**The North Irish Horse Battle Reports**

**The Lake Comacchio Operation**

1st-9th April, 1945 - B Squadron moved from San Alberto to a concentration area with the Italians. They carried out such training as was possible.

A and C Squadrons had a much better training area. They trained and practised with their respective infantry, getting to know the officers and explaining our methods. Both Squadrons spent many nights practising night marching across country. This had always been held to be impossible by pundits of the Royal Armoured Corps, but it was found quite practical under certain conditions. This training paid a very handsome dividend in the battle. As many officers as possible took flights in the observation aircraft to have a look at the ground over which we were to attack.
Conferences, Order Groups and reconnaissances took place every day. When the time came, a very elaborate plan went off without the slightest hitch. After considerable argument, the Regiment was allotted two Churchill bridge layers (a thirty-feet bridge), two Sherdozers, two Arks and two heavy fascine tanks. This was not enough but would have been just adequate had not every formation borrowed and often misused them.

Lake Comacchio and the spit of land between it and the sea formed the left flank position of the German Army. The lake is very shallow, with deep mud. The Spit is only a few hundred yards wide.
The amphibious attack by the Commandos, which B Squadron supported, was the preliminary move for the spring offensive. It had the following objectives:

   To capture the Spit and draw in German reserves.
   To mislead the enemy as to the direction and place of the main attack.
   If very successful, to continue round the north of the Lake.

Briefly, the plan was an amphibious landing by Commandos from the Lake and an assault crossing of the Reno at its mouth. Thus the attack would come in due east and west. It had been reported by naval patrols that the mouth of the Reno was seven feet deep, so B Squadron waterproofed two Troops to cross with the assault. The Reno proved to be over twelve feet deep, consequently this did not work out. The other two Troops were to cross the Reno on rafts to the west of the Spit in an area held by us and they were to attack along a narrow track between the Reno flood bank and the Lake with two platoons of Commandos in support.

2nd April - After a shaky start, due to the Commando assault boats sticking in the mud, the assault went off as planned. Nos. 2 and 4 Troops, B Squadron, crossed the Reno at night but were unexpectedly held up by a dyke. A fascine was put in this after some delay but by 1600 hours forty prisoners had been taken. Our tanks were behind the German positions in the flood bank and firing into them at point blank range. Just before the leading tank reached the Spit itself, it blew up on a mine, blocking the very narrow track. The last enemy pocket in the south-west corner surrendered when fired on by the tanks. The Commandos had a few casualties.
Meanwhile the other two Troops of B Squadron had done some good shooting across the mouth of the Reno and knocked out several posts. The Commandos captured or killed nearly two thousand of the enemy.

3rd April - The whole Squadron crossed the Reno on rafts and followed up the Commandos who had advanced almost to Porto Garibaldi. There the enemy had a strong defensive position. One tank was hit by a shell but was recovered at once.

At last light B Squadron was relieved by the 10th Royal Hussars.