Report on Action Night 23/24 Oct. By "B" Coy.

(1) B Coy moved up to start line according to plan. It reported in approx 20 yds behind 23 NZ Bn by 2115 hrs 23 Oct.

(2) Formation adopted was 2mPls fwd No. 12 Pl (2/Lieut. M Francis) on right. No.10 Pl (2/Lieut. K Waaka) on left and 1 Pl, No. 11 (2/Lieut A P. Warbrick) in reserve approx 20 yds behind. The Coy formed up in files of sections 50 yds between sections, each Pl having 2 Sections fwd and 1 in reserve.

(3) Direction was determined as follows. On the Coy right an N C O proceeded on the bearing making the inter Coy Bdy which was the 5 NZ Inf Bde axis of advance. The Inter Bde Bdy on the left was kept by another N C O working one bearing and the Coy axis of advance was checked by 2/Lieut Warbrick whose Posn was in the centre of the Coy front. Our direction finders on the right and left were instructed to try and maintain contact throughout the adv with A Coy and with C Coy. respectively. Contact was established with both C Coy on our left and the start line Contact with A Coy was maintained throughout the advance but we lost touch with C Coy soon after leaving the start Line and failed to see them again.

We advanced in Artos formation until about 400 yds from the Enemy FD Ls when both Enemy fire and the proximity of our own shells forced us to extend. In extended order we still maintained 2 Pls fwd and 1 in reser-ve but soon found that it was difficult to get orders back to the reser-ve Pl as I found them sometimes too far behind. At that stage it was thought advisable to bring the reserve Pl up to within 10 yds of the two fwd Pls.

Progress throughout was very slow as our speed of advance was de-termined by the attacking Bn and on numerous occasions throughout the advance we found ourselves right on top of the fwd Bn and on One occasi-on over ran them on our left flank. Hence there were more stops than we had bargained for.

At approx 15 minutes after the 23 NZ Bn made the assault we moved fwd under fairly intense fire which appeared chiefly from our right. We moved fwd until we made contact with elements of 23 Bn which we found to be the remnants of a fairly badly cut about Coy amounting in all to something under a Pl. We were unable to locate their Bn HQ nor did they know where the rest of their Bn was. Through their officer I invited them to join my Coy and this they did, I rocced further to the left where I found 24 Bn establishing their F D Ls. We created a defensive line there. Fire from the Enemy was at this stage was very heavy and we were subjected to considerable Mortar and LMG fire. As we now without the screen provided by 23 Bn we thought it advisable to to dig in, and this we were preparing to do when word came to me that 24 Bn on our left were retiring. Leaving instuctions with my men to hang on I again tried to contact 24 Bn to find out the reason for their withdrawal. It appeared that they had been ordered to withdraw 200 yds as by their own calcula-tions they had overshot the first objective to that extent.

It was unwise for us to remain out in font with our flanks exposed so after covering the withdrawal of some elements of 23Bn who were in a depression slightly ahead of us. I ordered then two Coys to withdraw bak to the line that 24Bn had established. Defence in depth was sighted and digging in operations began. The time now was approx 2400 Hrs.

Most of our casualties were sustained during the period between the assault by 23Bn and our own consolidation on the first. A large percentage of these casualties were inflicted by our own Arty fire. In fact our own Arty was a constant source of danger throughout the advance and there were times when isolated "friendly" shells were falling behind us. These are the casualties that we sustained up to this stage. Killed 2.- 39266 Pte Ruatoto P.-LMG fire, 67500 Pte Hough T-direct Mortar hit:- wounded 14- 4265 2/Lieut Warbrick A P,: 6175 WO11 RIini I: 62449 Cpl Oakes W: 65236 L/Cpl Menehira H: 25996 L/Cpl Rang R N: 65250 L/Cpl Reneti H: 25865 Pte Hemopo J (since died of wounds): 62667 Pte Herewini W 67561 Pte Hohua W (remain with Unit) : 67560 Pte Martin O: 39093 Pte Mc. cCausland E H : 62683 Pte Paora T: 65475 Pte Perenara W: 65254 Pte Roi-hana T:.

We liased with the markers of 21 and 22 Bns to determine location etc of start line for second objective.

At 0040 hrs 24 Oct the fwd tps 22 Bn passed through our lines. We had decided on our own strt line ahead but parallel to the "Pukka" one. Orders were issued for A and B Coys to form up on the start line, A on

right, B on the left. The advance began at 0105 hrs.

Our advance to the second objective was more or less uneventful. We soon overb 22 Bn and right throughout numerous halts had to be made inorder to allow them to get sufficiently ahead. Personal contact was being kept between C O 22Bn and myself.

We reached Miteiriya Ridge where we found the HQ of the 23 Bn. The opposition from the other side of the ridge was very vigorous and as 22 Bn was at that stage only 200 yds ahead, I ordered the Coys to go to ground just short of the top of the Ridge. The Enemy was now heavily Mortaring and machine gunning the Ridge. To have taken the two Coys over the Ridge at this stage would have involved certain casualties so it was decided to leave the Coys where they were and for myself to go over the other side to see what the situation was. I located the CO 22 Bn. 3or 400 yds fwd of the Ridge. It had been successful in taking the final objective. There no further duties here required of me.

A Coy has yet to contact 21 Bn whom we had not seen throughout the advance. An officer of that Coy was ordered fwd to contact 21 Bn but he reported back one hour later without success. Using 22 Bn wireless I communicated with 5 Inf Bde HQ explaining the situation and asking for instructions. I was told to contact 21 Bn. Again an officer from A Coy was sent out and this time he succeeded in locating them and obtained a clearance for A Coy.

Our Armour in the meantime had moved up and at this time were trying to negotiate the minefield just below the Ridge. As it was nearing daylight and as the "Scorpions" were unable to cope with the situation detachments from A and B Coys were sent to clear a passage for the Tanks. The two Coys finally left for home at approx 0615 hrs.

Casualties sustained during the advance from the first to the second objective were as follows:- Wounded 2. 62886 Pte Johnson W. 29272 Pte Northcroft J. Missing 3- 25841 Cpl Duncan T: 62882 L/Sgt Eparaima R: 62890 Pte Miller P.

It is difficult to asses the amount of damage done the amount of PWs taken. Roughly I should say 30 prisoners were handled by this Coy and about half these were handed back by 22 Bn. Most of the Enemy strong Points were wiped out by the attacking Bns and were not called on to do much in that respect. We can lay claim to two LMG crews for certain, surrendering to this Coy. We passed over a considerable number of Enemy dead but I should say this was chiefly the work of the attacking Bn.

It may finally be added that both A and B Coys worked in almost perfect co-operation throughout the advance particularly between the first and the second objectives. This was chiefly due to the fact that both Coys worked to a pre-determined signals blown on the whistle. Both Coys advanced together, halted together, got to ground together etc and the line formed by the two advancing Coys was almost invariably straight. In fact, at no stage was it difficult to maintain a straight continuous two Coy front line and at no stage was one Coy separated from the other. the whole two Coy Advance was controlled by the whistle.

O.C. 'A' Coy. (Capt. Kenare) was wounded and evacuated early in the action therefore no report on the operations from A Coy was forthcoming. Major Bennett. C.M. desires that this report of his actions of "B" Coy also cover "A" Coys actions as "A" Coy more or less became merged with "B" Coy during night's operations

(SGD) C M Bennett, Major.
O.C. B Coy.
30 Oct 42

Report on Action Night 23/24 Oct
By "C" Coy.

The role played by this Coy in the operation of the night 23/24 Oct as follows. At 1000 hrs on the 23 Oct. it came under comd of the 6 NZ Bde. At 0900 hrs together with O.C. "D" Coy I reported to 6 NZ Bde Hq for orders. The Job allotted to my Coy was to follow behind the attacking Bns and mop up strong points of resistance which may have been missed or by-passed during the advance. At approx 2100 hrs we formed up and got into posn on the 6 NZ Bde start Line. C on the right and D on left. The right flank of C was on the inter Bde boundary. On the right of C was B Coy of our Bn. which was playing a similar role to ourselves on the 5 NZ Bde front. The Start time was scheduled for 2130 hrs. It was intended that I should keep in touch with left elements of "B" Coy during the whole of the operations. Due to the delay of our fwd elements in moving fwd we not able to contact the left elements of "B" Coy until we reached the final objective which as far as we were concerned were at the foot of Mitereiya Ridge, just behind the 25 and the 26 Bns.

My right hand platoon was fwd on a bearing of 241 degrees from the start line enabling the right flank to move along the Inter Bde boundary.

The formation which was adopted by me was 2 platoons fwd in extended line and 1 back in reserve. With my Coy Hq I moved in line and between the fwd platoons. The distance between the men I laid down was visibility. During our whole advance we encountered spasmodic shelling and machine gun firing. From my point of view my platoons moved fwd excellently and well controlled. There was of course the tendency of the men to bunch up unintentionally aggravated no doubt by the presence of dahger and it was necessary to move up and down the line whenever possible to remind our men of the danger of grouping. This policy had its own reward and added to the fact that we did not encounter very heavy Enemy fire we able to advance the whole distance of the attack without suffering any casualties from Enemy action. The only casualties which my Coy suffered were 2 wounded from mines exploded by one of our own trucks which disregarded the warning of the presence of a minefield.

During the whole advance 4 prisoners were taken by "D" Coy practically on our inter-Coy boundary.

(Sgd) W. Awarau, Capt.
O.C. "C" Coy.

65

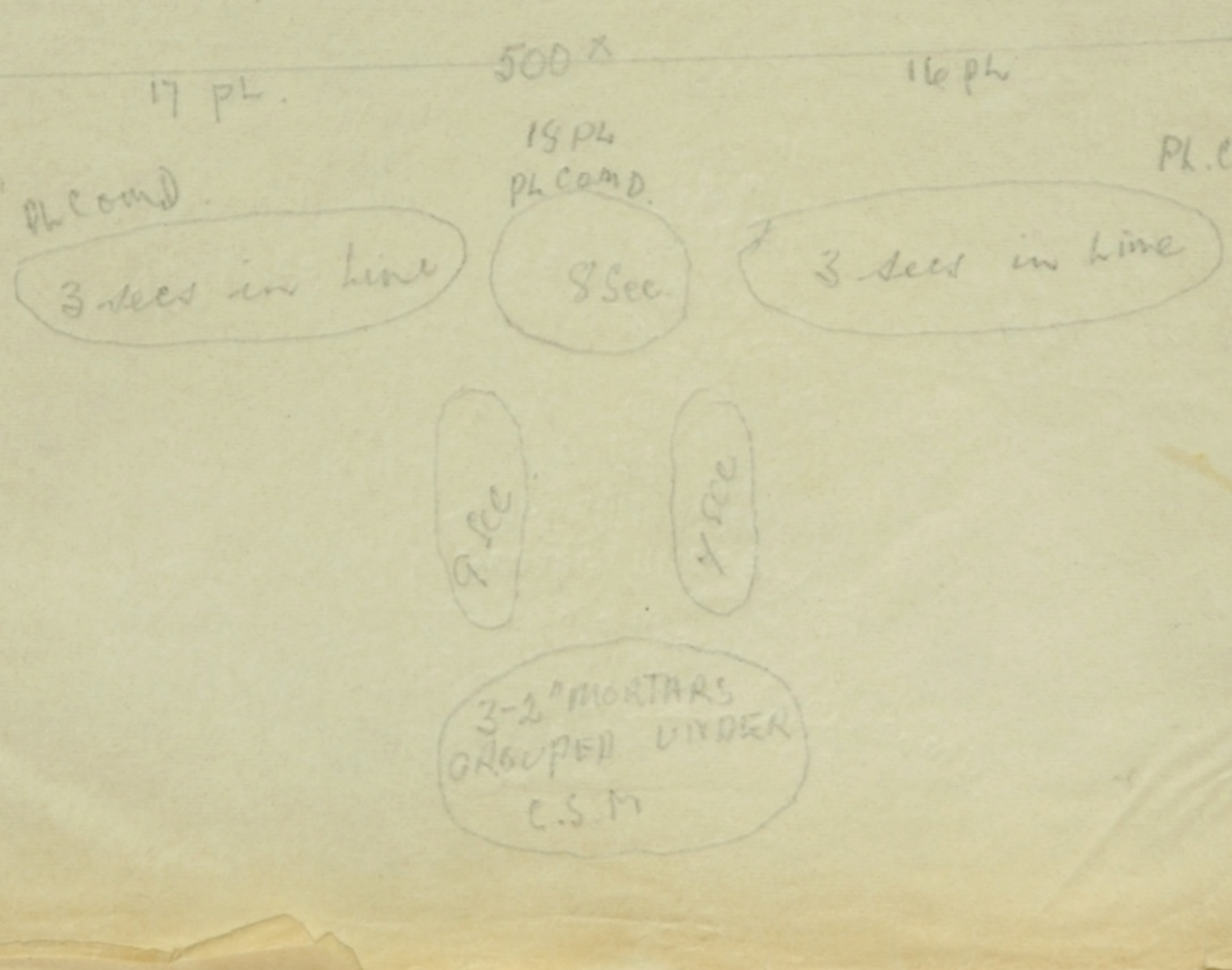
Report on Action Night 23/24 Oct

by "D" Coy

As per 6 NZ Bde Operational Order, D Coy with C Coy on the right followed 24th Bn across the Bde Start Line at 2135 hrs.(Z-25). The Coy frontage was approx 500m yds. There was no enemy fire encountered until the Coy had passed through our own mine field, when spasmodic machine gun fire caused fwd tps to slow up.

At approx 2200 hrs enemy Arty fire was opened on the frontage covered by D Coy. It consisted of rapid fire by 4 guns some of which was air burst and concentrated on a front of approx 200yds. This fire was at first going over the heads of our men as the advance progressed, but the advance at Z plus 15 became noticeably slower and the enemy barrage was soon landing among 17 & 18 Pls. No amount of effort on my part could induce the 24 Bn men in front of me to speed up their advance which seemed to me to be unnecessary slow, and the enemy barrage continued to land among the Coy. About 2315 hrs all enemy strong points opened up. The posns appeared to be on the boundary between the 6 Bde and SA and infilated the Bde area and the first enemy wire. This caused considerable damage until the concentrated fire of the Coy 2" mortars forced the enemy to vacate their posn retreat. D Coy reached the first wire at 2400 hrs and remained at the dpened formation just inside the wire, to wait for the 25 & 26 Bns . Word was passed to C and D Coys to report the passing thru of any men of those two Bns. At 0100 hrs , when no sign of the Bns was seen, a runner was sent to 24 Bn HQ to wireless for information. He returned at about 0130 hrs saying that the 24 Bn had not seen either the 25th. or 26th. Bns and there was no wireless communication with the rest of the Bde. At 0200hrs I decided to move forward to cover the Engineers who were laying 'boat' track and had passed through D Coy together with C Coy then went forward through the 24 Bn. After covering 1000 yds approx. heavy E. fire came from the direction of the South African area. The Coy took up a defensive position facing the left flank incase the fire was from Tanks. The fire ceased and the Coy gain push forward through E. strong points taking four (4) PWs and eventually came to MITEIRIYA ridge while the 25 Bn was contacted below the crest. Interviewed a Capt who sayed his Bn HQ was missing and could not be contacted. He added that through the advance they had not contactd the 24, 26 Bns or the South Africans. I told him that I understood the 25th objective to be a 1000 yds forward of he MITEIRIYA Ridge. His reply was that they were told to follow the barrage and when it ended, to come back behind the second Minefield which was on the Ridge. On his information, I took up a defensive position protecting his left flank and rear and lining up. with C Coy which had contacted the 26 Bn and which were covering up between the 25 & 26 Bns D Coy remained in Posn until the arrival of he Tank Coln along 'Boat Track' at 0030 hrs. Having ensured that the rear and the flanks of the two forward Bns were covered, D Coy withdrew wih C Coy at 0530 hrs and returned to the Bde area.

FORMATION ADOPTED



D. Coy report action Night 23/24.Oct. '42.

(cont)
To compensate for the 2" mortar men of 16 & 17 Pls. 1 Sect. of 18 Pl. was put in the front line. The 2" Mortarsof the Coy. were grouped wer the C.S.M. who moved with them in rear of 18 Pl. and ready to concentrte fire on any part of the Coy front or left flank.

This formation was used throughout the advance and the No. of men in the line was sufficient to cover the area.

Prisoners and Casualties.

The first enemy encountered was on the first wire on the left boundary. The Coy was enfiladed and suffered numerous casualties.

The Mortars were immediately brought into action and after three salvos, the enemy were seen to run away. About 17 were observed disappearing. On the strong point being captured three prisoners were taken and one other, wearing an SS arm band and a luger pistol, was shot. This strong point was later discovered to have consisted of 7 MG posts.

The next point at which opposition was encountered, was 1000 yds beyond the first wire, but although considerable fire came from the left flank, no enemy posns were later encountered. It was in this area that another four prisoners were taken from a dugout.

Own Casualties: 4 Killed.
1 Died of Wounds.
25 Wounded.

Enemy: 1 Killed.
7 Prisoners.

General Remarks: Major Connolly OC 'C' Coy 24 Bn admits that his Coy swung over right thus missing the first strong point which 'D' Coy cleaned up.

The slow advance of the 24 Bn from Zero enforced 'D' Coy to advance continuously under the barrage.

The routes A & B which were to be lit were not seen. The second start Line was not seen and as no contact with 6 Bde was made throughout the operation. The 25 & 26 Bns succeeded in entirely circumventing the 24 Bn and their start line and swinging back into their posns again.

(Signed) F. R. Logan.
Capt.
OC 'D' Coy..

Company Commanders report

Reference

Archives New Zealand = Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga.
Ref: 28 NZ (Maori) Battalion Diary, WAII 1 1665 DA 68/1/34, pp 62-66