FIELD TRAINING: EXERCISE — HEREWARD

BY

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INTRODUCTION

This Exercise was held in the Stanford Practical Training Area of Eastern Command from October 27–November 2, 1950. This Practical Training Area is an area in Norfolk held by the Army for practical training and is used for live shell, mortar and small arms firing.

A few villages have been evacuated in the area and houses have been used over the last two years as gun targets and for obstacles in street fighting. The whole area, especially on a wet day in late October, gives one an unforgettable impression of a battlefield in France or Germany but without the corpses of the killed whether human or animal.

This Exercise was the first in this country since the war in which a semblance of a Division took part.

Troops Involved.—Weak Division of two weak Brigades and one Brigade represented in skeleton. Div. H.Q. was in strength. Bdes. approx. half-strength in Infantry, R.A., R.E., R.A.C. and Services.

The Army Commander directed the Exercise. He used a small H.Q., including the Heads of Services to represent the Corps H.Q. under which the Division was operating.

The Exercise was controlled in order that the main aims set by the Director could be achieved.

R.A.F. Vampire planes took part and made many attacks on positions in order to show the need for concealment.

PRECIS OF THE GENERAL IDEA

Anglia, an Island power is being threatened by Lilliput, a large Fantasian power.

The Anglian Forces, having been neglected, are small though fighting efficiency is high. Lilliput on the other hand has a great superiority in air, tanks, guns and men.

The Anglia C. in C.’s plan, in brief, was to defend a line from King’s Lynn to Lowestoft passing through Stanford.

The Stanford sector is the weakest natural part of the line. It is also the part where the C. in C. Anglia intends to defeat the enemy main attack.

For political reasons no development of the defences was possible during peace but Commanders had some opportunity of studying the ground.

As was fully expected Lilliput forces landed in strength near Great Yarmouth on October 14, 1950, and made a Bridge-head.
1 and 2 Anglia Armies are taking up positions at the defence line and the Division we are concerned with is digging in at its allotted part of the line from October 28, 1950.

Notes.—The gun areas on the trace are shown as they were on the ground, some of these are not tactically correct, but were sited so that they could dig in properly.

Two A.D.S.s are shown, both of these were open for training. In actual battle one of these could have been closed.

The F.D.S. is not shown on the trace. It was open in the Div. Adm. area in FORNHAM PARK about 10 miles to the south.

The Narrative

Opening Situation

(1) When the Exercise began at 1800 hours November 28, the invading enemy forces were being held by our mechanized covering forces on a general line running N.W.-S.E. through NORWICH some 20 miles from the Division which was concentrating in the STANFORD area.

Occupation of the Position

(2) On the night October 28/29 the Division moved into position under cover of darkness.

It spent the remainder of that night and the two following nights preparing its position. It worked chiefly at night and was harassed by saboteurs, agents and the guerrilla activities of small bodies of enemy parachutists. By day it was subject to incessant enemy air reconnaissance, and enemy air attacks which gradually increased in intensity.

On October 30 counter-attacks were rehearsed down to the level of troop and platoon commanders.

Actions of the Division's Screen

(3) On the night 30/31 the Division screen took up its position a few hundred yards in front of the F.D.L.s. Next night our mechanized forces withdrew through our main position. At 0130 hours, November 1, a regimental group withdrew through the Division on the STANFORD road. Its armoured car rear party was intercepted by the enemy and had to be diverted by the Division through TOTTINGTON. By 0800 hours next day (November 1), the screen was in contact with the enemy and four hours later it was forced to withdraw through TOTTINGTON.

Enemy Attack

(4) From 1200 hours, November 1, the enemy patrol activity increased along the whole front with particular reference to the wooded areas on the flanks, where road blocks were established in rear of the forward battalions. To dislodge them counter-attacks by right forward battalion were carried out. By nightfall the situation had been restored in the Division's area but not in the areas of the Division on its right.
Brigade Dispositions: Exercise Hereward.
At 0100 hours, November 2, the main enemy attack was made against the junction point of the two forward brigades of the Division. It made good progress and by 0320 hours had captured the vital ground at Eagle Tower and Pole Plantation which had been held by a company of the reserve Bn.

At the same time the enemy made a subsidiary thrust against the right flank of the right forward Bde.'s left Bn., the Battalion holding Tottington. By 0300 hours it had cleared the road as far as some 500 yards south of it. It then unsuccessfully tried to widen the area of its break through.

**Counter-attack Phase**

(5) At about 0300 hours, November 2, the reserve battalion of the right forward brigade and up until then holding the vital ground at Ling Heath, was ordered to counter-attack for Tottington. Later the order was countermanded and the reserve battalion returned to its original position without having encountered the enemy.

(6) At 0515 hours, November 2, a divisional counter-attack took place. “A” Bn. of the reserve Bde. delivered its rehearsed counter-attack in the dark against Eagle Tower and Pole Plantation. The attack made good progress until its supporting barrage ended short of its objective: it was then held up by heavy enemy artillery fire.

(7) “B” Bn. was then moved up behind the pivot position on Ling Heath. At 0800 hours supported by one Regt. of Tks. and “A” Bn., it then attacked westwards and by 0920 hours had captured both Eagle Tower and Pole Plantation and had also forced the enemy to withdraw in disorder. It then advanced on Tottington and restored the situation there. Ground mist had prevented the intervention of the enemy fighters, which were over the battlefield throughout this last phase.

The Exercise then ended.

**Army Commander’s “Summing-up”**

**Exercise Hereward**

**The Aim of the Exercise.**

(1) The aim of the Exercise was to practise:

(a) The occupation of a defensive position, the concealment and camouflage of the defences, and the deception measures taken by an Infantry Division and its supporting arms under enemy air observation and harassing attacks.

(b) The launching of counter-attacks against a controlled enemy.

**Tasks of the Division.**

(2) The Division on an improvised establishment, and with one Brigade Group represented in skeleton, was given the tasks of:

(a) Occupying and preparing a defensive position facing North and stretching from Stanford Mill to incl. Thompson's Water whilst
imaginary armoured troops held the superior enemy forces on a line running N.W.-S.E. of Norwich, some twenty miles away.

Three nights were allotted for this task, the armoured covering troops withdrawing through the Division on the fourth night, October 31/November 1.

(b) Making safe provision for the return of the armoured covering forces over the bridge at Stanford and through Tottington.

(c) To destroy any enemy penetration between Stanford Mill and Thompsons Water.

The Division Outline Plan.

(3) In the Divisional Plan it was laid down that:

(a) The vital ground was, incl. Stanford Warren—Ring Counter 175—Lingheath and, in rear, Frog Hill.

(b) The F.D.L.s were to be some 500 yards north of the wood and stream obstacle as shown on map "P."

(c) While forward Brigades would counter-attack to recover forward Bn. positions up to F.D.L.s, the reserve Brigade would counter-attack only for the vital ground and as far forward as the obstacle.

(4) The Plan was, in more detail:

(a) To hold the position with two Brigades forward and one in reserve.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left</th>
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<th>(in skeleton)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>(1/2 strength)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>(1/2 strength)</td>
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(b) To deceive the enemy as to the strength of the position and to make him think that positions were strong where they were weak and vice versa.

(c) To cover this position and to assist the safe withdrawal of the covering troops, a screen was sited in position a few hundred yards in front of F.D.L.s. This screen was ordered to:

(i) Cover the withdrawal of the Anglian mech. forces and stop enemy interfering with Anglian mech. forces crossing the Stanford-Tottington obstacle.

Concealment.

Camouflage nets must:

(a) Blend with their background. (H.Q. "X" Bde. which was otherwise admirably concealed, was given away by a camouflage net covering a crossing over a ride in the wood.)

(b) Not to be draped like shrouds over vehicles.

(c) Be used before defensive works are begun and not afterwards. (H.Q. "Y" Bde., the vehicles of which were dug in using engineer plant under trees, was detected from the air because camouflage nets were not put up until the digging had been completed.)
Passive Defence.

Air defence discipline was only fair and deteriorated during the long "alerts."

This was partly due to unnecessary fatigue caused by:

(a) Air sentries not distinguishing between their own air O.P.s and enemy aircraft.

(b) Alerts being sounded whenever an aircraft was in sight, and without reference to its position and the direction in which it was travelling.

(c) No distinction being made in unit orders between the action required of troops under cover of thick trees and the action of troops in the open.

Protection Against Infiltration and Sabotage.

Various cases of infiltration and sabotage drew attention to the fact that all troops must be armed. Headquarters, road blocks, barriers, etc., must have adequate protection and alarm schemes. Comds., convoys, and officers must have escorts, and runners, etc., must not move about alone. Gun areas must also have adequate protection which may mean sitting in Inf. localities.

The Div. adm. area was within a park wall which gave the false impression that it normally might have a clearly defined perimeter. In close country such as England, the Div. Adm. area will describe a region occupied by Divisional Administrative Units. It will normally be about 5 miles x 5 miles instead of 1 x ½ as Fornham Park.

It will be impossible to prevent the perimeter being penetrated by enemy saboteurs, but each unit in its own area must be responsible for its own protection. Its own key vehicles must be securely located in the centre. Division should appoint an officer to co-ordinate the defences, to seal the main road approaches, supply and information service, and to ensure that a satisfactory standard is maintained by all.

This officer should not have any other task to do.

(ii) To stop minor enemy attacks getting through the screen and to inflict the maximum casualties on the enemy.

(iii) To maintain contact on their front as long as possible, but where it was clear that the enemy was about to launch a major attack, to withdraw across the obstacle inflicting as many cas. as possible. It was vital that they did not suffer heavy casualties.

(d) It was composed as under:

(i) Under comd.:

One Regt. of tanks (less one Sqn.).
Three Coys. of Infantry.
One C.C.P. of "A" Field Ambulance.
One Rec. P.
Deception.
This was the first time on which planned tactical deception implemented by a section of R Force has been used in an exercise with troops in the U.K. The following points arose:

(a) The object should not have been just to deceive the enemy: it should also to have been to make him react in a way favourable to the operational plan.

(b) Once the object has been laid down, the method of achieving it should have been left to the R Force representative to work out and to present it to the Force Comd. for approval. In this exercise the R Force representative was not asked to make a plan but was presented with one to carry out.

(c) The full details of the deception plan should not have been included in the operation order but should have been dealt with separately.

(d) It was laid down in Div. O.O. that the C.R.E. would co-ordinate the deception plan. This should have been the task of the R Force Commander. He is the expert in all forms of deception.

Occupation of the Position.
In general, the occupation of the position was well done. Certain points on traffic control, however, occurred on this and other occasions. Points to note are:

(a) On narrow roads to try to pass vehicle columns, through marching troops at night leads to confusion and delay.

(b) Complicated plans involving columns crossing at night must be avoided.

(c) All drivers must be told their destinations before movement begins.

(d) Pro must be told locations of Recovery Points and of all units in the Division.

Medical Units.
Two Field Ambulances and one F.D.S. took part.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>O.R.s</th>
<th>Vehicles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A&quot; Field Ambulance</td>
<td>... 8</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;B&quot; Field Ambulance</td>
<td>... 5</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.D.S.</td>
<td>... 5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
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"A" Field Ambulance was a scratch unit made up of T.A. personnel from 162 Field Ambulance T.A. and N.S. men posted in and 2 junior Regular Officers.

"B" Field Ambulance was an existing Field Ambulance loaned for this exercise.

The F.D.S. was very much in skeleton from the T.A. with 20 N.S. men attached.

Each unit was heavily umpired, the following extracts are taken from umpires reports giving the 3 best and 3 worst points of each unit.
“A” Field Ambulance

At approximately 1900 hours October 30 a D.R. of the 2 R.T.R. was involved in an accident near Cardigan Plantation 878959. He was dressed and put up in a Thomas Splint by the C.C.P. at this location. He was then evacuated to the A.D.S. at 880901, the splint adjusted and evacuated to the Civilian Hospital at Bury St. Edmunds by 2100 hours where the orderly was complimented on the state of the case. This, the rapid and comfortable evacuation of the casualty from a battle area to the static treatment centre (e.g. C.C.S. or General Hospital) is the essence of the function of a Field Ambulance.

The Layout of C.C.P.s on October 30

No. 1 at M.R. 878959. This was in support of a mobile Screen (Timforce). Treatment was laid out in a 3 tonner and unpacking was at a minimum as orders to move at short or no notice were expected. The balance between ability to function and readiness to move was most intelligently drawn.

No. 2 at M.R. 892933. A more formal and complete layout covering the normal function of a C.C.P. Treatment, cookhouse, store and staff sleeping as well placed and cover and signposting good.

Within the A.D.S. the handling of a composite group of men including 60 N.S. men of eleven weeks' training by the R.S.M. of 162 Field Ambulance was admirable. The work of the cooks and the Sanitary Sergeant largely with improvised equipment also contributed greatly to the efficiency of a very raw unit.

“Q” Side.

This unit was collected together from several sources and equipped at short notice on a scale thought to meet the occasion. There were certain glaring gaps in equipment, i.e. lighting consisted of hurricane lamps and only 6 Tilley lamps (1 U/S), heating nil, and also shortages of camouflage, stationery and hygiene equipment.

Even cooking equipment was incomplete.

It seems that while great efforts had been made to equip this temporary unit, the absence of a responsible commissioned Q.M. led to loopholes which made the working of the unit extremely difficult.

There was a delay in establishing contact with A.D.M.S., Bde., and Battalions, full all round contact not being established until nearly twenty-four hours after the A.D.S. was functioning.

Air Concealment.

Camouflage was good but individual regard to danger from the air and reaction was slow and inefficient (perhaps in real action one bomb would put this right). The attempt at deception, i.e. a dummy A.D.S. in buildings, was in my opinion dangerous, the buildings being too near.
General Comments.

That a composite unit of less than half strength and with only 2 per cent experienced personnel of all ranks could function at all can be reckoned as no mean achievement in itself. However, the old lesson that the cohesion and team spirit of an experienced unit is of infinite value, has been relearned.

That one of the points of adverse criticism should be delay in establishing contact is interesting in that the new establishment of a Field Ambulance has so few motor cycles. It would appear that this essential point is difficult even under full establishment conditions.

The behaviour of the sixty raw N.S. men was extremely good and they proved both quick and willing to learn.

<table>
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<th>&quot;B&quot; Field Ambulance</th>
<th>Liaison with formation headquarters and with forward units.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Best</strong></td>
<td>General unit layout.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit administration.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Worst</strong></td>
<td>Tendency to request unnecessarily for excess vehicles and stores.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No standing orders for battle had been compiled.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frequent state of uncertainty regarding adequate water supply.</td>
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General Comments.

Every opportunity was taken during the exercise to instruct junior officers and men.

The morale and spirit of the unit was good.

Reaction to hostile aircraft was at first good but later deteriorated. This was no doubt due to the exercise nature of the attack and would speedily be amended in war.

Field Dressing Station

This unit was open all the time in the Div. Adm. area. It dug itself in well and fulfilled its actual and exercise functions very well. Great credit is due to the T.A. officers and men who came out for this six day exercise and lived under uncomfortable conditions in late autumn in addition to their period of annual camp.

Dental Arrangements

During the planning stages of the exercise it was suggested that Dental cover on the spot should be provided for the personnel taking part.

This suggestion was agreed to and arrangements were made for two Mobile Dental Units—one prosthetic and one surgical—to be attached to the medical transport and proceeded to the Div. Adm. area, FORNHAM PARK, on October 28, 1950, and the units to be attached to the Field Dressing Station.

Dental treatment was carried out for personnel reporting sick at the latter site on the morning October 29, 1950. On the same afternoon, acting on instructions from A.D.M.S. of the Div., the Mobile Dental Unit (Surgical)
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proceeded to the site of "B" Field Ambulance where it functioned during the remainder of the Exercise. Minor lighting difficulties were encountered owing to the position of the site under trees and camouflage netting. These were overcome, however, and the dental officer attended at an average of 5 patients a day during the remainder of the Exercise and thus fully justified his presence.

It is suggested, when a change of site is ordered for Dental Units by the A.D.M.S. during future Exercise, that he ensures that both the Prosthetic and Surgical Units move together, as their efficiency is much impaired by separation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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