

***BASED ON EXTRACTS FROM THE REGIMENTAL WAR CHRONICLE OF THE
OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY VOL 4 1944/1945***

**SIXTH BATTALION IN BURMA
FROM 1st JUNE TO 31st DECEMBER, 1944**

There is not a great deal to report since the end of May. Those of you who have been unlucky enough to experience a monsoon will be able to explain to your more fortunate colleagues just why fighting in this part of the world is a little difficult at this time of the year. Please don't get the idea that we are merely sitting in our monsoon quarters smoking and playing dice. We are still very much in contact with the Japanese and I will deal first with our military operations.

Towards the end of May the Japanese began to withdraw from most of their regular positions and to establish monsoon quarters beyond the range of our guns. In one or two places they miscalculated. No sooner were their bashas firmly erected than our mediums flattened them out at extreme range.

In early June A Company sent patrols down the plain and into the foot-hills in an attempt to locate Jap monsoon positions on the west side of the range. They got much valuable information at the cost of one man slightly wounded (Operation "Sheen").

After this the Regiment began to take the monsoon seriously. We retired to our quarters and continued with our preparations for combating Nature in the raw during the rainy months, while active patrolling continued. In July we had about fifty-seven inches of rain, and whenever it isn't raining the camp steams like a Chinese laundry. Roads quickly became almost impassable to transport. Mules and river boats came into use.

Throughout June A Company, struggling valiantly through the mud, carried on with patrols and ambushes, scoring some mild successes. They were much heartened when, on the 28th June, the general paid them a visit and stayed the night with them in the forward defended localities.

Early in July reports came through to us that the Japanese were harassing the villagers farther down the plain. Besides treating them in their usual bestial manner they stole their cattle and building materials, tried to force a large labour gang on to the other side of the range, and finally gave them a limited number of days to evacuate their villages altogether. Major A. G. Hill, D.C.M., was ordered to take a composite force and establish himself in the village (Ponra) in order to put a stop to these impertinent pranks. The force consisted of A Company, Gurkhas and supporting troops. Landing unopposed, the force quickly established itself and wasted no time in setting about the enemy. The success of this enterprise has been great and continuous. The casualties we claim are only the actual bodies counted; that total now stands at fifty-seven, but in actual fact it is probably nearer 150. Against this the force has suffered not a single casualty. Operating from a first-class base, it seems likely to maintain its success as long as it is required to do so.

Right from the start the Japanese "bought it." Descending none too warily into the plain to do a bit of cattle rustling and to chevy the villagers, they were easy meat to patrols and snipers.

Honours must be given to the Gurkhas, never happier than when wielding their kukris with deadly skill. The difficulty is to restrain them when they get stuck in. Prisoners—not something likely! This is a pity. Our own snipers have done particularly well and the intrepid V Force has supplied much valuable information. As for the villagers, they are now more British than the flag. I believe we could form a volunteer native rifle company that would follow us to the end of the campaign. C Company has now relieved A Company.

On the 28th July the Japanese made a futile attempt to shell the force supply area. Seven shells from a 75-mm. gun landed harmlessly. Our artillery gave them a hot reply and on the same evening V Force reported sixteen Japanese carrying eight wounded and three limping men painfully pushing a gun in a southerly direction. So much for the monsoon skirmishes.

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Training is not easy under our present conditions. We have an excellent little range; we have also signal, mechanics, weapon training and 3-inch mortar courses, some of which are still running. Mules are once again in the news and the air is thick with speculation about our possible roles in the next campaigning season.

The men are keeping fit with basket-ball and athletics, all performed in rain and mud. Their spirits are high and their cheerfulness really remarkable; so is their health. In the evenings, now that lights are allowed, there are quizzes, brains trusts, debates on post-war problems and endless games of "Housey." Leave, mail and the alcohol are pretty regular and help greatly in keeping us contented.

Movement up the lines of communication is a struggle against heavy odds; to reach Calcutta we have two truck, three boat-ferry and two train journeys; but these conditions and the discomforts entailed are now undergoing drastic improvement by headquarters.

Mr. Churchill's extreme optimism about the war in the East is most heartening, but we take great care to keep our sense of proportion and do not let ourselves become over-sanguine. Our signature tune is still the repatriation march past, A few more years shall roll.

August, with the monsoon still at its height, was a dull month, very like, the two before it. Patrolling continued under wretched conditions, but the Japanese seemed to have gone to ground inside the range, for hardly one was seen and not a shot exchanged throughout the month. In the area of Regimental headquarters training went on in signalling, air transport loading, mule walloping, etc. Many games of soccer and rucker were played in inches of mud and there was even a sports meeting against the gunners. Japanese sitting on their heights in the range must have thought that the British were even madder than their reputation. Leave continued. Very nearly the whole Regiment has now had leave since coming to Burma.

Meanwhile Bolster Force, the most southerly troops in all Burma, continued to do good work in the plains. The force consisted of B Company plus one company of Punjabis. Temporarily the Japanese down there had had enough. They steered clear of our patrols as far as they possibly could, and despite long treks into the foot-hills and distant villages we found it hard to unearth them. On some of these treks a 3-inch mortar went out, the Serjeant lining up quantities of chicos before the start and giving them one or two bombs to carry on their heads according to their size. This party would then stagger incredible distances across the morass of paddy fields. Some of the resulting shoots were very successful. At the end of the day the chicos would be rewarded with biscuits and cigarettes.

June, 1944 - From the War Diary,

"General.—The Regiment at the start of the month was located as under:

"A Company—at Nurullapara.

"B Company—at Keinchakata.

"C Company—at Kanyindan.

"No. 1 Platoon, D Company—at Kanyindan and company headquarters and two platoons of the York and Lancaster Regiment.

"H.Q. Company—at Kanyindan.

"On the 2nd June we received orders for Operation 'Sheen,' a patrolling scheme organized by corps to find out enemy monsoon disposition on the corps front.

"A Company undertook this task in the Pt. 109—Godusara Chaung area and came up against heavy opposition, and valuable information was obtained. A Company suffered one man slightly wounded.

"After this operation we withdrew to our monsoon positions and started routine patrolling on our stretch of front. On the 15th A Company ambushed a small Japanese party at East Chiradan and took one wounded prisoner, who subsequently died.

July, 1944 - From the War Diary,

"General.—The month has been spent in monsoon positions, with daily intensive patrolling southwards. The enemy has shown no inclination to come down from the hills, and in the Regimental patrolling area has only appeared in East Chiradan, nearly four miles to the south-east of our main positions. Efforts have been made to ambush, without success.

"A special task force was sent by sea to land at Ponra and Damankhali in the early hours of the 4th. This force, named Bolster, comprised Letter A Company, various men of H.Q. Company, a company of the 3rd/2nd Gurkha Rifles, gunners, sappers and medium machine guns, and Battalion representatives.

Its primary object was the raising of the morale of the native population, who are very pro-British, and to gain information of enemy dispositions and strength in the area. Extensive patrolling has taken place to the foot-hills of the West Mayu Range and as far south as Hinthaya and Ton Chaung. Our troops have dominated the coastal plain and in numerous small encounters have so far accounted for fifty-seven Japanese (bodies actually seen) and taken two prisoners (Jifs*(Japanese-inspired fifth column)) without a single casualty to themselves. Later in the month Letter C Company replaced A Company with Bolster Force.

August, 1944 - From the War Diary,

"General.—The month has been spent in the same monsoon positions, and operationally there has been very little activity. Despite the weather, continuous patrolling has been maintained and in the Regimental patrolling area not a single Japanese has been reported, save in the last few days of the month, and even that was doubtful.

"The company at Bolster has changed over (B Company for C Company), but the relieving company has had no opposition. Our forces continue to dominate the coastal plain as far south as the Ton Chaung and still have received no casualties.

"Towards the end of the month the Regimental patrolling area was extended to include the Points 182 and 109 areas, and reconnaissances have been made daily. Topographical detail has been collected for future use, but no opposition has been met.

"The companies back at Kanyindan have continued training and improving defences. A signal course was begun at Teknaf. Training was given in air transport loading, and a large number of men attended mule courses in preparation for the time when the Regiment receives its own animal transport. Sport has played a large part in the men's recreation, with football, rugby, crosscountry running and field sports. Debates and quiz competitions held in the evening have been well attended.

"On the 12th Lieutenant-Colonel P. F. Metcalfe, to the regret of all ranks, relinquished command of the Regiment, and on the 31st we welcomed Lieutenant-Colonel R. M. Ingall (The Sherwood Foresters).

"1st.—A Bolster patrol under the command of Second Lieutenant Breen and with a gunner observer, visited Godusara and saw what were believed to be two enemy slit trenches in the foot-hills due east. Gunners fired ten rounds, but no casualties were observed.

"4th.—A Company patrol to East Chiradan entered the tin shack and searched the whole village and reports no signs of recent occupation. C Company platoon established a base at Lambaguna and patrolled to Hinthaya and Thandaywa, but no enemy seen.

"5th.—Bolster Force observed foot-hills from Godusara. Five Japanese were seen in area 392311 and these were fired on. No fire was returned and it was impossible to estimate casualties owing to denseness of jungle.

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"6th.—Patrol visited the garden area at Ywathitke, positions now unoccupied by Japanese and no enemy was seen.

"8th.—C Company patrol went through Ywathitke to Lambaguna and no enemy was seen. A report was received of seven Japanese in Thandaywa. One section approached to 388252 and was fired on at 400 yards' range by a medium machine gun at 39152475 and a light machine gun at 394246. Seven slit trenches were observed near the medium machine gun and these were engaged with a 2-inch mortar and small-arms fire. Owing to his disadvantageous position the patrol commander decided to withdraw. A crawl of 400 yards through open paddy land was made and no casualties were suffered. It is believed that this Japanese party came from Thaugbaingnya to lay an ambush.

"9th.—A mortar detachment supported by a 3rd/2nd Gurkha Rifles patrol engaged a party of five Japanese and four Jifs in Thandaywa. Bombs fell on this target and scattered the enemy, but casualties could not be observed. N.C.Os. and mule drivers practised air transport loading.

"10th.—C Company patrol entered Thandaywa and no enemy was seen. Movement was observed in Thaugbaingnya and engaged with eighteen 3-inch mortar bombs. Six Japanese ran to the east and small arms definitely hit one, possibly two. A direct hit on a basha killed a sentry and two others inside. Patrol approached the village and V Force confirmed these casualties and reported that seven Japanese had just entered the village with two light machine guns. Our small patrol then withdrew.

"11th.—C Company patrol reported that twelve Japanese had spent the previous night in Thaugbaingnya and had left, going south, in the early morning. A villager reported that a column of 200 coolies with three guns were going south from Myinhlut down the Donbaik road. An enemy 75-mm. engaged the ration boat at the beach-head with twenty rounds. No damage or casualties were caused. H.Q. Company patrol from East Chiradan observed hostile battery fire and by sound pinpointed the gun position at 397318. Our own counter-battery concentrations were observed to fall at 398319 and 391321.

"13th.—Transport drivers practised loading of jeeps on aircraft.

"14th.—C Company platoon took up positions in East Godusara to observe movement in the foot-hills to the east and in the Point 109 area. Smoke was seen at various places in the Mis, but no enemy seen. A hostile mortar fired seven rounds, but no damage or casualties were caused.

"15th.—Two American officers of the 10th U.S.A.A.F., were attached to the Regiment for five days.

"18th.—All mule leaders practised loading mules into aircraft.

"19th.—C Company platoon observed Pimples area from east of Suniamarpara. A bunker was discerned at 412267, but no enemy movement was seen.

"20th.—Three-inch mortar detachment with 3rd / 2nd Gurkha Rifles patrol fired forty rounds into areas 393307—393306— 393302, where movement and sentries had been observed. After shoot screaming was heard. A hostile 4-inch mortar replied with eight rounds, but no casualties were caused.

"23rd.—On receipt of a V Force report that a force of 100 Japanese were in the Point 182 area, a special patrol was sent to investigate. No enemy was seen.

"26th.—With Bolster a Regimental 3-inch mortar detachment, escorted by a 3rd/2nd Gurkha Rifles platoon, engaged a 75-mm. gun position in the Ton Chaung from a position east of Hinthaya. Results could not be ascertained.

"29th.—An A Company patrol saw four Japanese dressed in khaki at 379341 from a position 372343.

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They disappeared into the foot-hills. The patrol continued to 385335, where they observed the chaung and Point 109 area. No movement was seen.

"30th.— A reconnaissance patrol of H.Q. Company observed foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung, but no movement was seen. Chaungs leading to the foot of Point 109 were reconnoitred. No opposition was met.

"31st.—A D Company patrol entered the foot-hills at 383334 and proceeded to reconnoitre the re-entrant and chaung which lies to the north of Point 109. No enemy was seen and villagers stated that Japs had not been seen for a good while.

September, 1944 - From the War Diary,

"General.—At the beginning of the month intensive patrolling took place in the Point 109 area preparatory to the Regiment's move southwards to the area. This operation, named 'South,' was to follow the capture of the highest point in the Mayu Range, Point 1433, by the 3rd/2nd Gurkha Rifles.

On the 14th C Company moved forward and one platoon was engaged by the enemy on Point 109. The remainder of the Regiment, less B Company and H.Q. Company party with Bolster Force, joined C Company the following day, the Sausage feature being occupied on the 16th. A Company attacked and occupied Point 109 on the 17th.

"Extensive patrolling continued in the plains, south of the Godusara Chaung and eastwards to the Point 305 feature, and much valuable information was obtained. Bolster Force in the meantime beat off heavy enemy attacks during two successive nights and was withdrawn on the 17th and then on the 22nd B Company came south to West Chiradan with the object of performing the same tasks as Bolster Force in the coastal plain.

"On the 22nd enemy were observed on the Southern Tit, 800 yards south of D Company and 900 yards east of Point 109. A successful attack was made on the 29th by two platoons of B Company, and the feature was occupied by No. 1 Platoon of C Company.

"During the month's operations our casualties have been three officers and three soldiers killed and seven soldiers wounded. We have inflicted approximately, including Bolster operations, forty-seven killed, three probables and three wounded on the enemy.

"Since Operation 'South' began the weather has been very unkind, and the greatest difficulty has been experienced in keeping dry, maintaining mule tracks and evacuating casualties. Nevertheless, all ranks are in very high spirits.

"1st.—A C Company patrol patrolled the Point 109 area and observed the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung, but no movement was seen.

"2nd.—An A Company platoon patrolled the Point 182 area, but reported no enemy seen.

"3rd.—A section of D Company began a long patrol to observe the Point 305 area.

"4th.—A headquarter patrol with the commander and intelligence officer went as far as Bunker Hill and through East Chiradan to observe Point 109, but no movement was seen.

"6th.— an A Company platoon patrolled the Sausage feature, 1,000 yards up the re-entrant and chaung from Bunker Hill. No enemy was seen.

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"7th.—No. 17 Platoon, D Company, moved back from Pandelbyiri to Kanyindan. No. 14 Platoon, C Company, patrolled into the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung. Sentries on one ridge were seen and cable leading from positions down along a path into the centre of the foot-hills. Three Japanese walked down the path within a few yards of the small reconnaissance patrol, but fire was not opened, as the patrol's presence would have been revealed. In the afternoon the platoon, advancing up a narrow ridge, was fired on by a light machine gun and rifles. The patrol withdrew, the only casualty being Private Thorn with a flesh wound across the chest.

"8th.—To assist in Operation 'Tweezers' on the main spine of the Mayu Range A Company were warned to stand by to counter-attack any Jap move from the direction of Buthidaung. C Company from Keinchakata and D Company from Nyaungg-yaung in preparation for Operation 'South.'

"9th.—1000 hrs. A Company moved to the Tunnels area on the Maungdaw—Buthidaung road and came under command of the 53rd Brigade. No. 18 Platoon of D Company established themselves on the Sausage feature all day, but no enemy was seen.

"10th.—A C Company platoon proceeded to Sausage to observe Point 305, but no movement was seen. This patrol from today became a permanent standing one, each platoon being relieved every twenty-four hours. No movement was seen all day. In the Point 109 area with Bolster Force and a B Company section patrol came under heavy light machine-gun fire whilst tracking four Japanese up a path. The section withdrew and discovered Private Taylor missing. The patrol commander and the section leader crawled out under fire and recovered Taylor's dead body. The patrol then withdrew to Ponra.

"11th.—D Company relieved C Company's standing patrol on the Sausage feature, observing enemy movement on Point 306.

"12th.—The main features Lion (Point 1433) and Tjger were taken early this morning, thus completing Operation 'Tweezers,' and preliminary preparations were made for those following Operation 'South' in the foot-hills east of Chiradan. Bolster Force beach-head was heavily shelled in the early evening and Lieutenant R. D. Smith, the pioneer officer and acting beach-master, was killed. Lance-Corporal Howard, of the signal platoon, was another casualty. V Force reported a large enemy concentration opposing Bolster Force, and the Regiment was warned to be at short notice to reinforce with tactical headquarters and two companies.

"13th.—Lance-Serjeant Smith and eight men relieved Lieutenant Steven's platoon on Sausage. The stand-by order to reinforce Bolster was cancelled and orders for Operation 'South' were issued. The object was to secure the Point 109 feature and the features east to Sausage, and consequently to patrol south into the enemy positions south of the Godusara Chaung. The plan was for C Company to move to capture Point 109 in the early hours of the 14th with one company of medium machine guns of the 12th Frontier Force Rifles in support, and establish a base so that the remainder of the Regiment could move into the area. A Company returned from the Tunnels area to Kanyindan.

"14th.—C Company and attached troops moved off at 0300 hrs. 0800 hrs. Bunker Hill reached and reported clear, and No. 13 Platoon occupied the feature south of it across the chaung. No. 14 Platoon sent forward to take Point 109 were engaged with grenades and light machine-gun fire when one section only was near the summit. Lance-Corporal Webling and two men with a light machine gun immediately gave covering fire while the remainder of the platoon descended the bare slopes to the covered nullah bed below. Captain Bailey, who had gone forward on a reconnaissance, did not return. Lance-Corporal Webling gathered together four other men and Lieutenant Plant, the medium machine-gun company commander, and this small force engaged the enemy all day until dusk, when it withdrew. Six Japanese were killed and two more probably killed. Captain Bailey and the medium machine-gun company commander's orderly were reported missing.

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Meanwhile, on the Sausage feature to the northeast of Point 109, Lance-Serjeant White's section observed 100 Japs led by an officer move from the Point 305 area to a position immediately below them. Here they stayed for about an hour and a half and at 1000 hrs. they sent a party up the Sausage feature. Lance-Serjeant White shot the leading scout at five yards' range, and then, their position having been discovered, withdrew his patrol westwards to Bunker Hill, where he joined C Company. At 1730 hrs. Serjeant Archer and a section which had relieved Serjeant White reported a large force of Japanese in the chaung 200 yards to the east. He was ordered to withdraw across the military road to the village of Tatugyaung and join up with the remainder of the Regiment the following morning. C Company closed up platoons and spent the night 500 yards north of Point 109.

"15th.—C Company reported a quiet night. At 0900 hrs. the remainder of the Regiment left Kanyindan on a man-pack basis accompanied by its battle and fighting echelons of mules, The convoy was shelled for a brief period, but no damage was caused. At 1200 hrs. Bunker Hill was reached and occupied by a platoon of D Company, and a patrol from C Company linked up with the Regiment. The commanding officer issued orders to Captain E. J. N. Cohen, commanding D Company, to advance through the jungle and take the Sausage feature in the afternoon. In the meantime A Company were to occupy Bunker Hill and the feature south of the chaung, and Regimental headquarters to be established in the next re-entrant between A Company and C Company. The headquarters set off behind D Company, but the jungle was so thick that it was recognized that the company could not reach its objective before dusk, and D Company stayed the night on a feature 600 yards west of Sausage.

"16th—During the night of the 15th/16th Bolster headquarters at Ponra were attacked four times by a force estimated at 100 Japanese. All attacks were beaten off without any casualties to B Company, and the following morning nine Japanese dead were found in front of the wire. V Force reported a further fourteen wounded in Lambaguna. On a morning patrol B Company killed one Japanese in Damankhali. At first light a section of D Company returned, having been unable to reach Sausage in the dark. At 1200 hrs. D Company occupied Sausage unopposed following an artillery concentration and machine-gun support. Patrols to Chiradan and Godusafa reported no enemy seen.

"17th.—Again during the night of the 16th/ 17th Ponra was attacked continuously until 0400 hrs. The enemy made numerous attempts to break through the wire, but all were beaten off. Artillery and mortar defensive fire followed the enemy as they returned to Lambaguna. Our own casualties were nil, and those of the enemy unknown. On orders from brigade, Bolster Force evacuated Ponra, and all troops were embarked by 1200 hrs. without opposition. B Company then returned to rear echelon at Kanyindan. At first light A Company moved up to attack Point 109 with the information from a C Company listening patrol that up to 2200 hrs. the previous night the position was still occupied. At 0730 hrs. an artillery concentration was brought down for three minutes and- was followed by medium machine-gun fire until A Company were in position. Our troops were unopposed and by 1000 hrs. the position was consolidated. The bodies of three Japanese were found and several bunker positions were smashed in with dead Japanese underneath. Captain Bailey's body was found, and the medium machine-gun company commander's orderly was found unwounded but in an exhausted condition. He reported that the enemy had vacated the positions just before the arrival of A Company. A strong platoon from C Company relieved A Company on Point 109, and Lieutenant E. F. Garcia remained to command it. A Company then returned to the features immediately south of Bunker Hill, and two platoons were given a counter-attack role. D Company spent the day consolidating their positions on the Sausage feature and building a mule track up to them.

"18th.—C Company patrol to Godusara reported the village clear and no enemy seen. A huge fire was seen to flare up on the hill features south of the Godusara Chaung at 2115 hrs.

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"19th.—A quiet night except for a deluge of rain which swamped positions and soaked everyone. The best part of the day was spent in rebuilding positions and rest areas. Orders were received to include in patrol areas Point 305, 1,000 yards east of Sausage, the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung, the chaung area running south-east from the chaung at 407318 and the coastal plain as far south as Ywathitke.

"20th —Small reconnaissance patrols were sent out before first light in accordance with the new patrolling programme. A D Company patrol of three men went right round the Point 305 feature, and at one point it came upon a deserted cookhouse and recently made mule and foot tracks. On Point 305 itself no movement was seen. A patrol of similar strength from C Company penetrated into the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung and reported one feature clear of the enemy and no sign of recent habitation. An A Company reconnaissance patrol reported Ywathitke and the Garden area clear of the enemy, the bashas previously occupied by the Jap in the latter place having been burnt down. On questioning, the headman of the village reported that a small Japanese patrol visited Thayegonbaung every day at 1700 hrs. and that an officer, three Japanese and eight Jifs were in Shinkali.

"21st.—A small reconnaissance patrol from A Company penetrated the foot-hills 1,000 yards south of the Godusara Chaung. Half-way up the feature 39503085 it met a single strand of barbed wire and, whilst investigating, surprised a sentry. Its presence revealed, the patrol withdrew accompanied by grenades and rifle fire, and in crossing open ground drew fire from another section post on a feature to the north. In return fire it is believed that one Japanese was wounded. Another four-man patrol from D Company investigated the 305 feature 1,000 yards east of D Company's positions on Sausage. It reached within seven yards of the summit and surprised about six Japanese in a bunker position on the top. A grenade was thrown at the patrol and a medium machine gun in the bunker opened fire, but the patrol withdrew successfully. Later in the day accurate artillery fire was brought to bear on Point 305.

"22nd.—A patrol of C Company investigating the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung reported smoke and one sentry on a feature known as Southern Tit, about 800 yards south-south-east of Sausage. Further smoke and movement was seen on a feature 700 yards south of the main chaung. No. 17 Platoon of D Company was sent to investigate the Tit area and was supported by artillery and mortar concentrations and medium machine guns. However, observation was difficult and it is doubtful whether the supporting fire was fully effective. The platoon was engaged by approximately one section of Japanese on the top with medium machine guns, rifle fire and grenades. The patrol withdrew after a sharp exchange of fire at close quarters, our own casualties being nil. We claimed one medium machine gunner killed by a grenade. Other weapon pits were discerned 500 yards to the east of Tit. A platoon of A Company operating in the plains occupied the Point 106 feature in the foot-hills and reported no signs of recent occupation. An ambush laid hi Thayegonbaung produced no results. B Company established itself as a new Bolster Force at West Chadin.

"23rd.—A patrol observed Southern Tit and made a reconnaissance round the south and east flanks, but neither movement nor any tracks leading to the top were seen. The feature was later mortared. The Regiment was ordered from today to give first priority to patrolling east of Sausage and north of the Point 305 feature along the chaung to Hkamweywa and to discover whether the enemy is using this route to supply forward troops.

Talking and some movement were heard after dark south of the Godusara Chaung, but if it was intended to draw our fire it failed to do so.

"24th.—In the early morning Nos. 7 and 9 Platoons of A Company moved off to attack the enemy on Southern Tit. Artillery and mortar harassing fire took place until the attacking force was in position on the North Tit at 1200 hrs. At 1030 hrs. a hostile 75-mm. gun shelled the mule convoy moving at East Chiradan. Ten rounds fell, but no casualties were caused beyond flesh wounds to five mules. At 1130 hrs. three shells fell in Regimental headquarters, four on features to the east, and six on A Company as it was moving round to the attack at Sausage. Two soldiers were slightly wounded.

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At 1430 hrs. No. 7 Platoon established itself on the Centre Tit, about 150 yards north of the enemy. Fire from light machine guns and rifles was met from the eastern slopes of the South Tit and three men were wounded, one seriously. Meanwhile No. 9 Platoon moved round the feature to the east and made progress up one chaung to within forty yards of the top before it was discovered. It was grenaded and fired on by two light machine guns and the only approach being the chaung, owing to the thick undergrowth on either side, the platoon had to withdraw.

Another attempt was made up another chaung, but as there was no approach by which the position could be taken without heavy casualties Captain Cashin withdrew to Point 109. No. 7 Platoon spent the night on the centre Tit. During the day a reconnaissance patrol of D Company, working north-eastwards from Sausage, tried to reach the village of Hkamweywa on a pass through the main Mayu Range, suspected of being used by the enemy as a line of communication. It reported the track well used, and reached a point about 1,000 yards from Hkamweywa, where it spotted a Jap patrol of seven moving north in the direction of Point 210.

"25th.—At 1000 hrs. No. 8 Platoon relieved No. 7 Platoon on the Centre Tit. Reconnaissance was made for a future attack on Southern Tit. A patrol from D Company went north-east of Point 305 and at the deserted cookhouse discovered a few days ago saw a signal cable leading to both Point 305 and a feature 500 yards to the east. Movement was heard on this latter place. A patrol from B Company under Lieutenant A. E. B. Pope, operating hi the coastal plain, entered Suniamapara and met automatic fire from the south edge of Lambaguna and also automatic and rifle fire from a pimple 500 yards to the southeast. After two hours' observation and desultory fire from the enemy during this period the platoon withdrew under cover of 2-inch mortar fire. It is believed that the six men on the pimple were Jifs. Our casualties were nil.

"26th.—Further reconnaissance was made by B Company for an attack on Southern Tit. No. 8 Platoon during the morning withdrew from the Centre Tit whilst the artillery registered on the Southern Tit.

"27th.—A platoon of B Company under Lieutenant Pope, south-east of Lambaguna, observed seven Jifs in Gandhi caps and carrying rifles moving towards Suniamarpara. At 400 yards' range automatic fire was opened on them. All seven immediately went to ground. Two attempted to run towards Hinhaya half an hour later, and another two a little later, but the patrol fired on them and they went to ground. The patrol watched for one and a half hours, but saw no further movement. During all this time the patrol was fired on by a light machine gun from the small pimple south-east of Suniamarpara. The range was about 1,000 yards and the patrol withdrew without casualties. V Force scouts were sent out to report on casualties to the Jifs.

"28th.—A patrol of C Company to Godusara reported that the villagers asserted that a small party of Japs came into the village almost every night between 1900 and 2000 hrs. to collect foodstuffs. Positions where they bivouacked were pointed out.

"29th.—The attack on Southern Tit was launched in the morning, the assaulting infantry being two platoons of B Company under command of Captain T. Hankey. After half-an-hour's artillery and mortar concentrations the platoons began to move nearer under cover of medium machine-gun fire and a 3.7-inch mountain gun firing over open sights. The advance was made up the less precipitous south-west slopes and, on reaching a small spur, the gun fire was stopped and the platoons fanned out and crept up to the summit, still under the medium machine-gun fire. Ten yards from the top this fire was lifted and Captain Hankey and Lance-Corporal Phillips went forward. They met a light machine-gun burst and rifle shots. Captain Hankey was killed almost instantly, and Lance-Corporal Phillips, wounded by grenade fragments in the arm and shoulder, threw himself down the hillside. There was some disorder and Flying Officer Mitchell, R.A.F. Regiment, who had come as a spectator, took command of the platoons. He re-formed them on the spur to the south-west and, calling for further medium machine-gun support, initiated a flanking movement which was successful.

No opposition was encountered and the position was consolidated, contact being made with the platoon of A Company on the Centre Tit. Total casualties were one officer killed and one soldier wounded. Immediately the Southern Tit was occupied movement was seen in the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung. It appeared as if several enemy and Jifs were carrying boxes of some kind. They were dispersed by artillery fire. No. 13 Platoon of C Company relieved B Company on the Southern Tit and No. 9 Platoon of A Company on the Centre Tit returned to its company area."

October, 1944 - From the War Diary,

"General.—This month has been spent entirely in the Point 109 area, the most southern positions held by the Fourteenth Army in the Arakan. For the greater part of the time the whole Regiment has occupied the area, but on two occasions B Company has been detached to act as Bolster Force in West Chiradan and from the 25th two companies—B and C—have been resting some three miles in the rear at Bagona.

"Strenuous patrolling has taken place, and much valuable information has been obtained of the areas south of the Godusara Chaung, the Point 305 area and the chaung and features running south-east at 407318. The enemy has a light screen of troops to our east and south-east, occupying Point 305, the features at 413330 and 406312, and with patrols operating occasionally in the foot-hills south of the Godusara Chaung. There have been few patrol clashes and the only one during which we inflicted casualties was Corporal Tibbie's (D Company) small patrol, which reached the summit of Point 305 and killed a sentry.

"On the 2nd No. 12 Platoon of B Company, then part of Bolster Force, fought an all-day action in the coastal plain near Suniamarpara. Although cut off by enemy fire and subjected to four separate assaults by superior forces, the platoon inflicted heavy casualties before withdrawing. During the first part of the month there were continuous rumours among the villagers that Maungdaw would be attacked and our own positions invested, and this was borne out by V Force reports of Japanese village meetings, when the enemy openly declared his intentions. However, the attack has not materialized so far, and quite possibly may have been bluff. At any rate, the threat has decreased, and opportunity has been taken of resting two companies in the Bagona area.

"The total number of battle casualties suffered by the Regiment this month were: four soldiers killed, one officer and four soldiers wounded, and one soldier missing, believed prisoner. Enemy casualties are assessed at twenty-seven killed and twelve wounded.

"2nd.—Lieutenant A. E. B. Pope and No. 12 Platoon of B Company (totalling nineteen all ranks), operating in the coastal plain, reached a small feature 500 yards east of Suniamarpara by 0600 hrs., leaving one section covering the chaung 400 yards to the north-west. From here the Pimples, 250 yards south, and the Ton Chaung area were observed, but no movement was seen. At 0900 hrs. three Jifs were observed on the northernmost pimple looking towards the covering section. At the same time four Jifs appeared just north-east of the platoon's position and one fired a pistol at our troops, who returned the fire. A light machine gun from the centre Pimple immediately sprayed our positions. More Jifs arrived north-east of our positions. These covered the approach to the feature from the chaung. At 0920 hrs. a Japanese officer directed the fire of a 3-inch mortar on to our positions—five rounds were fired and were ineffective. More Japanese appeared to the east and north-east of our positions, much talking was heard, and the enemy, with one light machine gun to the north-east and one on the centre Pimple, continued to fire sporadically until 1300 hrs. The covering section moving to Dangaywa was heavily engaged from the latter position and sustained two casualties. Between 1300 hrs. and 1500 hrs. four attacks were made on the platoon position with grenades and automatic fire, but all were repulsed. In the last attack the enemy strength was approximately twenty, and they were heard to say in English, 'Surrender—put up your hands.' The platoon, running short of ammunition, then broke out north-west to the chaung and reached Dangaywa at 1700 hrs. Artillery was then directed on to the enemy positions by the air observer. Our own casualties were two killed, one missing, and Lieutenant Pope and two soldiers wounded.

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It is believed that casualties inflicted on the enemy were heavy and it was reported that Jifs were recruiting villagers to help evacuate their casualties. Later V Force reported that at least three Japanese and two Jifs were killed, and four Japanese and three Jifs wounded.

"4th.—B Company was relieved of its Bolster Force duties at West Chiradan by a company of the 2nd/2nd Punjab Regiment. B Company moved into the Regimental area and occupied heights between Sausage and Regimental headquarters. A small Q party was left at West Chiradan to deal with rations and supplies arriving by sea.

"5th.—A reliable report was received by V Force from the headman of Alethangyaw, who had to supply carrying parties for the enemy, that the enemy casualties in No. 12 Platoon's action on the 2nd were twenty-four Japanese and two Jifs killed and twelve others wounded.

"7th.—Reports from villagers indicate that the enemy is boasting of a coming attack on Maungdaw. It is stated that 600 will attack up the coastal plain, another 600 through the hills, while a column will deal with those in this area—Point 109.

"8th.—To draw some reaction from the enemy and to attempt to dissuade him from an attack on Maungdaw through the hills, we were ordered to prepare a dummy attack to our east tomorrow. B Company was ordered at H hour to advance to the Godusara Chaung under artillery and mortar high-explosive and smoke-barrage and medium machine-gun fire. Having given the impression of strength, it was to retire by concealed routes 1,000 yards before the start line.

"9th.—At 1200 hrs. B Company's dummy attack was launched and carried out successfully. Unfortunately the enemy did not reveal themselves. Their only reaction was the shelling of the mortar and medium machine-gun positions on Sausage. One soldier was seriously wounded in the platoon of D Company returning from the feature 500 yards to the east and later died.

"16th.—Corporal Tibbie and a section of D Company discovered empty cartridge cases and medium machine-gun belts on the tracks running in front of Sausage and up to the Kanbyin Chaung. At the northern foot of Point 305 they observed movement on a small feature about 400 yards to the east. The patrol's object was to discover whether Point 305 was occupied, and while four men and a light machine gun covered them from the summit Corporal Tibbie and two others crept to the top. Corporal Tibbie reached the top and surprised a sentry in an observation bay and killed him. The patrol withdrew successfully.

"28th.—For their part in the Bolster operations of the 15th/16th September the following immediate awards have been announced:

"Major R. G. Northcote-Green: Military Cross.

"5374551 Private L. Wallington: Military Medal.

"5391056 Private F. Weller: certificate of gallantry.

"5390612 Private C. K. White: certificate of gallantry."

From the War Diary, November, 1944

"General.—During the first ten days of this month the Regiment, less B and C Companies, remained in the Point 109 positions. Constant patrolling took place eastwards and southwards, and the enemy, though there was small movement in other places, seemed concentrated on Point 305 and Akbar Ridge only. At intervals the Regiment was shelled by two 75-mm. guns. On the 6th the enemy fired seventy-nine rounds in a very short time—an indication, borne out later by V Force reports and the fact that no further shelling has taken place, that the guns were being moved and the stocks of ammunition were being used up. One fatal casualty was caused in the final shelling.

"On the 10th the Regiment was relieved by No. 42 Commando (Royal Marines) and joined B and C Companies in Bagona, three miles in the rear. The rest period lasted until the 30th, when the

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Regiment took over 'its old positions. During the three weeks training was carried out, with special emphasis on village fighting, attacking bunkered positions and crossing chaungs. A good deal of field firing and route marches in full man-pack order were carried out. On the entertainments side basketball came into its own again and ample opportunity was provided for each man to visit the divisional cinema, and also see the E.N.S.A. show. One company even held a Christmas dinner.

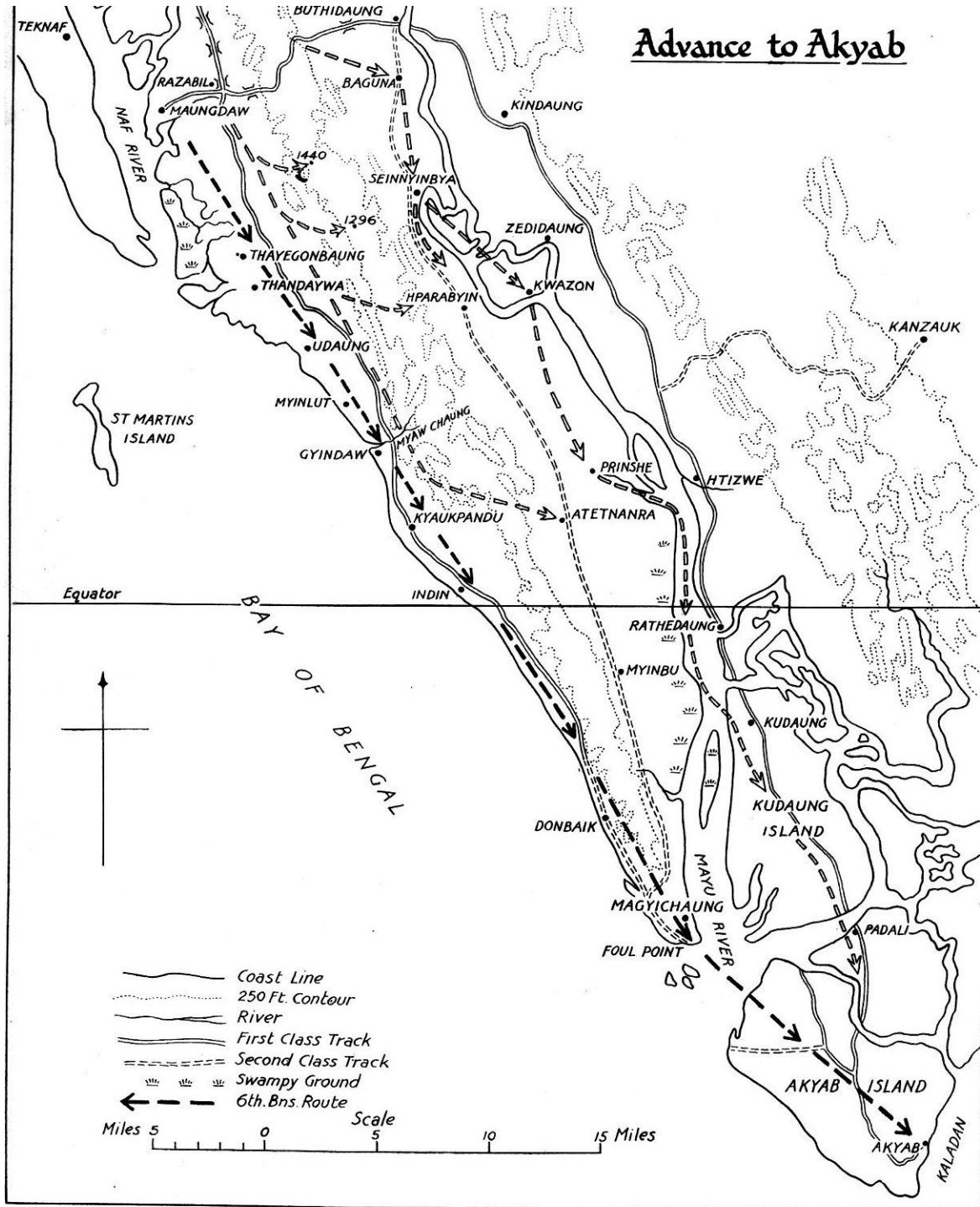
"The Regiment moved on the night of the 29th, practising its revised load tables on animal and motor transport and, having bivouacked the night in East Chiradan, relieved No. 42 Commando the following morning.

"25th.—The other two battalions in the brigade group moved farther south across the Arakan Plain on the west side of the Mayu Range, the preliminary move in the concentration of the brigade for a further assault southwards. The 3rd/2nd Gurkha Rifles occupied positions round the Ton Chaung without opposition and the 14th/ 10th Baluch Regiment moved into the foothills south of Point 182.

"29th.—The Regiment, plus mule and mechanical transport, moved out of Bagona rest area at dusk and took up a Regimental position in East Chiradan.

"30th.—The previous night's move was in the nature of a practice for future operations, but in the morning at first light the Regiment began to relieve No. 42 Commando in the Point 109 area. The take-over was effected by 1000 hrs. The dispositions were as follows: Regimental headquarters and H.Q. Company in the same area as before, with C Company, less one platoon; one platoon of C Company at Tree Hill; B Company on Sausage and Soya features; A and Administrative Companies at East Chiradan; D Company, less one platoon, on features known as Breasts 390305,600 yards south of the Godu-sara Chaung crossing; one platoon of D Company at West Chiradan.

Advance to Akyab



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MAP 6

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DECEMBER, 1944 (Maps Akyab, Sheet 1. Hind 601, Sheet 85 IE 113 / 3)

D Day in the Arakan was fixed for the 10th December. The rough plan was to clear the Mayu Peninsula with the 25th Division while the West Africans operated farther east in the Kaladan. The whole show was to be a preliminary for an assault by a fresh division on Akyab. The task of our brigade was to reach Foul Point by the 14th January, 1945.

Operation "Gamma" started the ball rolling with a ten-mile night march without incident. However, the next evening quite a merry party went on all round us with a few shells, mortars, Japanese gunboats and jitter parties forming the cast. Most of it was directed at brigade headquarters and the only casualties were to the Japanese and the officers' mess cook.

The next morning we moved on again to a very large and pleasant village called Udaung, where eggs and fruit were plentiful. Our forward patrols reported that the Japanese ran away when they appeared, one of them in his haste leaving his jacket behind with twenty chips in Indian currency in the pocket. Seven Jifs of the I.N.A.t surrendered here, which was an encouraging sign. They appeared to be delighted at having left their Nipponese masters in the lurch and shook hands with everyone. Their pistols, which contained enormous dum-dum bullets, were quickly snapped up as souvenirs.

On the 12th December Lieutenant Knight, commanding a platoon of D Company in an outpost position, had quite a brisk battle all the afternoon with about an equal number of Japanese.

However, Anthony Paul went out with a forward observation officer and dealt with them. The situation had been a bit sticky, as our platoon had a tidal chaung at their backs. We only had two men slightly wounded and the Japanese about five casualties.

For the next ten days, apart from a little shelling, life was fairly quiet and the brigade tidied up. We all had some excellent sea bathing in delightful weather, pastry-boards were found useful as surf-boards by many.

On the 21st December Operation "Circus" was sprung on us. It was decided that the original policy of advancing on the picqueting principle used on the Frontier would be modified and the Regiment, plus about 100 mules, sappers, forward observation officers, F.O.Bs., V Force, Dowks (DUKWs), two destroyers and some M.Ls.(Motor Launches) were to advance and capture Donbaik, twenty-two miles down the coast. This caused a bit of a stir, as Donbaik had been the Waterloo of the disastrous 1942-43 Arakan campaign, and stories of the impregnable Jap defences in that area were legion. Information was very scanty, as no one had been there for two years and the local inhabitants, being Mughs, were reported to be pro-Japanese.

We did what reconnaissance we could in the air observation post and aboard M.Ls., but few of us were much the wiser. On the 22nd December the Regiment set off along the beach, the column stretching for several miles. We lay up in the afternoon and in the evening the real march into enemy territory began. It was pitch-dark and the first snag was a bridge which was found to consist of only one narrow plank. We had to meander round and through a great many chaungs for an hour before eventually assembling again on the beach. For four hours we plodded on through the night, our man-pack getting heavier every hour. At midnight we halted, and with a certain amount of difficulty unloaded all our mules and tried to sleep on the cold, wet ground. At first light, after a good deal of discussion, the intelligence officer and the map agreed on our whereabouts, and we sallied forth. About breakfast time we discovered the signs of an old battlefield and reckoned we must be getting warm. D Company went off inland to look for the Japanese while the rest of us drummed up and broke our fast on biscuits and sardines.

No news came from D Company, and as there were no battle noises Ken Field, with C Company, went on with orders to capture Donbaik village. This he soon accomplished without opposition and we all packed up and moved on about 2,000 yards. It was rather an anti-climax, as not a single building remained standing and grass about six feet high enveloped everything.

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In addition, a deep chaung ran through the middle of the village. Movement and communications within the village were almost impossible without being completely engulfed in the mass of overgrown vegetation. Not a single inhabitant was to be seen and the place had rather an eerie feeling. The announcement on the wireless a few days later that British troops had captured the coastal town of Donbaik conjured up a very different picture from the reality. However, we earned the title of famous marchers and got quite a good write-up in the Press.

Actually it was a pretty exhausting operation and the Regiment marched magnificently. It was a typical jungle warfare operation, without lines of communication, no road, and we were twenty miles from the nearest land forces. The Navy soon came into action and stores and gunners began to flow in by sea, though unloading the guns from landing ships, tank, provided excellent entertainment for all except the gunners and the naval officer in charge.

As the Japanese appeared to have fled we rapidly made ourselves comfortable and, apart from routine patrols, had a well-earned rest. Christmas dinner consisted of dehydrated mutton and Indian composition, but our spirits revived on the 27th, when some very fat geese, Australian mutton and a bottle of beer each appeared and we had a somewhat belated celebration.

Several visitors of the V.I.P.(Very Important Person) category appeared out of the sky to tour old battlefields, but, apart from three tanks piled up in a nullah and a perfectly serviceable A/T cart, there was little to be seen. The whole area had been uncultivated for the past two years. Eventually we found a large Japanese camp (unoccupied) and some very fine bunkers and observation posts, luckily also empty.

At the end of the month the rest of the brigade group passed through us and we were left to guard the rear, while some medium guns on our doorstep made the night hideous by harassing the Japs on the other side of the range every half-hour.

On the 29th December it was announced that as we had beaten our schedule by a fortnight the brigade was to be given the task of capturing Akyab. This again surprised us not a little, as very few of us had the slightest idea about combined operations, and had not even any pamphlets to learn the theory from. However, considering ourselves well-trained infantry, we were prepared to have a go at anything once.