

(271X4) *difficult*

Attack on Point 237. Night 7/8 May '43. Ref Map ENFIDAVILLE 1/50000.
...A Coy Comdr's Report...

At exactly 1930 hrs 7 May 43 A & D Coys with Bn HQ leading moved up to the assembly area on Mt. Guides from 23 Bn were already there waiting to take the Coys to their respective start lines. The Coy had attached to them a section of sappers under comd of an officer. The Coy left the assembly area at 2045 hrs arriving at the start line which was the fwd platoon of A Coy 23 Bn at 2115 hrs. Platoons were dispersed while the officers checked bearings and distances.

By about 2130 hours heavy rain had set in accompanied by lightning and thunder. Visibility was such that one could not see a yard in front of him. My original plan of xxx attack which was an outflanking move from the left had to be abandoned as the weather plus the visibility and the added difficulty of navigation made such a move too hazardous and then decided to make a frontal attack with No 7 Pl on the left and No 8 Pl on the right and No 9 Pl in reserve.

Although the troops were soaking wet and shivering with the cold at exactly 2230 hrs (ZERO) the Coy crossed the start line, all tensed and eager to get on with the job.

No sooner had we gone over the brow of the escarpment into the wadi below, enemy flares went up followed by staccato chatter of machine gun fire. The Coy had to cross the wadi smartly as an enemy machine gun was enfilading us from the left.

On our way up the hill we encountered several pockets of snipers and xxxxi machine gunners which were quickly disposed of. The enemy fired a few mortar shells but landed well behind us. Enemy troops could be heard talking and running away.

At 0600 hours the Coy had gained its objective and began consolidating.

I then sent No 9 Pl to patrol our left flank but had only gone 200 yards when they came under extremely heavy small arms fire and some grenades thrown at them. The Coy suffered its first casualties at this stage 1 killed and 2 wounded. No 9 Pl then withdrew and dug in facing our left flank.

A small enemy force of about 20 - 25 men made a half hearted attack on No 7 & 8 Platoons but were driven off with a few handgrenades. Small arms fire was still coming from our left and right flanks. It was then quite obvious to me that my flanks were very much exposed. I felt very uneasy and informed the C.O. of the situation we were in. However patrols kept a very sharp look out for any slight enemy movement. We could see quite clearly the flashes of the enemy artillery down of the floor of the valley. Had the F.O.O. been up with us I venture to say that the enemy gun fire would have been neutralised.

At first light I could see a Coy of the 21 Bn about 1100 yds to our left with a lot of snipers and machine gun posts in between us. My force was too small to attack it and mortar shells landing all around us it made it more difficult and may of meant the loss Pt 237.

All day we were shelled, mortared and machine gunned heavily, pinning us to our trenches. Nothing could be done about it as we were on the reverse slope and the enemy on the ridge to our left overlooking us. As soon as anyone ventured out of his trench he was immediately chased back into it by snipers and machine gunners.

We lost contact with Bn at 0900 hrs as our line was severed by heavy heavy shelling and No.18 set could not raise Bn.

By night fall only three trenches in the area occupied by the fwd pls were not blown by mortar shells. Fortunately there were alternative posns further to the rear.

The Coy lost 5 men killed and 5 men wounded including one of the Pl comdrs during the afternoon.

Eventually our line was fixed and communications with Bn established.

I requested Bn to send another Pl plus mortars to thicken My Coy but before this could be done reports came to me that strong enemy forces were closing in our left and right flanks and were also working round to our rear. Trucks could be heard coming down our left. The enemy's intention of surrounding us then became fairly obvious. A decision had to be reached whether we hold our ground and fight it out or withdraw the Coy. I decided on the latter as our flanks were too vulnerable, the ground too broken and scrubby and besides most of the Bren gunners had become casualties.

At 2330 hrs the Coy commenced to withdraw by thinning out under very heavy small arms fire. The Coy fired back all it had just to steady the enemy pursuit. During the withdrawal he sent over a few slavs from his "niebelwerfer" gun but no casualties were sustained.

I must say that the men were badly shaken by the terrific pounding they received from mortar and shell fire.

Casualties:

Own Troops.

6 Killed: 7 Wounded: 1 Missing;

Enemy:)

No accurate figures, can be given but a very conservative estimate would be about 20 killed and wounded.

6 Prisoners:

2 MG (Spandaus) Captured.

(sgd)

J.C. Henare Capt.
OC "A" Coy.

"D" Report on Action night 7/8th May 1943. Point 212. (App 4)
 Ref Map ENFIDAVILLE 1/50000.

On the night of the 7th we embussed for our assembly area and moved off at 1930 hrs to our F.U.P. where we debussed and were met by our guides who directed us to our start line. The attack was on a two Coy front with two separate objectives Pt 277 and Pt 212. A Coy left and D Coy right, objective Pt 212. On arrival at the start line I with my Pl comdrs and the Coy of C Coy 23 Bn went fwd 300 yds to recon the ground on which we had to advance. There the Coy Comdr of 23 Bn gave us all the information about the dispositions of the enemy including compass bearings and distances. At 2230 hrs which was our Start time we advance on a two pl front, with one in reserve, 16 Pl left front, 18 pl right front and 17 Pl in rear. In this order we advanced. Owing to the rugged nature of the ground we found great difficulty in maintaining direction. However once we had reached the bottom of the wadi our objective could be seen outlined on the skyline despite the fact that heavy rain was falling. From there we reorganised to attack the two prominent features 16 pl left feature and 18 pl right feature. We moved fwd until we had reached the foot of the left feature when the enemy fired a white verey flare that landed amongst us. It was then that MG posts on the bothe features fired upon us. We then pushed fwd under cover of our LMG and 2" mortars. Pressing home the final assault with the usual war cry we scaled the features quickly overcoming all enemy resistance, killing many of their gun crews and taking prisoners. Among the "booty" captured we e 4 MGs and 1-3" mortar. Now that we had gained our objectives we mad e secure our gains by consolidating. By 0030 hrs the attack and consolidation was complete. At first light we were subjected to heavy mortar and constant artillery fire. This continued throughout the day 8th May '43.

At 1000 hrs I ordered by Bn to patrol and exploit SE of my right flank. This patrol under Sgt. Wepu, returned at 1400 hrs and reported, that up to 300 yds SE was clear of mines and enemy. About the same time a sapper who had been wounded while lifting mines 2 nights previous was brought in by one of the patrols. From then on and throughout the night there was little enemy activity except for spasmodic shelling and report that A Coy had been surrounded and forced to withdraw. On day 9th May 43 the shelling and MG fire became more intensive than the previous day. About midday a section exploiting ground to our right front surprised and captured some 25 prisoners with more MGs. When this party returned another section was sent out on a similar task this resulting in the capture of more prisoners, MGs and 1-3" mortar. Early that morning I was warned that we would be relieved that night by French troops at 2030 hrs. The relief arrived at 2100 hrs and change over being completed by 2200 hrs. Prior to the relief a riving all except one section returned to the embussing area at last light. This party arrived back at 2245 hrs where the whole Coy embussed and returned to Bn area.

(Sgd) J. Matchaere, Capt.
 OC "D" Coy.....

Casualties: Own: Killed: Nil.
 Wounded: 3.
 Missing: 4.

Enemy equipment captured: Machine Guns 12.
 3" mortars 2.
 Prisoners taken. 50.

REFERENCE

Archives New Zealand = Te Rua Mahara a te Kāwanatanga
28 (Maori) Battalion War Diary, WAI 1 1666 DA 68/1/41, pp 89-91