

The Guards at Mareth

By Brigadier J. A. GASCOIGNE

ON about 25 Jan. I went down to Cairo from our station in Syria on a combination of business and pleasure, and no sooner had I arrived than I was sent for by the C.G.S. who told me that the Bde. was to go to Eighth Army to become the Motor Bde. of an Armd. Div. We were to leave Syria on 7 Feb. and motor up to Tripoli, re-equipping ourselves on the way.

Time was pretty short and my staff and the Bns. had an enormous amount of work to do, since our very heterogeneous collection of vehicles had to be classified into four different categories each of which had to be disposed of differently. We also had to work out exactly what we wanted to draw in the way of G.1098 equipment, arrange for some parties to go to Tripoli by sea, some by sea and rail, some by road and rail and the main body entirely by road. These arrangements were not made any easier by heavy snow which prevented all movement from the camp for a period of about five days and broke most of the telephone lines.

On 7 Feb. the main body left and motored to Egypt. They spent 10, 11 and 12 Feb. handing in old and drawing up new vehicles, and left for their long motor drive to Tripoli on 13 Feb. It was a great disappointment to me that I could not motor with the Bde. but the three C.O.s and myself had been ordered to fly up to Tripoli in order to attend the Army Comd's. conference. I had hoped to be able to say, when I was a boring old grandfather, that I had once motored from Tripoli (Syria) to Tripoli (Tripolitania). The move went all right and out of all the hundreds of vehicles we only lost four or five, three of which were blown up by mines on the way.

The Space of 28 Days

Like so many arrangements that one makes, my original ideas for the move did not come off, and in actual fact the three parties in which we were moving arrived at their final destination on 2 and 3 Mar. 4 and 5 Mar. were spent in occupying and preparing a position and on 6 Mar. the Battle of Medenine took place. Thus in the space of 28 days we had moved in our own M.T. 2,200 miles, had re-equipped ourselves and had fought a most successful battle against the Germans. I think this must be a record.

I must here diverge from the story of the Bde. in order to give you

a short picture of the general situation so that the rest of the story can be intelligible. The Army Comd. had for some time been planning his attack on the Mareth Line to take place round about 20 Mar. He had pursued the enemy from Tripoli with the minimum of strength and by 27 Feb. there was really only 7 Armd. Div. in contact with the enemy, with the Highland Div. in process of arriving. Just at this moment he was told by the C.-in-C. to make a diversion in order to relieve the pressure on the Americans and First Army in Tunis. To do this the Highland Div. made certain slight advances which apparently had the desired effect since Rommel gave up his attack on the Americans, about turned and moved his forces southwards to meet the threat from Eighth Army.

During the next few days the Army Comd. decided that Rommel would be quite ready to attack at any time after 4 Mar. and that he would probably have available three Armd. Divs. with which to do it. The situation, therefore, was not good since there was only 7 Armd. Div. and the Highland Div. to meet the attack. However, Gen. Montgomery acted with his usual energy and so hurried up the arrival of reinforcements that by the night of 3 Mar. he had, in addition to his original force, 201 Gds. Bde., 8 Armd. Bde. (re-equipped with tanks from 1 Armd. Div.) and the New Zealand Div. These troops were all in position by the night of 3 Mar.

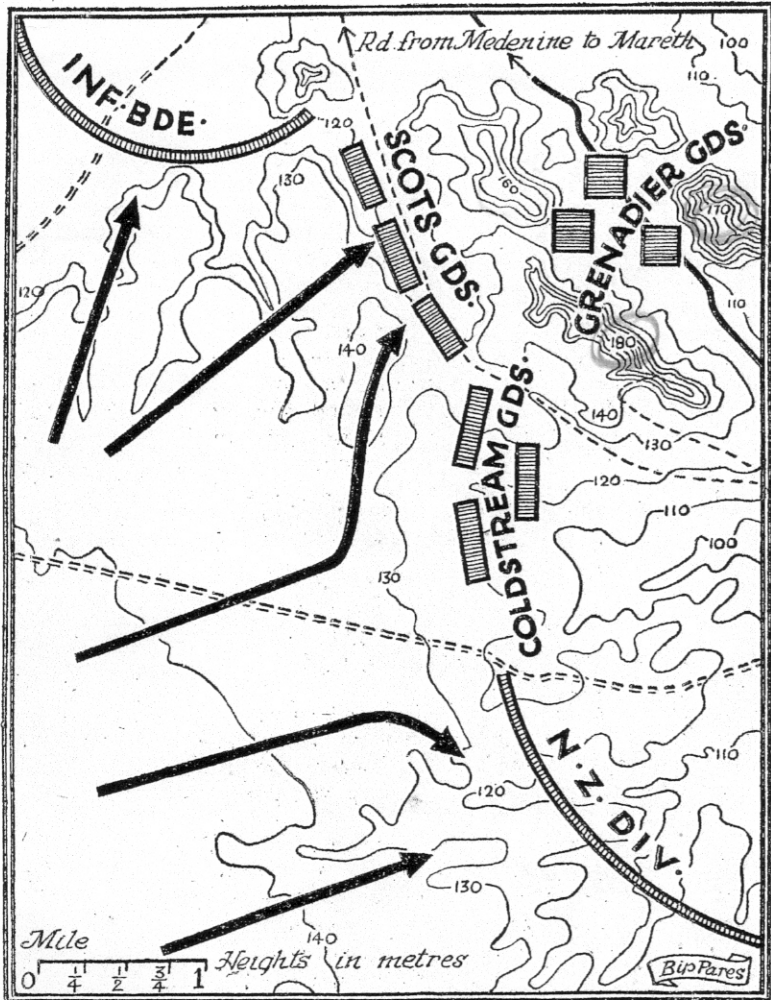
There were Plenty of Hills

I think that I must here give you a short description of the countryside over which the battle was to be fought. The country south-west of Mareth is a mass of real mountains, high and very precipitous. To the east of them are a series of lower hills, but still very steep, and rising very sheer from the plain, which completely dominate the countryside from Mareth in the north to Medenine and to the north and east of them to the sea. There is also a smaller range of hills (see north-east corner of map, page 3) about 3,000 yards square, rising precipitously from the plain.

The observation given from these hills over the surrounding plain is limited only by the sea in the north, the mountains in the west and south-west, and the degree of visibility to the east, south and north. The plain itself appears at first sight to be completely flat, but, in fact, is split up by a series of comparatively deep and often steep-sided wadis, which in many places are a complete obstacle to the movement of any form of vehicle. This is particularly so between Medenine and the sea. To the south wadis are still plentiful, but they are not so steep, and south of the Mareth-Medenine road it is quite good tank country.

But in no Depth

By the evening of 3 Mar. Gen. Montgomery had available 30 Corps and the New Zealand Div. 30 Corps consisted of the Highland Div. and 7 Armd. Div., which for the battle consisted of 8 Armd. Bde., 22 Armd. Bde., 201 Gds. Bde. and an Inf. Bde. The New Zealand Div. consisted of two infantry Bdes., and had under its command



4 Lt. Armd. Bde. and also a rather miscellaneous collection of Free Frenchmen equipped with a certain number of cruiser tanks, armd. cars and carriers. The Highland Div., who stretched from the sea to the main road, were organised in three Bde. localities with gaps between them. An infantry Bde., the Guards Bde. and N.Z. Bde. were stretched in a thin red line covering all the ground with anti-tank weapons and light automatics, but in no depth at all (see map).

Depth was provided by the position of 22 Armd. Bde. and 8 Armd. Bde., who had various battle positions reconnoitered, to which they could move at short notice to counter any threat to the infantry positions.

There was no wire available and only a comparatively small quantity of anti-tank mines, nearly all of which were Hawkins.

The Position was Interesting

By nightfall of 2 Mar. the Bde. was disposed as shown on the map. It appeared highly probable that the enemy's objective would be the Tadjera Khir range*; since his possession of this would make the whole of Eighth Army's position untenable, and it appeared likely that we should bear the brunt of the attack, as, in fact, Scots Gds. and an infantry Bde. did.

The position was an interesting one; on the right were the Scots Gds. Nearly all their anti-tank guns were sited from 300 to 400 yds. behind the crest over which we hoped they would come at an ideal range for the 6-pr. gun.

On the far slopes of the hills behind them were sited the machine-guns covering the crest in order to prevent observation of the anti-tank gun position by the enemy. Mines were laid in four or five small gullies leading into the position, which it was difficult to cover with anti-tank guns.

The object of the defence was to prevent the German tanks getting through into the northern plain either through the Tadjera Khir position or to the west of it.

On the left were the Coldstream, who had an extra battery of anti-tank guns under their comd. This enabled them to keep one Coy. and a certain number of anti-tank guns in reserve, which gave a little depth to the position. Stretching along the front of their position was a dummy minefield.

Behind were the Grenadiers, who, in a way, gave a certain amount of depth to my own position if the enemy came from the west. They were, however, entirely separate from the other two positions, and held the basin formed by the hills through which the road ran.

The Battle of Medenine

It was known that the Boche was ready to attack any time after 4 Mar., and we were all ready for it on 5 Mar., although we hoped that it would not come that day, because an extra 24 hours would be invaluable for the final preparation of the position. It did not come on 5 Mar., the only preliminaries being an increased amount of shelling and bombing from the air. Bde. H.Q. was bombed during the day, and unfortunately one bomb scored a direct hit on the A.D.S., causing a certain number of casualties. The other effects were good, in that Bde. H.Q. did more enthusiastic digging as a result than months of talking had ever succeeded in making them do.

* Marked 180 on the map.

The attack actually came very soon after first light on 6 Mar. It started off by reports of tanks moving Eastwards towards the Coldstream and New Zealanders. The Coldstream soon got their first shot and soon after that claimed the first tank of the day. Very unfortunately, in a way, their dummy minefield combined with their anti-tank fire proved too successful and the tanks turned away to the North or to the South and never came near the Coldstream again; not very long after that the Scots Gds. began to get a good deal of shooting.

Exactly what We Wanted

The day before the battle the C.O. and I had discussed his position and had come to the conclusion that the Boche would never attack it because it was too strong, but he did. He did, in fact, exactly what we wanted, his tanks came rumbling along over the plain out of sight of the anti-tank gunners and equally unable to see them, then came lumbering over the ridge and got shot. The ones following were obviously taken completely by surprise and appeared not to know what to do; they sat about in small groups or wandered vaguely in the angle made by the Scots Gds. position and that of the Infantry Bde.

In addition to his ordinary guns the C.O. had a pair of sniping guns that were employed in backing themselves up to the crest, taking two or three pot-shots at some tank that the other guns could not see and then getting behind the crest again. These were most successful and scored several hits.

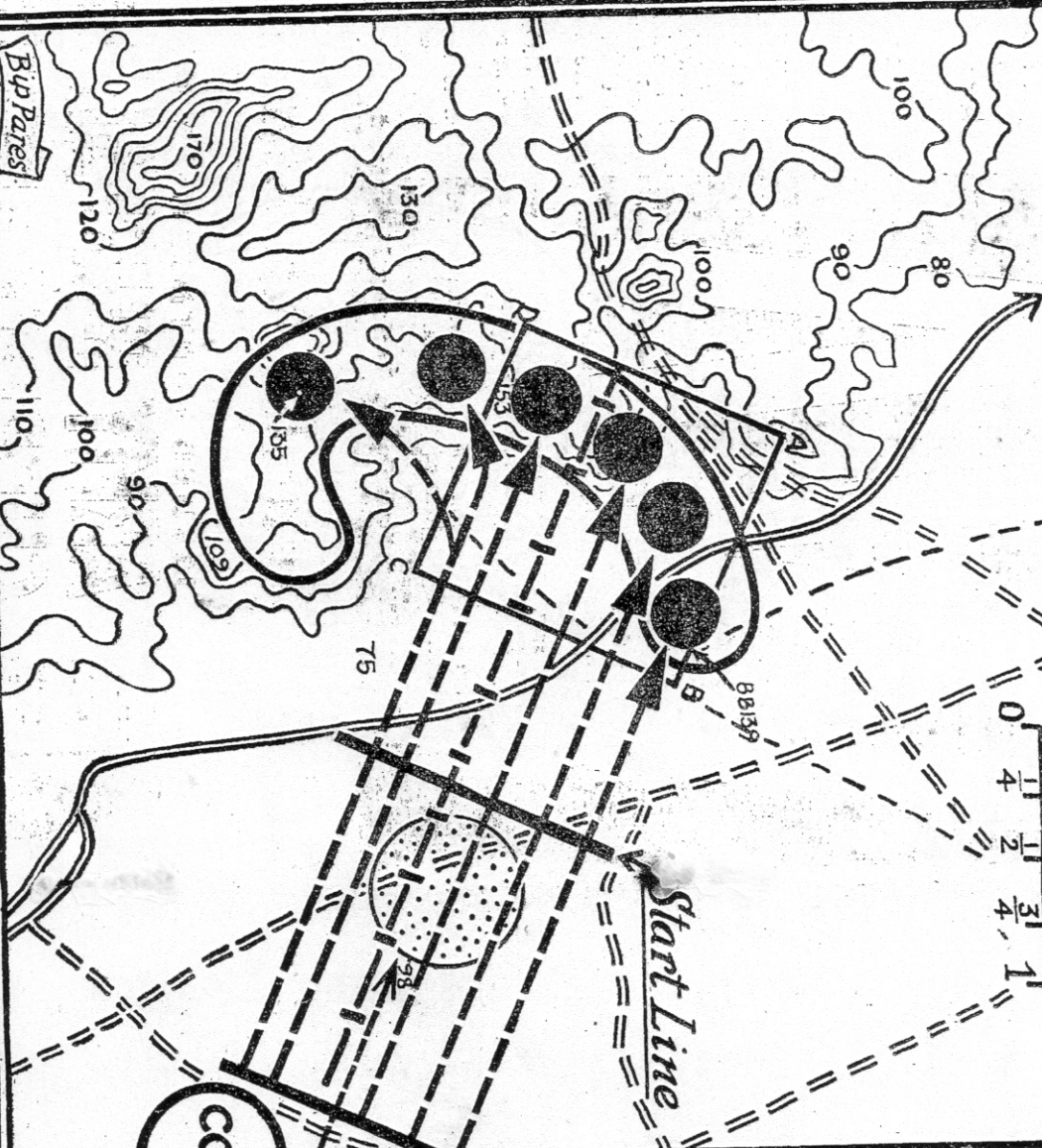
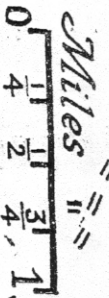
Our arty. support was also excellent. The very capable C.O. of the Med. Regt. who was in my area, had come to see me and he really spent the day in direct support of the Bde. and did most excellent work putting concentrations of his whole regt. down on to targets or clusters of tanks that could be seen.

Nightfall Came, Nothing Happened

By midday the battle had died down and the Scots Gds. claimed 15 or 16 tanks. There had been very few infantry on our front but there had been a certain number on the right on our Infantry Bde.'s front and there had been a definite infantry attack launched along the road from Mareth on the 51 Div. front. Tanks and infantry were reported concentrating in the wadis opposite the Scots Gds. and the Infantry Bde. front, and I thought that the battle was going to take the normal course of German attacks. I thought that the morning's performance had been merely recce. to try and find the weak spot, that he had succeeded in finding it between the Infantry Bde. and the Scots Gds. and that he would then launch an attack in the afternoon, probably at that point. However, nightfall came and nothing happened.

The night was literally as black as ink and patrols sent out to the wadis to try and find out what was happening in them were unable to see anything at all, although they heard quite a lot. About an hour and a half before dawn we heard quite a lot of noise of engines

Rd from Medicine to Mareth



Localities previous ○

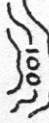
Routes followed during attack - - - -

OBJECTIVES (C.O.Y) ●

BN. OBJECTIVES (S.GDS) ●

Inter Bn boundary -|-|-|-

AREA COVERED BY BARRAGE MARKED ABCD

Heights in metres 

Front edge of forming up line

GRENADIER GDS.

COLDSTREAM GDS.

SCOTS GDS.

and thought that he might attack at dawn which came with a thick and heavy mist. When it cleared it appeared that he had gone for good and this was in fact so.

The Whole Lot Moved Away

During the night the Scots Gds. had sent out a patrol, two men of which got lost. After wandering about for a bit they decided to lie down and go to sleep where they were. About an hour and a half before dawn they were woken up by what they described as loud voices shouting orders; this was followed by the starting up of tank engines and the whole lot moved away. The Scots Gds. came in when it got light, none the worse for spending the night among the enemy, and that was the end of the Battle of Medenine.

The Bde. received many congratulations and the Army Comd. congratulated it on its "magnificent performance." The congratulations were quickly followed by a series of visits from Gen. Leese, on the day after the battle, with the Divisional Comd., and from Gen. Montgomery the following day. The latter went all round the front and talked to a lot of officers and men. He stressed how glad he was to have the Bde. in Eighth Army, all of which was very pleasant.

I think the reason for the attack never developing more than it did was that his losses were too heavy to make it possible for him to go on, the total score being 52 tanks killed without ever engaging our own armour. I think that the reason for his failure was merely that he was completely surprised at the existence of the New Zealand Div. and ourselves, and certainly at the strength of our position.

Immensely Helped by the Artillery

The success of our defence was immensely helped by the concentrated fire of the artillery, the centralised control of which has been brought to a fine art in this Army and particularly in 30 Corps. There is little doubt that the artillery themselves accounted for 17 of the tanks; we had 14, the Infantry Bde. 6, the New Zealanders 6, and I have forgotten how the full total mounted up. Our casualties were not heavy, the total being one officer—Lewthwaite of the Scots Gds.—wounded, 8 O.R.'s killed and 40 O.R.'s wounded.

Plan to attack the Mareth Line

After the Battle of Medenine the Army Comd. decided to revert to his original plan to attack the Mareth Line on about 20 Mar., and all preparations for this continued. The Bde. meanwhile remained in the same position in which it had fought the Battle of Medenine.

Part of the plan entailed 7 Armd. Div. occupying certain ground as a preliminary operation with the object of protecting the flank of the Highland Div.; this ground was known as the Horseshoe. The original proposal was that the Inf. Bde., which was acting as the

Mot. Bde. of 7 Armd. Div., would do the attack, but Gen. Leese later suggested to me that 201 Gds. Bde. should undertake the operation instead.

He explained that both he and Gen. Montgomery were very anxious that my Bde. should not be involved in any difficult operation until it had had time to do a certain amount of training (no Bn. or Bde. training had been done) or until it had had a comparatively easy period of quiet operations in order to acclimatise the many newcomers to warfare. The Horseshoe was considered to be a lightly held outpost position and we both considered that it was a suitable task for the Bde. to take on in its rather unprepared state. It was therefore agreed that we should do it on 16 Mar.

As Always, Many Difficulties

As is always the case in war, there were many difficulties about planning the operation. For various reasons, little was known about the detailed dispositions of the enemy. Also, owing to the fact that we had to hold our present position until 10 Corps could arrive to relieve us, it was not possible for us to take over that sector from the Highlanders immediately. All the ground in front of it was overlooked by the enemy positions and it was therefore a matter of considerable difficulty to carry out the recess. of the position to be attacked. To counterbalance these difficulties there were many favourable features. Air photographs showed the objective to be a very lightly held open flank of the outpost position.

The strongest favourable feature, however, was the very large amount of artillery support which was made available, both 25-prs. and mediums. I had available sufficient guns to fire a barrage on a 2,000 yd. front with one gun per 20 yds. of front and moving at 100 yds. on four minutes over a depth of approx. 1,200 yds. In addition to this I had a very considerable amount of fire available for concentrations, and I had three medium regts. which I employed almost entirely on counter-battery work.

Between Us and the Objective

The dominating feature of the objective was Pt. 153 (Si el Guelaa), which was shown on the air photographs to be the southernmost point of the outpost line. This was a large whale-backed hill with the steep end facing us. The remainder of the objectives was a series of features running away from Pt. 153 in the shape of a horseshoe. Between us and the objectives was the Wadi Bou Remli, which in many places had sheer vertical banks varying from 3 to 30 ft. in height with a lot of minor wadis running off it. It could not be seen from anywhere in our position and could only be reconnoitred by patrols at night.

The road was known to be cratered at one place and it was thought almost certain that the more likely crossing places over both the wadi and the road, and certainly the crossing of the road through the wadi, would be mined both with Tellermines and anti-personnel ones. The "I" staff did not consider that there would be any extensive minefields,

because there were not sufficient men manning the position to have laid them.

On the night of 13 Mar. the Grenadiers and Coldstream took over from the Highland Div. On 14 Mar. the Grenadiers and Coldstream moved forward and occupied the ground west of the Wadi el Machchana ; on the same night the Scots Gds. were relieved and moved into the position vacated by the Grenadiers. These were the positions from which the attack took place so there were only available the night of 14/15. (on which they moved) and 15/16 for the forward Bns. to do the necessary recces. before the attack. (A sketch map is on pages 6 and 7).

I Think I Should Explain

I think at this stage I should explain to you the state of training of the Bde. From the beginning of Jan. I was working on their training instructions, which visualised the Bde. being ready for war by the beginning of Apr. In addition we were extremely weak in transport and equipment, so I decided to concentrate on training the new drafts and on amalgamating transport to enable Coys. to go out complete as such and to start Bn. training and Bde. training in Feb. I was then ordered off to Eighth Army at very short notice at the end of Jan., so that when the Bde. arrived it had, in fact, done no Bn. or Bde. training.

When making my plan I gave the highest priority to ensuring as complete simplicity as possible. This swayed me, therefore, strongly towards doing the attack in daylight. On the other hand, the Gunners, numerous though they were, considered that they could give me no guarantee that they could stop the defensive fire of the enemy and were certain that by means of a barrage any possibility of loss of direction would be eliminated if the attacking troops would merely follow the barrage. The fact that the enemy also overlooked from all directions the ground over which I had to approach also influenced me towards the night attack. In addition, the moon was very nearly full and would be up from 19.30 hrs. to 03.30 hrs., thus making a very light night, so I decided to do the attack by night.

Eventually Caused Our Undoing

As for the enemy, his dispositions were strongest from Pt. 135 round to BB. 139. (139 is merely the number of a trig point and does not represent the height of the objective, which is below the 100 metre mark.) The main danger appeared to be counter-attack at first light the following morning. There were three main avenues possible ; from the north down the Arram rd., from the west from the main Mareth positions, or from the south. The first was the most dangerous since it might also be supported by tanks ; the last the least dangerous. I had sitting behind my left flank an armd. regt. of 22 Armd. Bde.

The unknown factor which eventually caused our undoing was mines. As I told you earlier, we expected all likely crossings to be mined, and in order to deal with this problem I asked for my original

allotment of one troop of Sappers under comd. to be increased. This request was granted so that I was able to give one tp. to each Bn. and keep one up my sleeve. I anticipated at least very considerable shelling on the following morning, which would undoubtedly be unpleasant since the ground was very rocky and difficult to dig in; to help in this I was given three compressors.

From the point of view of ground the two main difficulties to be overcome were firstly, loss of direction, since the ground is extremely confused and cut up, and secondly, the probable difficulty of getting anti-tank guns and other supporting weapons across the Wadi Bou Remli.

Two Up, One Back

I finally decided to attack with two Bns. up, Grenadiers on the right, Coldstream on the left and the Scots Gds. in reserve, and to make, in the first place, for the right half of the main objective from incl. BB. 139 to incl. Pt. 153. The Coldstream, on gaining their objective, Pt. 153, were to exploit their success south-westwards to occupy Pt. 135.

The Scots Gds., in reserve, were to follow up and occupy a position on the east side of the Wadi Bou Remli, with the primary task of linking up the right of the Grenadiers with the left of the Highland Div., who were on my right, and preventing any infiltration on that flank by the counter-attack.

The advance was to be silent until reaching the Start Line, from the Start Line until the attacking troops were across the Wadi Bou Remli heavy concentrations, from the Wadi Bou Remli to the objectives would be a barrage and also concentrations. The medium artillery were to fire counter-battery the whole time, except for two short and heavy concentrations on Pt. 109 and in that area.

The Timetable was as Follows

All preparations for the attack—recces. for the Start Line, recces. for routes (one for each Bn.), tracks for the transport with the supporting weapons to come up, recces. for the crossing over the Wadi Bou Remli, detailing of the order of march of the weapons, arrangements for the duplication and triplication of communications, etc.—were made during the night 15/16 Mar.

The Start Line was taped in the half hour of darkness before Zero, which was 19.30 hrs. At this hour the leading troops crossed the track immediately in front of their position. The timetable for the attack was as follows: From 19.30 hrs. to 20.45 hrs. the leading troops were advancing to the Start Line, where they paused for a quarter of an hour until 21.00 hrs. The artillery concentrations started at 20.35 hrs., the point of this being to drown any noise that might be made by the troops getting over the wadi behind the Start Line.

From 21.00 hrs. until 21.36 hrs. they moved forward to the west side of the big Wadi Bou Remli, where they had another pause of 10 minutes in order to re-organise after crossing the wadi. This

part was done under the cover of heavy concentrations on selected enemy positions. From 21.46 hrs. to 23.02 hrs. the barrage was fired in addition to the continuation of the concentrations.

This Was the Method

The Grenadiers' plan was to advance with their three Coys. more or less echeloned forward from the right, each seizing one portion of the objective. The Coldstream plan was to move with two Coys. up and one in reserve, the two Coys. following the barrage and taking the objective one from the right and one from the left, since the forward edge was very steep. On success being gained here the third Coy. to be launched in a left-handed direction to capture Pt. 135 under concentrations on that area and on the Zehmoula area to the east of it.

The Scots Gds. meanwhile were to move at 20.00 hrs. from their position in rear up to the area previously occupied by the Grenadiers, and they, on my orders when I had seen how the primary part of the attack was going, were to move up to occupy their reserve position.

Success Signals

For the people at Bde. H.Q.—I only had the Bde. Major, the G.III and the C.R.A. up there, besides various Liaison Officers—the attack began with a tremendous amount of artillery fire. We had no news and no messages until shortly after 23.00 hrs., when the first success signal was seen. From the bearing of it it appeared to be the right-hand objective of the Grenadiers.

Shortly afterwards a second was seen from the centre or left Coy. of the Grenadiers, and about 23.30 hrs. a third from what obviously was the direction of the main feature of the objective, Pt. 153. Everybody, including the Divisional Cmd., who had got his Tac. H.Q. quite near me, was very elated, but it was very shortly after this that the first shadow fell, in the form of a message from Bill Kingsmill, who was looking after the transport of the Grenadiers, to say that he was held up by continuous mines and was unable at present to get any of the transport up to the Bn.

On the Coldstream front things appeared to be going well, and at about the same time I got a message relayed through David Forbes, who was at Rear H.Q., to say that No. 3 Coy. had been launched at attack Pt. 135. In fact, although at 23.30 hrs. things appeared very rosy, they were not so, since both Bns. had begun to have casualties from anti-personnel mines and on both Bn. fronts vehicles were being blown up by Teller mines.

The Situation Appeared to Be

By about 01.30 hrs., as far as one could get it, the situation appeared to be that the Grenadiers had reached their objectives, but that their supporting weapons were being very slow in coming up, and that there were a lot of Germans who had come to life after the barrage had passed over them, who were being very troublesome in the rear of the objective, and that there was a great deal of fire coming from beyond the objectives.

On the Coldstream front No. 1 Coy., the right Coy., had got to the top of Pt. 153 with a considerable number, reports vary between 50 and 100, prisoners. The centre Coy., No. 4, had got as far as the ridge about 300 yds. from the opening line of the barrage when they had come under heavy fire from the left flank and also had had casualties from mines. They had sent for their carriers to come up, and these had been blown up near the ridge on further mines; this Coy. were pinned to the ground and could advance no further. Meanwhile No. 3 Coy. had been sent on to capture Pt. 135, and had got to the foot of it when they also came under fire and were also stopped.

Hold On for the Present

At about this period I got a message from the C.O., who asked what he should do and telling me this situation. I sent back the Liaison Officer, who brought it with orders to dig in where he was and to hold on to what he had got. Shortly after this I got a message from the Grenadier C.O. asking if he could have two Coys. of the Scots Gds. to help him hold his position. It appeared to me that what was wanted on his front was not so much men as weapons, i.e., machine-guns and carriers, and also if in the end we were unable to hold the objective it would be very difficult to withdraw the Bn. if the greater part of the Scots Gds. were also involved, and we had no firm base to withdraw through.

I sent back a message to him that he must hold on for the present. By about 03.30 hrs., when the moon went down, the situation was about the same. On the Pt. 135 attack's front no more had been heard of No. 1 Coy. on the top of their objective (the No. 18 sets, which we had borrowed for the operation did not work at all satisfactorily). The remaining two Coys. had been withdrawn, and were digging in on the east side of the wadi about Pt. 75.

Was Strongly of the Opinion

Shortly after this I discussed the whole situation with the Div. Comd. who was strongly of the opinion that on no account must the Scots Gds. be moved until we knew more about the situation. I then went forward so as to be able to see what the situation was as soon as it got light and went first to the Scots Gds. H.Q. The alternatives for which we hoped were that the enemy troops that were holding out would be few in number and fairly easily mopped up by the Scots Gds. and if this were not so, that the Grenadiers and No. 1 Coy. of the Coldstream would be able to hold on during the day until we could clear the situation with the Scots Gds. with an attack the following night. I had, however, been ordered not to use the Scots Gds. without the Div. Comd.'s consent.

Meanwhile it had become doubtful whether Michael Wills was still in possession of Pt. 153 and if he was not this fact combined with the much greater opposition than had been expected made the objective quite untenable by the Grenadiers. I had just come to

this conclusion when the Div. Comd. himself arrived and he agreed with this decision.

Never Got the Order

Just at this moment the Grenadier C.O. himself arrived so a plan was made to try and get him back. The great difficulty which he anticipated was getting orders to his Coys. to carry out the withdrawal and it is certain that some of them never got the order, which accounts for the large number of officers and men missing.

I was ordered by the Div. Comd. to occupy a position on the high ground about Pt. 98; this position was recd. straight away and was occupied as soon as it got dark. Owing to the disorganisation consequent on the withdrawal of the two leading Bns. it was difficult to find out what their casualties were but I was afraid that they were extremely heavy. In fact the figures were:—

	Killed		Wounded		Missing	
	Offrs.	O.R.s	Offrs.	O.R.s	Offrs.	O.R.s
Gren. Gds. . .	8	15	4	83	11	151
Coldm. Gds. . .	—	11	7	44	4	93
Scots Gds. . .	2	2	5	21	—	2

The Causes were Three

The causes of our inability to hold our objectives were three. First, the minefields, both the regular ones and scattered unmarked ones. These, beside causing casualties to individuals, entirely prevented the supporting weapons being brought up to consolidate the position. Secondly was the state of preparation of the defences which were much stronger than the information available led us to believe. This enabled the enemy to withstand the barrage and concentrations and to come up and shoot afterwards.

It was later discovered that the position was in fact held by 90 Lt. Div. reinforced by a battalion of Panzer Grenadiers. Incidentally, a total of something like 24,000 shells were used in support of the attack. The third cause was the low rifle strength which enabled small parties of the enemy to infiltrate through the position during the night.

Both Bns. had fought magnificently. No. 1 Coy. of the Coldstream had done extremely well to get on to the top of Pt. 153, while the Grenadiers in their first battle had gained all their objectives. The cost, particularly to the Grenadiers, had however been extremely high, especially among officers.

It was a considerable consolation to all ranks to feel that the losses had not been in vain when I had a letter from Gen. Montgomery saying that the attack had been invaluable to the main Army plan by making the Boche think that it was there that he proposed to launch his main attack whereas, in reality, it was in an entirely different part of the Mareth Line. Also a very great number of Germans had been killed by both Bns.