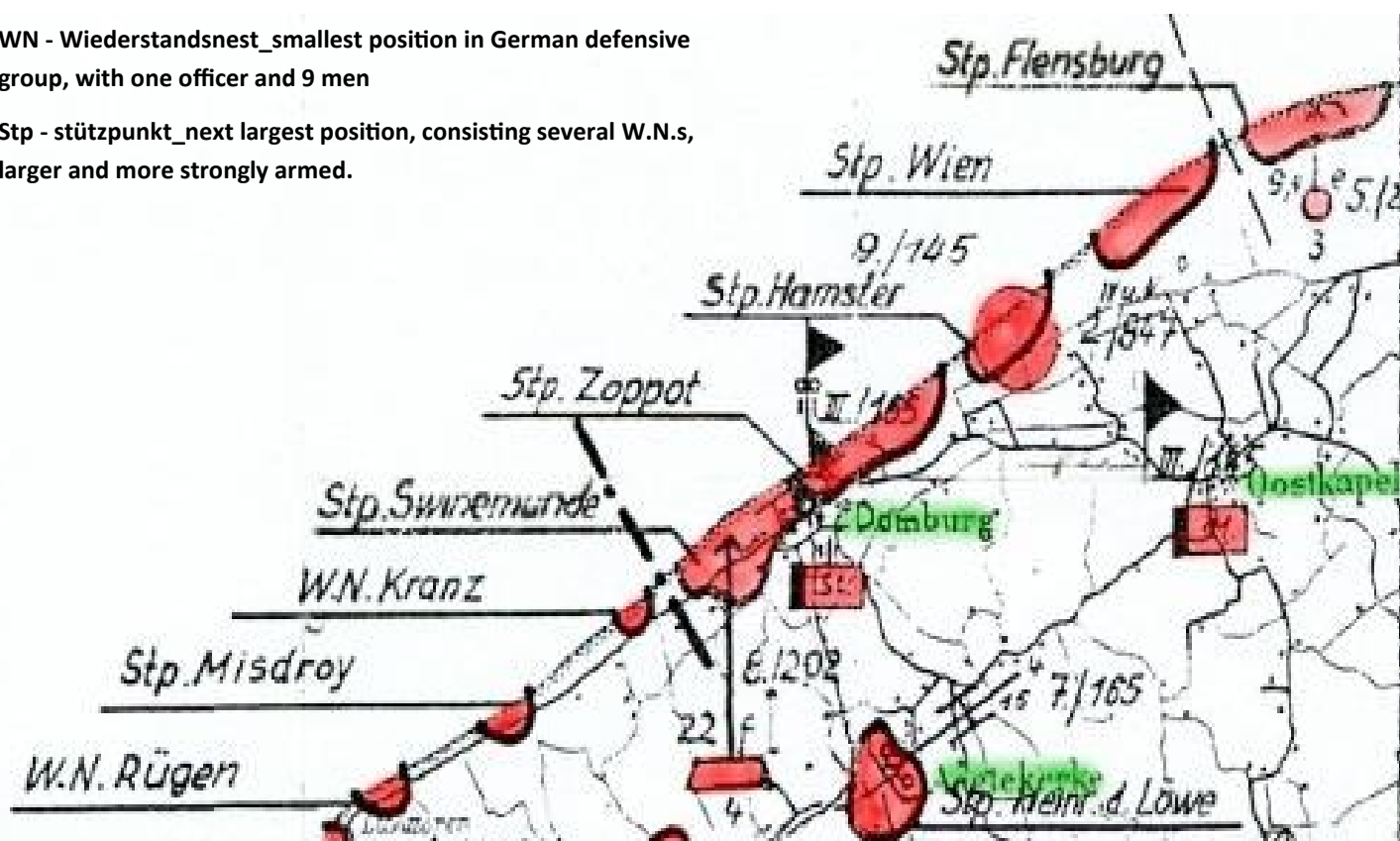
41 Cdo took Westkapelle then three troops - Y, P and B - moved north at 1500 along the dyke, intent on silencing W17 Battery by nightfall. After a bombing and strafing attack by 24 Spitfires the marines took W17 and W283, plus a large number of prisoners before moving on towards the village. By nightfall the marines had formed a perimeter around the town and were planning an attack to clear through the village at first light. At this point, Leicester decided that he wanted 41 Cdo to support the advance south, so ordered 10 (IA) Cdo to take over from 41 Cdo. 10(IA) Cdo arrived at 0400 on D+1, and being smaller in numbers Leicester had also ordered the four remaining tanks—two Shermans and two AVRE Churchills—to assist with the clearance operation. Conditions hindered the movement of the tanks, which took most of D+1 to reach Domberg, but their arrival resulted in German resistance fading and retreated back towards W18 and eastwards to the woods.

On 3 Nov (D+2) Belgian and Norwegian commandos were able to advance over difficult and mined terrain and take a large number of prisoners.

On 4 Nov (D+3) 41 Cdo arrived back in Domberg after a fruitless march south, and advanced on W18 at 1500, while the Belgian Troop advanced inland through the woods. The Belgians made good progress and took 100 prisoners, but 41 Cdo were stopped by mines and enfilade fire from Westhove Castle. It would take another 4 days, and reinforcement by 4 Cdo, before the Germans were trapped around Overduin and Vrouwenpolder in the north-east corner of Walcheren. Artillery was now able to support the assault and German positions were shelled without response. On 8 Nov (D+7) a formal surrender was arranged with the CO of the 1020th Grenadier Regiment in Vrouwenpolder. At 0845 the CO 4 Cdo, Lt Col Dawson, was taken by German staff car to accept the surrender of Oberstleutnant William Veigle, 35 officers and 900 men - they had run out of ammunition.

WN - Widerstandsnest_smallest position in German defensive group, with one officer and 9 men

Stp - stützpunkt_next largest position, consisting several W.N.s, larger and more strongly armed.





**Above: The area around the W17 Domberg Battery. Despite Bomber Command's efforts, and the 300 shells fired by HMS Warspite on 1 Nov 1944, very little damage was done to the battery casements.
Below: Domberg today. The heavily cratered area above is now the golf course.**



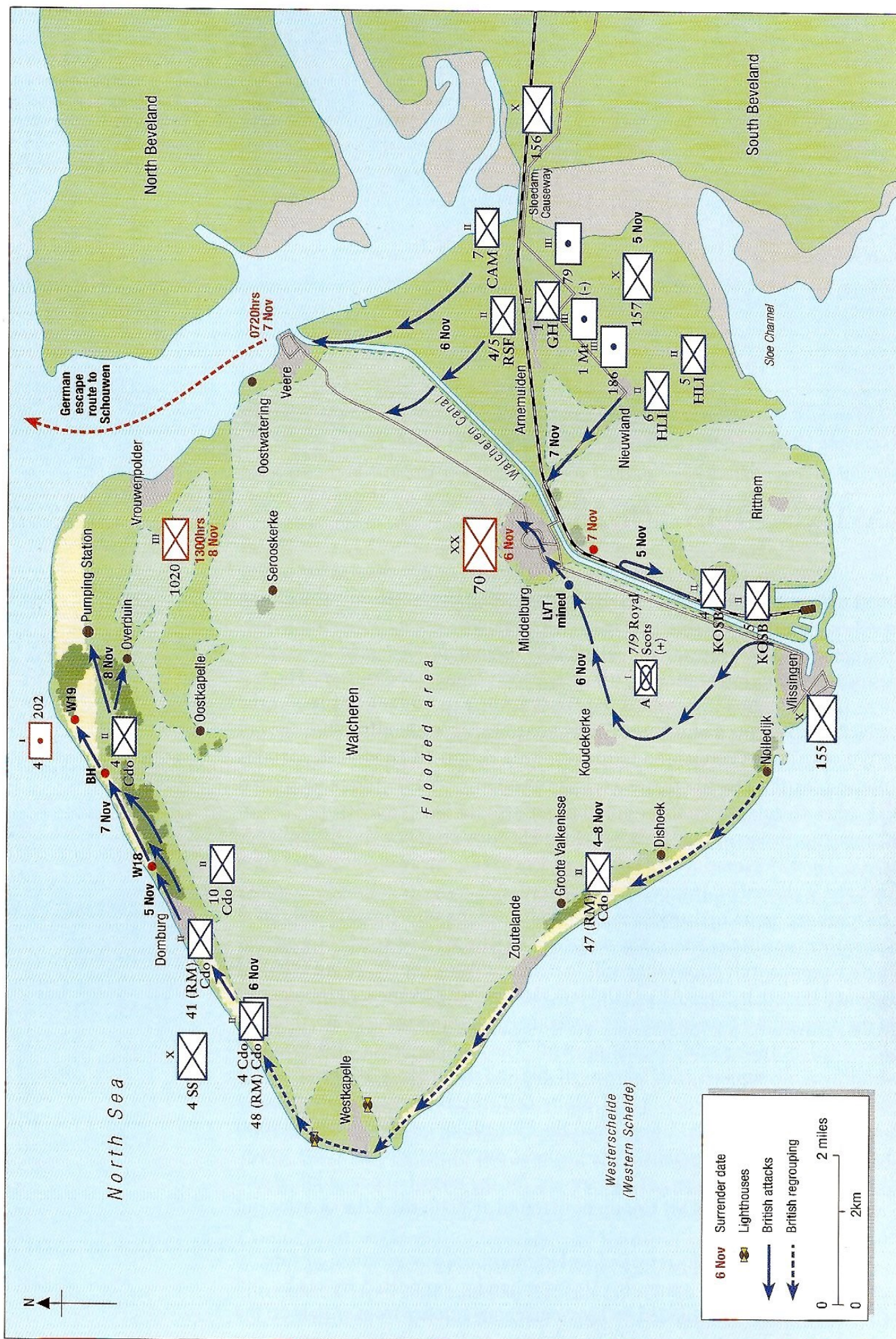


Above: One of the two Sherman tanks still working after the landing at Westkapelle opens fire on the Domberg water tower, being used by the Germans as an observation point.

Below: The Domberg water tower, which still bears the scars of the Nov 1944 fighting.



Walcheren falls: the British follow-up, 3–8 November



Day Three Stand Six _ Middelburg

Unlike the coastal areas, Middelburg escaped the ravages suffered by the towns on the coast and has retained many of its original features. The main square, dominated by a magnificent 15th century town hall , marks the culminating point for the Allied forces involved in the battle for the Scheldt Estuary. .

As we heard earlier on the eastern side of Walcheren, Canadian and British efforts to break out of the bridgehead across the causeway were not achieving great success. It was not until the night of 2 Nov that another foothold was gained, this time by crossing in assault boats to the south of the causeway. Two days later, troops from both bridgeheads were able to link up and begin moving westwards. North Beveland fell on 2 Nov, and British forces from Vlissingen and Westkapelle linked up on 3 Nov. From this point on a systematic advance to clear all Germans from the island ensued. On 6 Nov, eight Buffaloes and 120 men of the 7th/9th Royal Scots rolled into the square. After some negotiation and quick thinking by the Allied officers present, Generalleutnant Wilhelm Daser, commanding 70th Infantry Division, agreed to surrender. Eight days after the initial attack, it was reported that all organized resistance on Walcheren was at an end.



General Daser leaves his HQ with Major, 'Temporary Colonel', R.H.B. Johnston.

The battle to clear the approaches to Antwerp was over, and once the Royal Navy had completed Op CALENDAR, a minesweeping operation to clear the estuary all the way into the port, Allied shipping commenced the delivery of the vital supplies needed by the forces pushing towards Germany. The Royal Navy completed its task on 25 Nov, and the first convoy arrived in Antwerp on 28 Nov 1944. Unbelievably, while Allied naval and military chiefs from Belgium, Great Britain and the United States joined the Burgemeester and dignitaries at the official reception to open the port to Allied shipping, not one Canadian representative was invited. Ironically, the first ship to pull alongside and commence unloading the supplies that were absolutely vital for the continued Allied advance towards Germany was the Canadian-built *Fort Cataraqui*.



Above : Mid-afternoon 5 Nov 1944_ men of the 7th/9th Royal Scots arrive in the Market Square in Middelburg.

Below: German troops under guard in the Main Square following their surrender. 120 men and some Dutch volunteers guarded 2 000 prisoners for 9 hours before men of the Highland Light Infantry and 4th KOSB arrived.



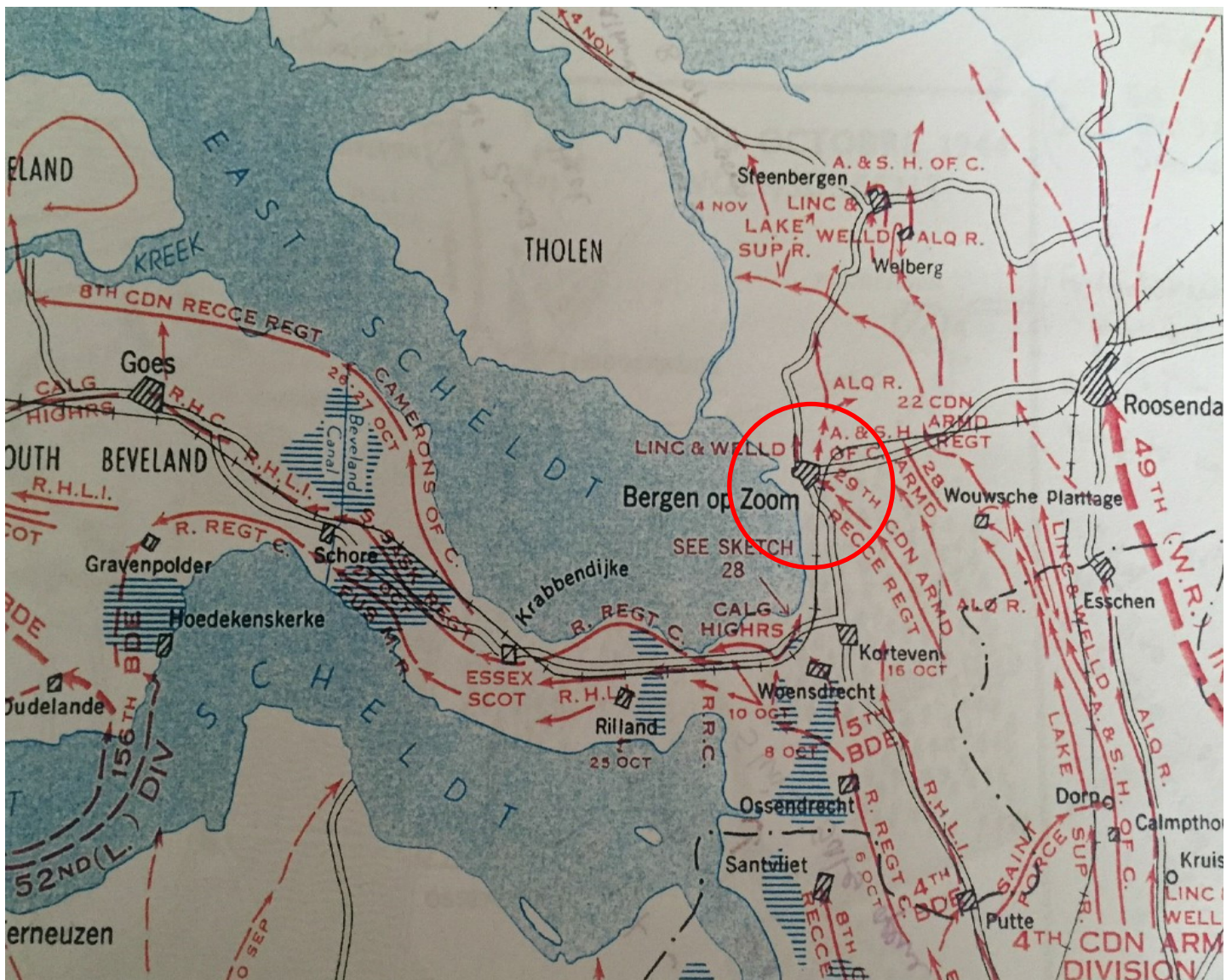
ITINERARY_DAY FOUR

TIME	EVENT	REMARKS
0800	Breakfast	
0900	Depart Hotel	Sqn Blazers and ties available for Antwerp
0930-1045	Visit Bergen op Zoom CWGC	RV with 33 Sqn Engr Gp
1130-1230	Wreath laying ceremony at Schoonselhof CWGC - Flt Lt Godfrey Argument RCAF	33 Sqn Engr Gp will head back to the UK ahead of 33 Sqn Association Gp due to
1400-1500	Visit Ypres	Coffee and chocolates!
1620	Arrive Calais	
1850	Ferry departs Calais	
1930	Coach departs Dover for RAF Benson	
2200	Coach arrives RAF Benson	

DAY FOUR - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Between 1 Oct-8 Nov 1944 the 1st Canadian Army, which was made up of Canadian, British, Polish, Czechoslovakian, French and American troops, had suffered nearly 13 000 casualties, of which more than 6 000 were Canadians. In prisoners alone, the Germans lost more than 40 000 men; no official figures for German losses during this period were released. Allied casualty figures alone illustrate the bitterness of the fight that had been waged under appalling conditions reminiscent of World War One—cold, rain, mud, flooded ground. We have already seen the cemetery at Adegem, today we will visit the much larger CWGC and Canadian cemeteries at Bergen op Zoom before driving down to the Schoonselhof Cemetery in Antwerp, where we will hold a short wreath laying commemoration for Flight Lieutenant Godfrey Addison Argument RCAF, another Commonwealth pilot who served with 33 Sqn and the first of the two pilots that the Sqn lost in action in Europe in 1944.

Our visit to Schoonselhof marks the official end of the 'Walcheren / Battle of the Scheldt' element of the Battlefield Tour. From Antwerp we will head down to the famous town of Ypres, where Chris Perkins will whet our appetite regarding possible options for future Association battlefield tours. After a short stop in town we will head off to the ferry at Calais and the drive back from Dover to RAF Benson.



Day Four Stand One_ British and Canadian War Cemeteries Bergen op Zoom

Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery and Bergen-op-Zoom Canadian War Cemetery lie close to each other and many of the casualties in both cemeteries fell as a result of the series of battles for Walcheren. After all of the hard fought battles that we have discussed over the last three days, principally involving units from the 52nd (Lowland) Division, the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade and the 4th Special Service Brigade, Walcheren was secured on 8 Nov 1944. In total there are over 2 400 men buried in the two cemeteries and you will recognize many of the Regimental names on the headstones.

2nd Canadian Infantry Division

Toronto Scottish Regiment (Machine Guns)

4th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Royal Hamilton Light Infantry

The Essex Regiment

The Royal Regiment of Canada

5th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada

Calgary Highlanders

Le Regiment de Maisonneuve

6th Canadian Infantry Brigade

Les Fusiliers de Mont Royal

Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada

South Saskatchewan Regiment

Brit 52nd (Lowland) Division

155 Brigade

7th/9th Royal Scots

4th KOSB

5th KOSB

156 Brigade

4th/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers

6th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

7th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)

157 Brigade

1st Glasgow Highlanders

5th Highland Light Infantry

6th Highland Light Infantry

4th Special Service Brigade

41, 47 and 48 Commando

This part of the Netherlands lay under the routing of the bomber streams to and from Germany so the cemetery also contains the graves of many Allied airmen. Of particular poignancy for the RAF is the grave of Flight Lieutenant Patrick Garland (36) who was killed on 1 Jan 1945. He was one of four brothers who served and died in the RAF during World War Two. Pilot Officer Desmond Garland RAFVR (27) died on 5 Jun 1942 and is buried at the Runnymede Memorial, Flight Lieutenant John Garland RAFVR (32) died on 28 Feb 1943 and is buried at Midhurst Cemetery. Their youngest brother, Flying Officer Donald Garland (21) died on 12 May 1940 leading a flight of Fairey Battles from 12 Sqn against the rapid German advance through Belgium. For his action of flying his aircraft, with bombs still attached, directly into a bridge across the Albert Canal Donald Garland and his navigator, Sergeant Tom Gray, were awarded posthumous VCs, the first RAF VCs of the war. There is a monument to Garland and his crew at the bridge and the crew lie together in Heverlee War Cemetery, 30 km east of Brussels and 3 km south of Leuven. Their rear gunner, LAC Reynolds, received no award, on the grounds that he did not occupy a 'decision-making' position in the crew.

Day Four Stand Two_Schoonselhof Cemetery

Antwerp was the seat of the Belgian Government from 17 Aug to 7 Oct 1914. Towards the end of Aug, the city was one of the strong positions on the Allied left flank and, by the middle of Sep, a position of critical importance. On 27 Sep 1914 the Germans laid siege to Antwerp and on 9 Oct 1914, before other British and French reinforcements could arrive, the last forts became untenable and the last defenders retired. From 10 Oct 1914 to the Armistice, the city was in German hands. German forces returned to Belgium in May 1940, and occupied Antwerp until its liberation by the Allies on 4 Sep 1944. The town and port were secured, but as we have seen over the last few days it would be several weeks before the approaches from the North Sea could be cleared of German resistance.

Flight Lieutenant Godfrey Addison Argument joined the RCAF in Aug 1940 and arrived in the UK on 30 Jun 1941. Awarded his pilot's badge on 16 May 1941 he joined 289 Sqn in Scotland in Jan 1942. He was commissioned 01 Aug 1942 and was married in Newcastle 31 Mar 1943. 33 Sqn's ORB reports that on 17 Sep 1944 a bombing and strafing task was flown against the Roosendaal rail yards, during which Flight Lieutenant Argument's aircraft was hit by flak, crashing near Wommelgem. At the time Flight Lieutenant Argument was buried next to his aircraft, but his wife was informed by a letter from the Air Ministry, dated 6 Oct 1947, that his body had been moved to the Schoonselhof Cemetery in order that the Imperial War Graves Commission could ensure adequate care and maintenance of his grave in perpetuity.

33 Squadron,
R.A.F,
B.L.A.
25.9.44

Dear Mrs Argument,

As you will have already heard, your husband was posted as missing on the 17th of this month. I am sorry I have not written to you earlier, but I have been waiting to see if there was any further news of him.

We were out on a bombing trip and had bombed the target when Ed, as he was known to us, called up on the radio to say he had been hit by flack, very shortly after this he informed me that he thought his engine was going to stop and that he thought he would have to crash land in a field. During the time all this was taking place his number two was with him and saw him open his hood, the aircraft then went into a gentle dive and crashed in a field.

We have made every endeavour to obtain news of him, but as yet none has turned up.

Ed was a very popular member of the Squadron and his loss is deeply felt, both as a good friend and as a good pilot.

The other members of the Squadron join with me in offering you our deepest sympathy in your great loss. If at any time I can help you in any way please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours very sincerely

(signed) Ian Matthew

S/Ldr.

O.C. 33 Sqdn.

Day Four_Visit to Ypres



It is often asked why Ypres was so significant in the overall picture of the First World War. This has been attributed to many factors. It was a key site to protect the channel sea ports and associated shipping lanes, and a good point to advance from to seize Ostend and prevent the Germans using this key port to launch U-boat attacks (Third Ypres). Saving the town of Ypres from the Germans was very important to the Belgium people as it represented the last part of Belgium land still under its sovereignty. Due to the gallant bravery of saving the town from the Germans in 1914 (First Ypres), against overwhelming odds, the town became of symbol of defiance.

The Ypres area at the time was often described as being like a saucer, with the town of Ypres at centre where the cup sits and the surrounding land being the saucer rim. This gives a very good indication the advantages the Germans would have had for the greater part of the conflict in this area.

Menin Gate Memorial & The Last Post Ceremony

The Menin Gate is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient. Broadly speaking, the Salient stretched from Langemarck in the north to the northern edge in Ploegsteert Wood in the south, but it varied in area and shape throughout the war.

The battles of the Ypres Salient claimed many lives on both sides and it quickly became clear that the commemoration of members of the Commonwealth forces **with no known grave** would have to be divided between several different sites. The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their way to the battlefields. It commemorates casualties from the forces of Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and UK who died in the Salient and have no known grave. In the case of UK casualties, only those prior to 16 August 1917 are recorded there. UK and New Zealand servicemen who died after that date are named on the memorial at Tyne Cot, a site which marks the furthest point reached by Commonwealth forces in Belgium until nearly the end of the war.

Each night at 8 pm the traffic is stopped at the Menin Gate while members of the local Fire Brigade sound the Last Post in the roadway under the Memorial's arches.



APPENDIX 1:

Extracts from 33 Squadron Operations Record Book

(1 Aug - 11 Dec 1944)

Glossary of codename and terms:

Circus	Bombers heavily escorted by fighters to bring enemy fighters into combat
Nickel	Leaflet drop
Noball	Attacking V-1 flying bomb storage, manufacturing or launch sites
Popular	Photo-recce sortie
Ramrod	Similar to Circus, but with intention of destroying a target
Ranger	Large formation freelance intrusion over enemy territory with aim of wearing down enemy fighter force
Rhubarb	Small scale freelance fighter sorties against ground targets of opportunity
Roadstead	Low level attack on coastal shipping
Rover	Armed reconnaissance against chance targets behind enemy lines
Sortie	Individual operation by an aircraft. Ten a/c on a Sweep would constitute 10 sorties
Sweep	Offensive formation of fighters or fighter bombers over enemy territory, designed to draw the enemy
Tac/R	Tactical Reconnaissance

APPENDIX 2:

2nd Tactical Air Force (Fighters) Order of Battle (20 Jan - 27 Dec 1944)

APPENDIX 3:

**2 TAF and Fighter Command aviators buried at Adegem, Bergen
op Zoom and Schoonselhof Cemeteries**

(3 Jan 1944 - 8 Feb 1945)

ADEGEM CEMETERY

23 Feb 1944:
FS J Fudala
Typhoon
3 Sqn / ADGB / 11 Gp
Roadstead to Zeebrugge, evening. Hit by flak. Drowned after baling out. Pilot was Polish.

25 May 1944:
WO A Witham
Typhoon
137 Sqn / 83 Gp / 124 Wg
Shipping strike, am. Hit by flak off Ostend, crashed into the sea.

30 Aug 1944:
WO JJD Bonfield
Spitfire
610 Sqn
Evening patrol. Lost in cloud SW of Boulogne.

28 Nov 1944:
S/L O Smik DFC
Spitfire
127 Sqn / 84 Gp / 132 Wg
Armed recce, Arnhem area pm. Hit by flak while attacking rail good yard. Czech pilot.

31 Dec 1944:
F/L JAC Fowler RNZAF
Spitfire
504 Sqn Fighter Command
Ramrod 1425 to Sollingen, pm. Oxygen failure? Spiralled down from 20 000ft, lost a wing at 10 000ft.

BERGEN OP ZOOM CEMETERY

6 Sep 1944:
F/L JC Younge
Spitfire
414 Sqn RCAF / 83 Gp
Tac/R sortie, am. Shot down by flak at Bruges while attacking barges.

18 Sep 1944:
FS S Dworski
Spitfire
303(Polish) Sqn
Escort to supply drop at Arnhem, pm. Shot down by flak, crashed near Roosendaal.

20 Sep 1944:
Flt Lt H West & Flt Lt LA Komaroff
Mosquito
29 Sqn / 11 Gp / 147 Wg
Defensive patrol, evening in the Arnhem area.

24 Sep 1944:
F/O RW Vokey
Typhoon
439 Sqn RCAF / 83 Gp / 143 Wg
Shot down by fighter from JG26 north of Oosterhout, late afternoon.

25 Sep 1944:
WO LJ Phipps
Spitfire
132 Sqn / 83 Gp / 125 Wg
Patrolling Arnhem , pm. Shot down by Me109 near Nijmegen.

14 Oct 1944:
F/O A Barr RCAF
Typhoon
263 Sqn/ 84 Gp / 146 Wg
Collision with Typhoon Ib R8923 'U'
F/L DF Evans, possibly caused by flak during an attack south of Oostberg.

18 Oct 1944:
P/O FJ Vance
Typhoon
197 Sqn/84 Gp/146 Wg
Shot down by flak near Korteveen.

24 Oct 1944:
F/O RW Clarke RCAF
Typhoon
175 Sqn/ 83 Gp / 121 Wg
Hit by flak, baled out east of Megan, landed in the river Maas, drowned.

SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

3 Jan 1944:
FS WT Whitmore
Spitfire
65 Sqn / 83 Gp
Ranger to Brussels, pm.

19 Apr 1944:
WO A Mrtvy
Spitfire
313(Cz) Sqn / 84 Gp
Escorting B-26s, shot down in combat with JG26.

17 Sep 1944:
F/O GA Argument RCAF
Spitfire
33 Sqn / 84 Gp/135 Wg
See 33 Sqn ORB

2 Oct 1944:
F/L J Whittington
Spitfire
127 Sqn / 84 Gp / 132 Wg
Dive bombing, am. Hit by flak near Calais.

3 Nov 1944:
F/O JL Allan DFC RCAF
Typhoon
198 Sqn/84 Gp/123 Wg
Hit by flak, force landed South Beveland. Died of wounds 5 Nov 44.

21 Nov 1944:
F/L EK Necklen RNZAF
Typhoon
197 Sqn/ 84 Gp / 146 Wg
Collision with MN881 'R' P/O CB Hall RCAF (also killed) crashed at Amersfoort.

5 Jan 1945:
P/O GB Jones
Typhoon
257 Sqn
Armed recce. Engine failed north east of Brecht after an attack on Veen. Force landed.

7 Feb 1945:
WO WJ Luffman
Mustang
126 Sqn
Ramrod 1454 to Wanne Eickel. Crashed at Lokeren, Belgium, in bad weather.

ADEGEM CEMETERY

BERGEN OP ZOOM CEMETERY

SCHOONSELHOF CEMETERY

2 Dec 1944:

F/O ACD Hines

Mustang

2 Sqn / 84 Gp / 35 Wg

Tac/R sortie, crashed near Breda due to weather.

24 Dec 1944:

F/O TA Priddle

Spitfire

4 Sqn/84 Gp/35 Wg

High level PR pm, east of Utrecht.

Shot down by Me109 of JG1 near Nieukirk (Aachen). May have just shot down 28 victory ace Hauptmann Erich Woitke.

29 Dec 1944:

FS PR Attwooll

Spitfire

127 Sqn / 84 Gp / 132 Wg

Dive bombing, pm. Hit by flak during attack on barges. Force landed north of Tilburg but aircraft caught fire and burnt out. Pilot died of wounds.

6 Jan 1945:

P/O FW Matthews

Spitfire

485 Sqn RNZAF / 84 Gp / 135 Wg

Dive bombing, pm. Attacking a train, hit by flak and baled out too low. He died 7 Jan 45.

6 Jan 1945:

Flt Lt AB Stead DFC

Spitfire

485 Sqn RNZAF / 84 Gp / 135 Wg

Dive bombing, pm. Attacking a train, hit by flak and crashed.

8 Feb 1945:

F/L GK Malcolmson RNZAF

Spitfire

2 Sqn / 84 Gp / 35 Wg

Tac/R sortie, ran out of fuel and crashed trying to land at Hunbergen.

THE BATTLE OF THE SCHELDT

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1944

0 5 10 MILES

- Canadian forces
- British or Polish forces
- United States forces
- Roaded areas
- ONLY PRINCIPAL ROADS SHOWN

