

A Worm's Eye View

The 1/4 KOYLI in Normandy

Lewis Keeble

I thought it might be interesting to write a purely personal account of the Normandy campaign, but with a few observations on tactics and morale, for the benefit of any who might care to read them. I have little liking or even respect for military ways, customs and traditions, so this account will be at least free from any false glamour.

I was with the First Fourth Battalion, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (1/4 KOYLI) from June 1940, shortly after leaving OCTU, to 3 September 1944 except for about 3 months when I was mortar instructor at 49th Division Battle School, so I knew it pretty well. My worm's eye view derives from this narrow experience as well as from the very limited physical view one had in Bocage. So it may not be a very valuable opinion when I say that I feel fairly confident that 1/4 KOYLI, when it went to Normandy, was well in the upper half of British infantry battalions. As further evidence of impartiality, I got into it purely because a War Office clerk couldn't hold a ruler straight; until June 1940 all Yorkshire meant to me was a cricket team that batted rather slowly.

I've read a lot about the Second World War. Four books have made very special impressions; Lord Moran's *The Anatomy of Courage*, John Ellis' *The Sharp End of War*, Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* and John Masters' *The Road Past Mandalay*. To that very recently, I've added the First War History of the Wellington (New Zealand) Regiment. They were at Passchendaele; my late father-in-law was with them. In 1961 I took him to see Tessel Wood.

The reason I've mentioned these books is that anyone who has been in battle in the infantry must wonder how his experience compared with other infantrymen in other campaigns and wars.

One knows that it is very frightening and exhausting, but what others went through reads as if it was very much worse. There are several reasons for this. Practically all accounts are a bit hyped up; they recount the highlights rather than the lowlights; they don't usually indicate the comparatively short time spent in battle by most individual infantrymen, before wounds, illness, accident or death get them; they don't indicate the comparatively small proportion of time spent by any unit actually at the point of the sharp end (i.e. exposed to aimed small arms fire); most don't reveal the difference in hostile firepower between the First and Second World Wars and only *The Sharp End of War*, out of what I've read, explains what a very much smaller proportion of troops were at the sharp end in the Second War than in the First. I say this not to seek to magnify the endurance we were called on to find in Normandy, but to explain the undoubted fact that we all went through just about as much as we could take, and more than some of us could take.

This is where *The Anatomy of Courage* is particularly interesting. Its thesis is essentially that every person possesses a certain reservoir of courage — small, medium or large, probably genetically determined, that that reservoir is progressively depleted by exposure to danger and fatigue, and when it's empty you're finished. Removal from danger, and rest, allows the reservoir gradually to refill. I remember at Tessel

Wood, a machine gunner being led away with hysterical blindness after only two or three days exposure to not very much danger. Later, during a pause in the advance to the Seine, I spent some hours burrowed in the depth of a haystack, having absolutely no inclination to emerge and there being no special need to do so.

Normandy was certainly far less frightful than many campaigns — during a fair part of it we were winning by miles — but it was not exactly a walkover. At the back of Godfrey Barker Harland's admirable little *War History ofl /4 KOYLI* is a fairly sombre Roll of Honour: 186 killed in North West Europe. How many wounded? We're not told. The only indication I can give is that of the 20 or so officers in rifle companies when we landed, I was the 19th to be knocked out, 85 days after landing, and the 20th, Tony Little went about 8 days later. Moreover, during that time, several places had been refilled twice or more and several of the wounded had returned.

That leads me to several interesting points. Why are officer casualties always so high? It's certainly not because they are braver than the others (or even that they are more stupid!). It is simply that their jobs make it necessary for them to move about more, with greater danger of being caught in the open. Also, it's sometimes necessary for leaders to go first.

Why have I concentrated on casualties in rifle companies? Partly because I can't be sure about any more general figures, but partly because it is inevitably the officers in the rifle companies who have to spend a larger proportion of their time exposed to aimed small arms fire than the others. (Even though some of the others have sometimes to expose themselves to greater danger than the rifle companies are exposed to most of the time). However, all this is very imprecise; even when a battalion is right at the sharp end, life in the rear rifle companies may be very much more comfortable than it is with the forward companies.

Speaking of comfort, a touch of comfort, if attainable, is a great aid to efficiency as well as to morale, and I think attention to this was

lacking in the very good and long training we had. At company commander level it is practically impossible to function efficiently for many days at a stretch in an uncovered slit trench; at the very least it is necessary to be able to shine a torch on a spread map protected from rain. (If you get that there is the added chance of being able to sleep lying down instead of sitting.) In Normandy we sometimes got the Pioneer platoon to come and blow a 6 foot diameter hole with gun cotton and roof it with a vehicle cover, as a Company HQ, but I don't think enough of that was done. Incidentally, out of 85 nights in France I probably spent only 7 in some sort of building and I imagine that was typical.

On D+4 the battalion landed, somewhere on Gold Beach. The Normandy invasion was, in most respects, a model of military organisation. We landed wearing denim trousers in case we got wet, with our proper trousers round our necks. We marched inland a bit and changed our trousers in a field in which there was a sign saying "You are now at map reference 123456." Then we marched a bit more and took up a position at Coulombs. The bridgehead was the most extraordinary spectacle, practically standing room only, spotter planes jostling for position with guns, enough DUKWs to make a duck fair. Guns firing all the time. "My dear, the noise and the people." Guns considerably stopped firing when you had to walk across in front of them so that you didn't get your head blown off. There were, or were alleged to be, some German snipers around. Hordes of soldiers went after them on totally futile hunting parties.

Then we moved to Brouay (then shown as Bronay on the maps) where we were in contact with the enemy. Hessian screens were erected to fill gaps between trees so that it was possible to walk around. There was some gallant and successful patrolling, about which Godfrey knows much more than I do. There was also some indiscipline; a party (officer led!) went to a nearby crashed Spitfire in search of souvenirs and were nearly shot as enemy on their way back. I did a stupid thing; I went sniper hunting on my own and then realized he was much more likely to get me than I was to get him.



British infantry in Normandy had a wide array of weapons available to them including the Stengun (left, centre), PLAT (centre) and the Lee-Enfield rifle (right). (IWM BU 1335)

Then on 16 June, D+10 we did Cristot. Before I describe that, I should just explain that this will be the sixth or seventh time I've revisited the Normandy battlefields, or some of them, but after 42 years memory has faltered. The physical scene has gradually changed a good deal during that time, some of one's recollections have become blurred and distorted. I can't even remember from which direction we attacked Cristot. But worse than that, and especially applicable to Cristot, the Bocage country is a map reader's nightmare and the maps we had weren't, anyhow, very good.

I was second-in-command (2 i/c) of "B" Company and we were the left forward company. Tony Little was the Company Commander. There can't have been many amateur infantry officers as competent as he was, and none braver. The fire support for this battalion action was enormous: seven field and four medium regiments, ships, fighters, fighter-bombers, some platoons of 4.2-inch mortars and tanks. Unfortunately,

Tony and I couldn't match the start line on the map with the ground. Walker, the CO., came up and was rather scornful about this, but he couldn't match them, either. "Oh well," he said, "it's too late now." And it was. Down it all came; a lot of it on the start line we had taken up, some behind it.

Judging by what happened a week or so later at Tessel, we may, in fact, have been on the correct start line. As 2 i/c I was more or less a spectator of the initial stages of the attack from some 50 yards back. Tony had set off at H-Hour, with the leading platoons but within a minute he had the Company doubling back. I wondered whether he could get them going again, but of course he did.

At this point I should emphasize that the men of the battalion were almost all quite new to battle. There were some who had been in the ill-fated Norway expedition and a very few who had fought in other theatres, but, overwhelmingly, we were raw, if very thoroughly trained, troops. Fortunately it

was, apart from the initial debacle, by any standard, not a difficult attack. (Our casualties, during the attack and the subsequent few days during which we occupied Cristot, were 11 killed, 2 missing and 53 wounded.)

A subsequent War Office pamphlet extolled this attack as a model of infantry-tank co-operation, but really it wasn't; it was a bit of a shambles. At the objective Tony and I had more trouble in reconciling map and ground. Fortunately this could be resolved easily. The church was visible on the ground and shown on the map. I walked to the church, and by means of compass bearing and pacing established exactly where we were (attempting to discourage an alleged sniper in the church by tossing a grenade thereinto).

Well, that was that. The next item, on 25 June (D+19) was the 146 Brigade attack on Fontenay-le-Pesnel and Tessel Wood. That was a very different matter. There are some curious discrepancies in accounts about it. Godfrey deals with it briskly and accurately in his brief history. F.K. Hughes, in his *Short History of 49th West Riding and Midland Division* writes rather dismissively:

Phase 2 opened around midday and at 12:15pm 4th KOYLI (146th Brigade reserve) crossed the Juvigny — Fontenay road and were able to capture their objective, the north west corner of Tessel Wood in the face of only light opposition.

No one who was there will recognize that as an accurate account of what happened. Not that it really matters, but it shows the fallibility of historians.

G.F. Ellenberger in his *History of the KOYLI 1939-1948* is much better [p. 122]. He says that we lost 13 killed, 52 wounded and 20 missing (unlikely). He lists Fontenay-le-Pesnel among 25 KOYLI 2nd World War battle honours and, further, as one of 10 "selected for emblazonment on the Queen's Colour."

It was a hell of a day. I don't want to go on and on about it, but it was the most

exciting day of my life and of a good many others, I bet. The essence of it is:

The Hallams and Lincolns went down the hill early in the morning and took Fontenay-le-Pesnel with considerable effort and delay. I had taken over command of "C" Company. We were the left forward company; Gerald Roberts commanded "D," the right forward company; Derek Mayall, with "A," was behind us and Tony Little, with "B," behind "D" Company. When we got the word we went down the hill to the village and lay up north of the main transverse road. The first shock was that this advance was supposed to be protected by smoke, but we were utterly exposed. No smoke, but no-one fired on us. No smoke where it was needed, on the opposite hillside, but blinding smoke down below in the valley. I tried to march to our forming up place (FUP) on a compass bearing. A Royal Engineer officer diverted us — minefield. But we got to the FUP in time, plenty of time. Our H-Hour was postponed. Two members of the Company couldn't stand it and shot themselves in the foot in quick succession. At last, H-hour was announced. The fire support was similar to or even greater than for Cristot. More of it behind the start line than in front of it. No doubt about the position of the start line this time, it was the road. Off we go, the blast from a shell knocks me over, but only one little flesh wound. Up the hill, through the first hedge, binoculars torn away, trousers ripped. Where are the boys? Nothere, I go back; "come on." Through the hedge again, still no boys. Back again "COME ON!" They came. Through more hedges. Up to the edge of the wood. Bloody murder; people dropping dead. But, we're there. Send success signal. Hitler Jugend prisoners. Ominous looking "bunker" on line of advance held no enemy.

I said there would be no false glamour in this account. During the attack one of my platoons ran away and were brought back at pistol point by Tug Wilson, my 2 i/c.

We dug in. I heard Gerald Roberts had been killed; "D" Company had ground to a halt and Tony Little had passed through them to the objective.



Tessel Wood and the startline of the 1/4 KOYLI attack.

(WLU Air Photo Collection 310/4050)

After a while I walked back from advance Company HQ to main Company HQ, where the Company carrier was, to check up on a few things. I'd only been there a few minutes when there was a great blast of artillery and machine gun fire. We were being counterattacked by infantry and two tanks.

The same platoon ran away again. Tug got the spare Bren off the carrier, I got the spare 2-inch mortar, the CSM fed us with ammunition and this somewhat unconventionally composed combat group put down some pretty rapid fire. I thought our remaining forward platoon was likely to be



*Soldiers of the Hallamshire Battalion walking through the village of Fontenay-le-Pesnel, 25 June 1944.
(Photo by Lieutenant Handford, rWM B 5942)*

overwhelmed and got the rear platoon organised to counter-attack if this happened, but eventually it all died down. The enemy retired, leaving two knocked out tanks and quite a lot of dead. I was sure they'd be back and stood to the whole Company all night so that there'd be no question of surprise. But they didn't come. Did I do right?

We stayed at Tessel Wood for more than three weeks (Mulberry damaged in gale and consequent shortages). I forgot to mention that, shortly before Tessel, Walker had become Brigadier and Wuzzle Wardleworth had taken over as *CO*. He was very good; why he was several times replaced after temporary command I shall never know. He moved the

companies around fairly frequently in order to give everyone a turn in the comparatively quiet rear positions. The right forward company position was the worst; it was hardly possible for the right forward platoon of that company to move at all during daylight without attracting fire. When we were occupying that position I visited that platoon one night and found all sentries asleep. There wasn't an awful lot between us and the coast.

It was during the Tessel phase that exhaustion began to bite. The oldest and the youngest were worst affected; I formed the *view* that most under 23 and over 35 were too old or too young. Of course that doesn't apply to battalion commanders and above, who

have just a bit less physical stress. Irritability increased; there was a tendency for people to fall asleep at O Groups when not being directly addressed. There was an awful lot of patrolling; it may have been necessary, but it was physically and nervously exhausting. The three weeks at Tessel Wood was packed full of incident. The saying about war being 90% acute boredom and 10% acute fear didn't apply. The 10% fear was there, but there was no time to be bored.

One night's work deserves to be told in some detail because it was so full of highlights, not typical at all.

"B" & "C" Companies each had to send out a patrol that night; mine was to have yet another sniff at la Petite Ferme, I forget what "B"'s had to do. Tony Little joined me at my HQ and we had some rum.

Fierce fighting broke out from the direction of La Petite Ferme and almost at the same time a German air raid developed a little to the rear. Some of the buildings in Fontenay were set on fire and blazed merrily. The firing from La Petite Ferme grew positively hysterical. There came a sound of running feet and laboured breathing. "Come quickly sir, Captain Wilson's hit." I sent back for stretcher bearers and hurried forward, fires behind us, bursting A.A. shells and aircraft flares overhead, sinking slowly downward; the drone of German engines, the chatter of machine guns from La Petite Ferme. Tug groaning and bubbling from the mouth. He had been standing in a slit trench with his head and chest exposed and stray bullets from La Petite Ferme had got him through the lung.

The stretcher bearers came up and we got Tug on to the stretcher. He wanted a drink, wanted his boots off, said he was done for and wished us luck. Tony thought he was too lively to be badly wounded, but I felt sure his number was up. We stumbled back with him through the edge of the wood, with all the lurid noise and light still going on. There was a crescendo of firing, and bullets came hissing all around us. One of the bearers dropped his end of the stretcher and lay down flat. I

kicked him in the arse and told him to get on. A few yards further and the fire became so intense that we all lay down by mutual consent, but the stretcher went down gently this time.

When we reached my Company HQ some fresh stretcher bearers went off with Tug through the whistling bullets while I stayed to look after the Company. About then, the fires and flares having gone out and the night very black, it seemed to me that the bullets were coming from much nearer than they had been before. It is always hard to judge the distance from which shots are fired, and especially so at night. There didn't seem to be anything one could possibly do, so I did nothing. Presently it became quieter and I was just beginning to relax when there were more sounds of running feet and panting. My patrol was back and the officer in charge of it had been shot through the hands with a Sten gun by "B" Company's patrol. The two patrols had met in the dark; the other patrol commander had challenged, and my man, (a reinforcement officer who had only been with us for twenty four hours) had dodged behind a hedge instead of answering. He was lucky to be alive.

Some time later a prisoner was brought to me, a Pole from Gdynia who had succeeded in getting away from his unit and giving himself up, no mean feat at either end. The Pole was a pleasant lad and I accompanied him to Battalion HQ. We chatted in an odd mixture of French and German and he said he thought large numbers of Germans were almost ready to give up.

I went to see the Medical Officer to enquire after Tug. Tug was dead. I had known him well for only a very short time but I had learnt that he was a very admirable person. He had been with the Battalion in Norway in 1940 before I joined it. He was one of the best soldiers in the Battalion. After a long time in Africa he had been posted back to the Battalion just in time for the invasion, death and a posthumous M.C.

Dawn was breaking, and seven or eight miles to the East the process was beginning

of bombing Caen to pieces before capturing it. As far as the eye could see a solid stream of bombers was making its way from the Channel towards Caen and another stream was returning to England. An enormous jet black, spreading column of smoke rose straight up into the windless sky.

Some short, unconnected thoughts before I leave Tessel Wood:

1. Why do telephone lines, laid along the ground, **always** get broken by shellfire? It seems statistically improbable.
2. There's nothing like battle for promotion; during the three weeks I had one lance corporal up to Company Quartermaster Sergeant and another up to Sergeant. I'd have had my signals corporal, Charlie Wainwright, up to Field Marshal if it had been possible. Sergeants commanded most platoons most of the time and were admirable. I switched the Company Sergeant Major to platoon commander and had a sergeant platoon commander as CSM. Horses for courses.
3. Since Tessel Wood I have never doubted the fundamental excellence of most ordinary human beings. The comradeship was terrific.
4. Exhausted sentries **will** fall asleep, no matter what. Commanders need to be frequently aroused to check and prevent this. But what if the arouser has fallen asleep? Savage punishment is no remedy. It's a complex problem. There has to be **some** sleep.
5. The battlefield is empty. One **sees very** few live, uncaptured enemies.

We moved from Tessel Wood, speeded on our way by some nasty air bursts, had a bit of rest and as a division moved to the Caen sector and from Second British Army to First Canadian Army. From this point on until Forêt de Brotonne I can't give any properly connected account, partly because the battalion moved so frequently and in unintelligible directions (like an elephantine

boxer ducking and weaving) as part of higher level strategy; partly because, though we marched a lot of the time, we were sometimes lifted in trucks, which destroyed one's sense of direction, and partly because at one point I flaked out and was carted off to hospital for a couple of days. (So did Tony Little, a bit earlier. He was carried off delirious and struggling; I at least went quietly! I simply lay down at one point and couldn't get up again). But here are some episodes, roughly in sequence.

One day, on the march, we saw some American heavies bombing like mad several miles ahead of us in what we had thought an area firmly under allied control. It was; they were bombing 51st Division and the Polish Division.

For some days we were at the twin villages of Sannerville and Banneville, a few miles east of Caen. They, and much else around were so heavily blasted by bombing that there wasn't really any landscape.

I was lucky to have the best of the Company positions here. Company HQ was the cellar of a little chateau-type country house, itself smashed by bombs, and the Platoon positions were unusually secure and even comfortable because the unit which occupied them before us had burrowed into the bases of the ha-ha's which marked the boundaries of the garden. The rear elevation of the chateau looked through a broad swathe cut in a small wood which reached almost to the ha-ha's. In the middle of the garden, oddly impressive against this break in the wood, was a large wooden Gothic cross marking the grave of a German soldier. Judging by the smell, not all the dead in the vicinity of the chateau had been buried and in the cellar there was a strong and unpleasant smell the source of which we were never able to find. Even so it was delightful to have a headquarters within a building instead of in a hole in the ground. A very large number of books and papers belonging to the chateau had been spread far and wide by the bombing. I picked up a letter, evidently written by one young man to another, in which the writer deplored that his parents would not allow

him to go and lead the gay life of Paris. I also found an extremely indecent French play, the highlights in which were vividly illustrated by monochrome drawings. The last of these showed a massed sexual orgy; the great ingenuity with which dual roles were assigned to each of the participants went a good way to redeeming its slight repulsiveness.

I don't recall being fired on by small arms at the chateau, but artillery, mortars and aircraft made things very lively. The aircraft attacks were little more than a joke for they consisted of showers of little anti-personnel bombs. Each aircraft would heave overboard several dozen of these. They came down whistling and all burst within a second or so of each other, but none of the bangs were loud enough to be really frightening. On the other hand we first encountered the Moaning Minnie, Nebelwerfer or multi-barrelled mortar here. These were fiendish things.

Came Minden Day and my cellar was selected as the rendezvous for a little convivial booze-up for all officers of the Regiment who could get there. Quite a lot did. Staff officers from various Divisions, one or two from the Sixth Airborne and so on, including Richard Todd, the film star. As they gathered in the cellar, baying their fatuous upper class greetings, it occurred to me that one well directed shell during the next few minutes would considerably increase the prospects of promotion in the British Army and weaken the impetus of the invasion quite appreciably. The enemy can't have been more than 400 yards away. (Ellenberger says 200 yards.) An equally unwelcome visit was from my usually dear friend Harkin, the Transport sergeant, who one day drove a truck skidding to a halt in a cloud of dust just next to our cellar (in search of loot). He left even more rapidly after hearing from me a vivid account of his probable ancestry and lack of hope of posterity. Moral; post notices warning of proximity of front line.

A recce patrol from the 1/4 KOYLI goes out covered by a Bren gun.

(IWMB 11119)



One morning just after stand-to I had a narrow escape. I was returning to Company HQ after visiting the left hand platoon. Near the crumbled bits of wall which had been the outbuildings of the chateau I met a runner from another company; we stopped and had a brief chat and had just parted when we heard the snarl of a Nebelwerfer. We ran for cover in opposite directions; I huddled under the best bit of wall I could find, which was about six feet long and two feet high. The six bombs straddled me. The last seemed to explode inside me. I felt a red hot pain in the back. I got up; three yards away a small crater was still smoking slightly. How could I possibly still be alive and with only one hole in me? I looked for the runner to whom I had been talking; he crawled over the edge of a bomb crater, unhurt, grinned pallidly and went on his way.

I was quite light-headed; I tried to catch a lovely white rabbit which was wandering about in the rubble, which I thought would make a nice pet. I couldn't catch it, and presently began to wander back to Company HQ in a dreamy, lackadaisical fashion. On the way I was seized by violent shivering. My second-in-command had a dig at my back with a penknife and reported that he didn't think there was much harm done but there seemed to be a bit of metal stuck rather firmly in it so that I ought to see the Medical Officer.

I got back to the Regimental Aid Post still shaking badly, though not feeling bad. Tom Dean, an absolutely magnificent Medical Officer, did a very rapid diagnosis and provided immediate treatment: a quadruple neat gin. Then he started poking around in my back and wanted to send me to hospital. I argued with him; I still had a couple of days to go before becoming a temporary Major instead of an acting Major and didn't fancy reverting to Lieutenant and becoming potentially subject to being buggered about by every Captain in the army. So he kindly dug the fragment out. No sweat, as they say.

At Bourneville, a little west of the Forêt de Brotonne, I was ordered to do a set piece dawn company attack. This was a scene of high farce for me. I stayed awake most of the

night making plans and, at my "O" Group, noted with alarm that the "O" Group seemed to be larger than the, by then, fairly depleted Company. Anyway, in the solemn dawn, we all advanced menacingly on Bourneville, but when we were about 200 yards from its outskirts a Recce Regiment, private walked casually across the village street with his hands in his pockets. They were there before us. Wasted sweat.

This is a good point at which to lavish some praise on the direction of the Normandy campaign as it affected us. We never went hungry; there was never a day when we didn't get food and so far as I know we never ran out of petrol. Papers and mail arrived frequently. (Once I got a *Daily Mirror* on the evening of the day of publication when we were a forward Company at Tessel.) We never once got ahead of the maps supplied, though once or twice we were perilously near the edge. During the rapid advance to the Seine the organization needed to secure that must have been of a high order. Medical Services were admirable; once a wounded man had been got back to the Regimental Aid Post (and Godfrey saw to it that that happened as quickly as was physically possible) he was off to hospital in a flash. But I guess wireless communication was a great deal less than perfect. We ought to have known the Recce Regiment was in Bourneville.

Speculative afterthoughts

The Normandy invasion may have been the best organised invasion in the history of warfare; I've already given some examples of how this appeared at the worm's eye view level. Here are a few queries from that level of how things might, or might not, have been even better.

1. Could more effective measures have been taken to avoid bombardment of own troops? Very bad for morale, apart from direct losses.
2. Could infantry have been better conserved? I think we were pushed a bit too hard at times. For example, it's hard to believe that the amount of patrolling we did (especially at Tessel)

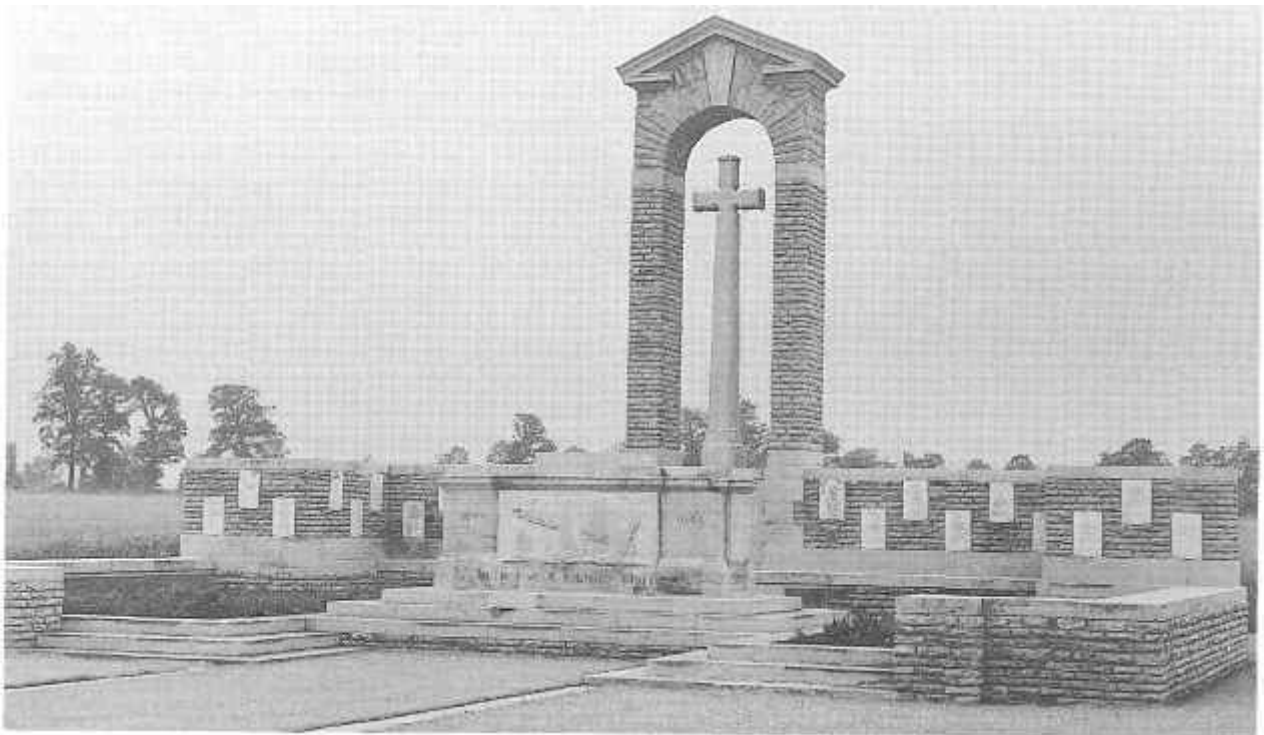
produced results commensurate with the strain and exhaustion entailed.

3. Could wireless communication have been better? It's hard to believe that the devotion of more resources to this would not have produced more than commensurate benefits.
4. Granted that, by a silent and mysterious process, the worst senior officers had been weeded out before D Day, was the system of promotion and allocation to commands still unduly conventional and rigid?
5. Should there not have been, during training, far more exercise (via umpires, "you, you and you are dead") of people in taking command two steps up? (One of my bravest sergeants nearly fainted when, before an attack, I said to him "If I'm knocked out, you're Company Commander").
6. But it has to be admitted that there are limits to what can be done. The efforts to impress on people the need to dig in immediately upon reaching

an objective could hardly have been greater, but "Thank Christ, we're here; let's find some loot" seemed to be an ineradicable attitude.

This account was adapted from Appendix C in Godfrey Barker Harland, *Battlefield Tour. The 1st/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in the NW Europe Campaign, 10 June 1944 - 8 May 1945.* 1987. Reprinted with permission.

Lewis Keeble landed in Normandy on 10 June 1944 as the second-in-command of "B" Company, 1/4 KOYLI. On 20 June he became the officer commanding "C" Company and remained so until 3 September 1944. He was wounded in action three times, the last wound serious enough to remove him from combat. He was awarded an immediate M.C.



Memorial to the 49th "Polar Bear" Division between Fontenay-le-Pesnel and Rauray.

(Photo by Linda Copp)