

Lost in Normandy

The Odyssey of Worthington Force, 9 August 1944

Mike Bechthold

The lamentable story of Worthington Force is well known. During the second phase of Operation Totalize a battlegroup formed by the tanks of the British Columbia Regiment and the infantry of the Algonquin Regiment was ordered to capture a piece of high ground known as Point 195. In the pre-dawn darkness of 9 August 1944 the battlegroup set out on its mission. Rather than capturing Point 195, they found themselves on a different piece of high ground, near Point 140, some six kilometres northeast of their objective. Soon after daybreak the battlegroup was heavily attacked by German units in the area. Lieutenant-Colonel D.G. Worthington, the commanding officer of the BCRs and the overall commander of the force, made the fateful decision to stay put and await reinforcements. Unfortunately, nobody came to their rescue. Though small bodies of troops were able to escape, Worthington Force was destroyed losing 240 men killed, wounded and captured, 47 tanks and numerous other armoured vehicles and half-tracks.

The odyssey of Worthington Force is one of the great enigmas of the Normandy campaign. In their advance to Point 140 the battlegroup crashed through the last major German defensive line, effectively opening the way to Falaise. Reinforcing this breakthrough with additional troops might have caused the entire German front north of Falaise to collapse.

Abstract: The standard account of Worthington Force is well known – on 9 August 1944 during Operation Totalize a battlegroup formed by the tanks of the British Columbia Regiment and the infantry of the Algonquin Regiment was ordered to capture Point 195. Unbeknownst to anyone, including the men of Worthington Force, the battlegroup lost its way in the dark and found itself on a different piece of high ground, near Point 140, some six kilometres northeast of their objective. Cut off from any support, Worthington Force was destroyed by concerted German attacks over the course of the day. Based on new archival research and an examination of contemporary aerial photographs, this article will show how the battlegroup lost its way as well as reveal that the battlegroup was not as out of touch as previous accounts have indicated.

But nobody knew where to find Worthington Force. Communications with the battlegroup were lost before noon on 9 August and the limited attempts to find it were focussed on the vicinity of Point 195. Intermittent radio communications between the battlegroup and rear elements were made during the course of the day as were contacts with elements of the Polish Armoured Division, the artillery and aircraft of 2nd Tactical Air Force but the location of the battlegroup was never relayed to HQ 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade (4th CAB).

How did Worthington Force get lost? C.P. Stacey, the official historian of the Canadian army,

speculated “it seems clear that the regiment, fighting its first battle, and advancing across country with few landmarks and dealing with scattered opposition as it did so, simply lost its way.”¹ After setting out for Point 195 in the early morning hours of 9 August the battlegroup encountered enemy fire diverting it from its intended route. As dawn broke high ground, assumed to be their destination, was sighted directly ahead. Stacey surmised that the battlegroup mistook a straight section of the road running from Estrées-la-Campagne to Mazières for the main Caen-Falaise highway. After crossing this road the battlegroup found a defensible position on the high ground and dug in. The battlegroup was repeatedly attacked by German forces until early evening when the position was finally overrun ending the desperate battle. How could this happen? That a battlegroup could get lost and ultimately destroyed before reinforcements could arrive was unprecedented in Normandy, and perhaps in the course of the Second World War. The closest example was the destruction of elements of the British 22nd Armoured Brigade at Villers-Bocage on 13 June 1944, but it was never lost and its casualties were much lower than those of Worthington Force.²

Until now this was our best understanding of the destruction of the battlegroup. Recently, new photographic evidence has emerged.

The Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies possesses a collection of Second World War aerial reconnaissance photographs. Among the hundreds of boxes of images are a number containing images taken on 9 August 1944. A careful examination of these photographs reveals a great deal about the odyssey of Worthington Force. The entire path of the battlegroup can be traced, from the time it left its harbour north of Cintheaux until its final arrival southeast of Estrées-la-Campagne. The air photos reveal information about the route of the battlegroup, the resistance it encountered along the way, locations where tanks and vehicles were destroyed and evidence regarding German reactions to the breakthrough of the Canadian force. Most importantly, the air photos provide evidence to support a new hypothesis about how the battlegroup got lost. This article will re-examine the events of 9 August 1944 which culminated with the destruction of Worthington Force and provide a better understanding of why and how things went so terribly wrong.

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Operation Totalize, launched late on 7 August 1944, was a major armoured offensive designed to break through the German positions south of Caen and open the way to Falaise. At 2300 hours 1,020 Lancasters and Halifaxes of RAF Bomber Command commenced dropping 3,462 tons of bombs to open the attack. The ground attack started 30 minutes later. The first phase of Totalize was remarkably successful. The attack did not go exactly as planned but in less than 24 hours the infantry of the 2nd Canadian and 51st Highland Divisions, supported by the 2nd Canadian and 33rd British Armoured Brigades, had pushed more than nine kilometres into the German defences.³



British Columbia Regiment (BCR) Archives

Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Worthington was the commanding officer of the British Columbia Regiment. He was considered by Major-General George Kitching, the commander of 4th Canadian Armoured Division, to be "the outstanding regimental commander in the armoured brigade...he was the youngest, full of energy and quick to seize an opportunity."

The momentum of the attack was to be maintained in the second phase of Totalize by committing 4th Canadian and 1st Polish Armoured Divisions. Again the attack was to be led by heavy bombers, this time supplied by the US Eighth Air Force. The bombing started at 1226 hours on 8 August and was largely accurate, hitting three of four targets (Bretteville-sur-Laize, St. Sylvain and Hautmesnil/Cauvicourt) with good concentrations while a fourth target

(Gouvix) could not be identified. Unfortunately a number of American aircraft dropped their bombs short hitting Canadian and Polish troops causing over 350 casualties (including more than 65 men killed). This friendly bombing caused serious difficulties in the rear area, and to the Polish Armoured Division in particular, but it did not prevent 4th Canadian Armoured Division (4th CAD) from starting their attack on time. The 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade, led by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, captured the villages of Cintheaux and Hautmesnil by last light. Renewed German resistance, however, prevented the expected breakout. Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, the commander of 2nd Canadian Corps, was not satisfied with this progress and during the course of the day was constantly urging the armour to move faster.⁴

The disappointing pace on 8 August led Simonds to order his armoured units to continue advancing in the dark. However, night operations for tanks are difficult and Canadian and Polish armoured units generally halted operations and withdrew to harbours to await dawn.⁵ The lack of a breakout also forced a reshuffling of assignments for the next day. Halpenny Force, composed of the Canadian Grenadier Guards (CGG) and the Lake Superior Regiment, was originally tasked to capture Point 195. The control of this high ground was seen as essential for any advance to Falaise. However, Halpenny Force had been unable to advance past Hautmesnil on 8 August. Brigadier E.L. Booth, commander of the 4th CAB, now ordered Halpenny Force to capture the village of Bretteville-le-Rabet while a fresh formation - Worthington Force - was ordered to reach Point 195 by first light. The stage was now set for the dramatic events of 9 August 1944.⁶

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Sherman tanks and other vehicles of the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade await the order to move, 8 August 1944.

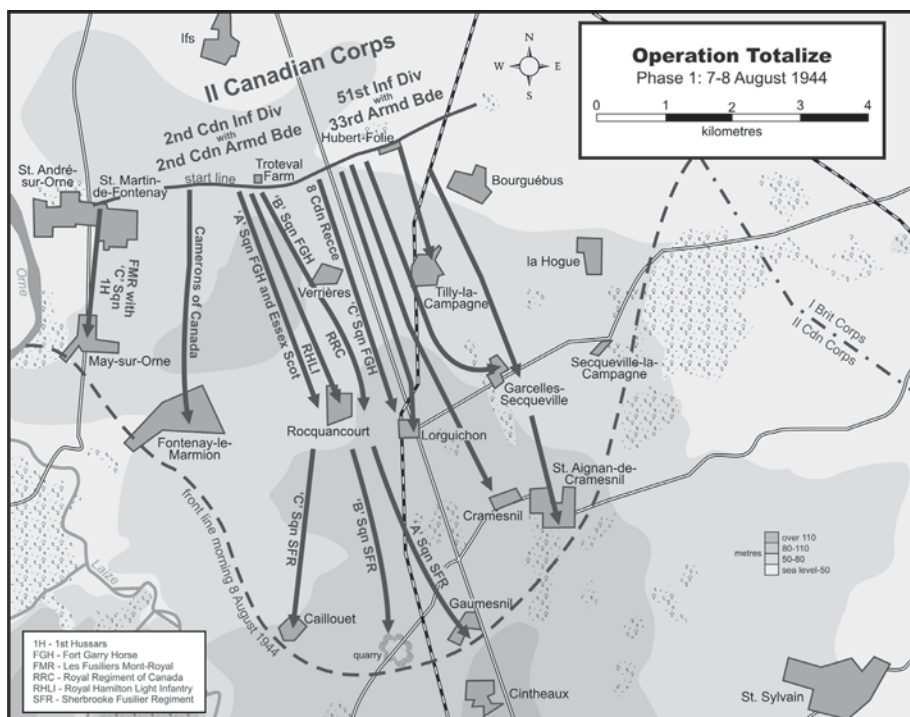
The Breakthrough

For the Algonquin Regiment, the first day of operations was one of slow advances and great monotony. The men boarded armoured half-tracks in Vaucelles (just south of Caen) before midnight on 7 August shortly before the column headed south. By dawn, the column had advanced three kilometres and halted north of Ifs. They remained in this location most of the day and it was here the unit witnessed American bombers hit targets behind them. Major L.C. Monk, the commander of "B" Company, recalled, "What a situation, to see your own people bombed by your own people, without being able to do anything about it...It was a grim thing to witness just before going into battle."⁷ Fortunately, the Algonquins escaped being hit by the bombs and their advance continued at 1700 hours. The column slowly passed through Rocquancourt which was still being cleared by Canadian infantry before pulling into a harbour with the British Columbia Regiment (BCR) just as it was getting dark. The experience of the BCRs that day was similar. The unit began its advance at 0130 hours and its move was equally slow due to the difficulty of moving an armoured column at night. No casualties were sustained during

this advance, unlike the Governor General's Foot Guard which lost two tanks to mine strikes. At last light, the BCRs pulled into a laager north of Cintheaux where it "blackhorsed in an open field."⁸

Just before midnight on 8 August, Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington was called to the brigade orders group (O Group). Brigadier Booth outlined the new plan. The Poles would not be able to move that night and the advance was to be led by Grenadier Guards and BCR battlegroups. The normally upbeat Worthington left the O Group dismayed. The BCR's intelligence

officer, Lieutenant J.T. Jenkinson, recorded, "As we left the conference, Col. Worthington commented quietly and off the record about the changes in the original plan. He recounted the Principles of War and how so many of them had been violated and that we would need luck if we were to, 'bring it off.'"⁹ By the time that Worthington returned to hold his own regimental orders group at 0130 hours he was determined to be positive. Worthington briefed the officers of the BCRs and Algonquins on the new plan. Major J.H. Carson, officer commanding "B" Squadron,



Map drawn by Mike Bechthold ©2010

recalled that Worthington expected "merely a few second rate German formations holding feature 195 and vicinity."¹⁰ Major Monk was also present during this briefing and remembered the orders "as something like this":

The attacks have gone well today. The enemy is disorganized - the higher command intend to take advantage of the situation and push on.

The Polish Division will be operating on our left. We will likely be beyond our artillery support, but may have some air co-operation. The Algonquin Regiment is under command. The Brigadier's intention is to seize the high ground feature, spot height 195...

My intention is to seize and hold this feature until the rest of our troops can reach us.

Method - we will move out of this harbour, cross the highway at MR (guess 080547) about 300 yards south of where we are now, pass through the Lake Superiors who are dug in at this point, advance south on the east side of the highway, taking advantage of ground until opposite the objective, then recross the highway and assault the hill from the south-east.

The tanks will do the fighting on the way down. Keep moving; try to reach the objective before daylight.¹¹

The column left its harbour south of Lorguichon at about 0230 hours in the pre-dawn darkness of 9 August 1944. Progress was slow as the column received constant, though largely inconsequential, German machine gun fire. By about 0400 hours the column reached Cintheaux. The lead formation, "C" Squadron, was forced to halt for 15-30 minutes to deal with this opposition emanating from a tree line extending east of Cintheaux. This was eventually neutralized as was machine gun fire emanating from the church in Cauvicourt.¹² More serious resistance was encountered a little farther south in the triangle formed by the quarry south of Hautmesnil, Bretteville-le-Rabet and Cauvicourt. The terrain the battlegroup was passing over was heavily scarred by the American bombing of the previous day but this does not seem to have seriously affected German defences in this area. There was a German gun position containing four 88 mm dual purpose anti-aircraft guns and six smaller-calibre anti-aircraft guns in an open field on the north edge of Bretteville-le-Rabet.¹³ This position contributed to the "intense and accurate flak" which

destroyed nine American bombers during the attacks of the previous day.¹⁴ As the lead tanks of the column passed between Hautmesnil and Cavicourt they took fire from the south, likely from this German position. It was here that the seeds of the disaster were sown.

Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington was faced with a tough decision. His orders were clear - Simonds wanted his battlegroup entrenched on Point 195 by daybreak. The direct route to his objective was not available to him. Bretteville-le-Rabet was still held in some strength. The village was supposed to have been cleared by Halpenny Force but it had started late and its lead squadron was arriving at the same time as Worthington Force. As the BCR war diary recorded, "it was undecided for a moment or two whether we should wait for them to clear the town or not. Then the CO gave the order 'Move on anyway, while we still have surprise.'"¹⁵ There was a great deal of confusion. In order to keep moving the battlegroup maneuvered east to avoid German fire to their front and the CGG to their right. It was a clear night but the moon was only in its first quarter and did not provide much light for navigation. Visibility was further degraded by an early morning ground fog as well as the dust generated by the armoured

A line of 4th Canadian Armoured Division Sherman tanks head south on the Caen-Falaise highway on the afternoon of 8 August 1944.



vehicles.¹⁶ Crossing the bomb-cratered wheatfields the battlegroup came upon a wide straight road. In France, where narrow, twisted roads were the norm, this, they believed, could only be the Caen-Falaise highway. The lead elements of the battlegroup immediately turned 90 degrees to their right and increased speed to follow the road which would lead them to their objective. Their navigation was confirmed as the first glimmers of sun began to appear in the east. As the BCR war diary related: "High ground was sighted and we headed for it."¹⁷

Unfortunately, the road discovered by the battlegroup was not the main highway. The Chemin Haussé du duc Guillaume (the raised road of Duke William) was indeed wide and straight at the point where it was crossed by the battlegroup, but it did not lead to Point 195. This ancient road had been ordered constructed by William the Conqueror to mark the route of his escape from the vicinity of Valognes through the intervening territory to Bayeux and then on to Falaise. A straight section from Laize-la-Ville (east of the Orne River) to just west Rouvre was still in existence in 1944, nearly nine centuries after its construction.¹⁸

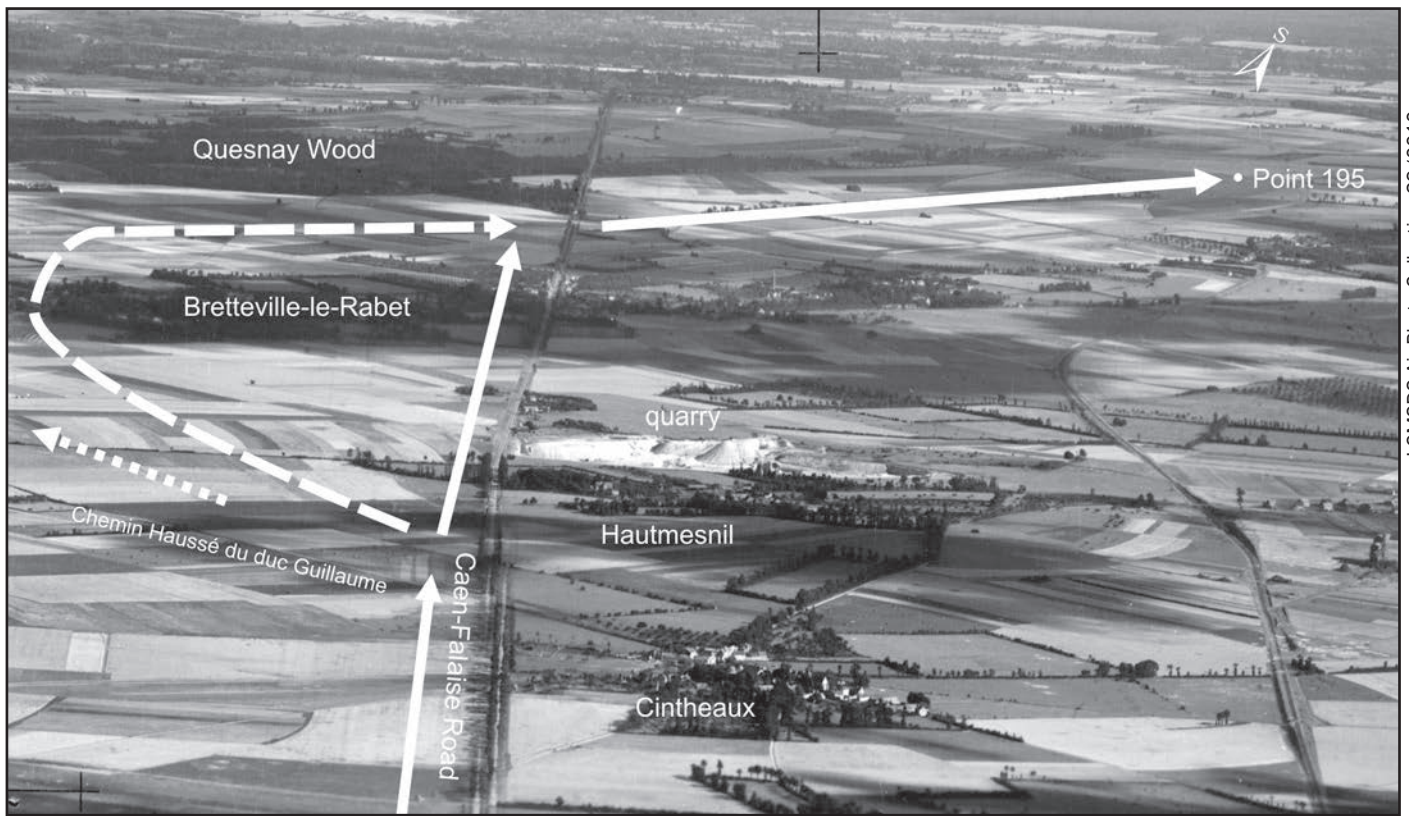
Aerial reconnaissance photos taken mid-morning on 9 August clearly show the route taken by



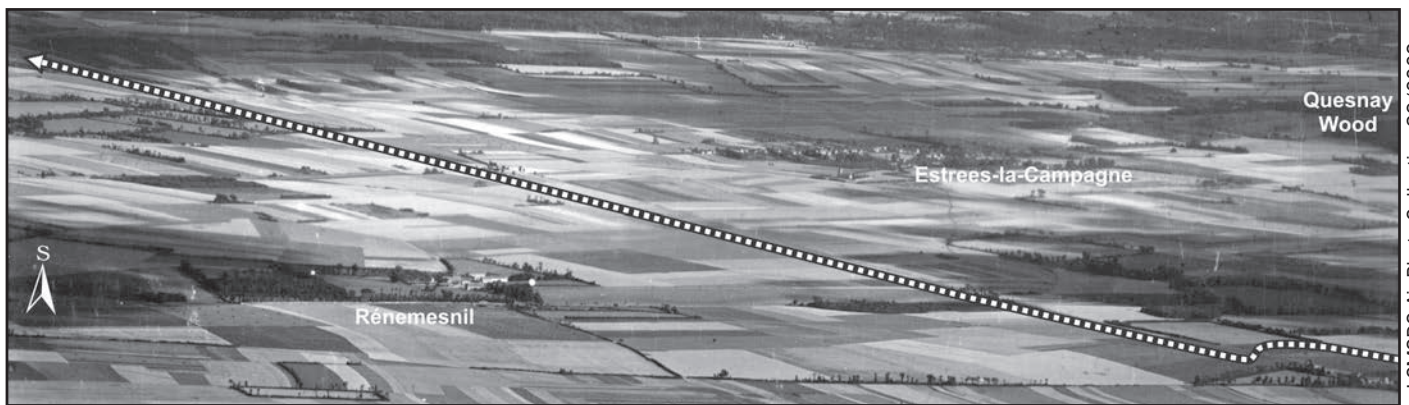
Top: Captain Lyle Monk watches Corporal Jack Richmond demonstrate the handling of a Sten gun at the Algonquin Regiment's barracks in England, 22 November 1943. Monk would subsequently be promoted major commanding "B" Company.

Middle: Major Tommy Baron (second from right), officer commanding "C" Squadron of the BCRs, poses with his tank crew before the battle.

Bottom: Officers of the British Columbia Regiment. In the front row (from left to right) are Major Baron, Major G.R. Sidenius, the "A" Squadron commander, Colonel Whyte and Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington.



LCMSDS Air Photo Collection 39/0010



LCMSDS Air Photo Collection 39/0002

Worthington Force. The battlegroup initially followed the Caen-Falaise highway, but soon left the highway and continued their advance south parallel to the highway. Just south of Cintheaux the battlegroup headed to the southeast and passed west of Cauvicourt. After passing the village it briefly moved south. At this point it began to take fire from German positions north of Bretteville-le-Rabet. Wheeling to the left (due east) to avoid the enemy gunscreens it travelled about half a kilometre before crossing the Chemin Haussé. The fog of war now took over. In the confusion of battle and with poor visibility the lead elements of the BCR lost track of their position. When they crossed the wide, straight section of the Chemin Haussé they must have

assumed they had stumbled upon the Caen-Falaise highway. After crossing the road they immediately turned to the right and followed this road to what they thought was their

objective. In fact the Chemin Haussé led straight to their destruction.¹⁹ From the narrow vision slits of their tanks and in the gloom of the early morning the terrain fit what

Top: This oblique aerial photograph, taken on 26 July 1944, shows the intended route of Worthington Force as a solid line. When the battlegroup approached Bretteville-le-Rabet they discovered that the village was still being cleared by Halpenny Force so Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington made the decision to skirt the village and continue on to Point 195 (dashed line). The dotted line shows the direction the battlegroup actually took.

Above: This oblique aerial photograph, also taken on 26 July 1944, shows the actual route taken by Worthington Force. The position where they ended up is just visible in the top left corner of the photo.

Opposite: This aerial photograph, taken on 9 August 1944, contains the evidence which shows how Worthington Force got lost. The prominent straight road starting at the top left corner and extending to the centre of the photo is the Chemin Haussé du duc Guillaume. The tracks in the field made by Worthington Force show that as the battlegroup moved south, roughly parallel to the Caen-Falaise highway (just off the photo to the left) it moved west where it encountered the Chemin Haussé. After crossing this wide, straight road the battlegroup immediately wheeled to the right and continued to follow this road all the way to its final position near Hill 111. It is believed that in the confusion of the early morning battle, with visibility obscured by smoke, mist and dust, this road was mistaken for the Caen-Falaise highway.



Chemin Haussé du duc Guillaume

Bretteville-le-Rabet

4137

2TAF 400 684 9 AUG 44 36



LCMSDS Air Photo 102/4196

The aerial photographs taken on 9 August 1944 capture the tragedy of Worthington Force. This image shows the area immediately to the west of their final position. A number of burning vehicles can be seen. The two on the left centre of the image almost certainly belong to "A" Squadron which was almost entirely destroyed before reaching the rectangular wood. The white smoke emanating from the tree line below the road at the top centre of the photo is most likely a German position that has been destroyed by the battlegroup while it is impossible to tell the identity of the vehicles on the road.

they expected to find. They were following a straight road which they intended to cross on their right and find a height of land which was their objective. This description fits both their intended route to Point 195 and their actual route to Point 140.

The rapid pace of the advance and the concealment provided by the half light of dawn allowed the vanguard of the battlegroup to proceed with limited German intervention. The Sherman tanks of the BCRs led the way firing at any potential targets along the way. The BCR war diary remarked that some haystacks exploded when fired upon while machine gun bullets ricocheted off other haystacks. South of Cauvicourt the lead tanks passed through a small wood containing enemy troops. "As we approached...we sighted enemy soft skin vehicles, armoured cars, and half-tracks. These were duly shot up as we proceeded and many of the enemy were killed."²⁰

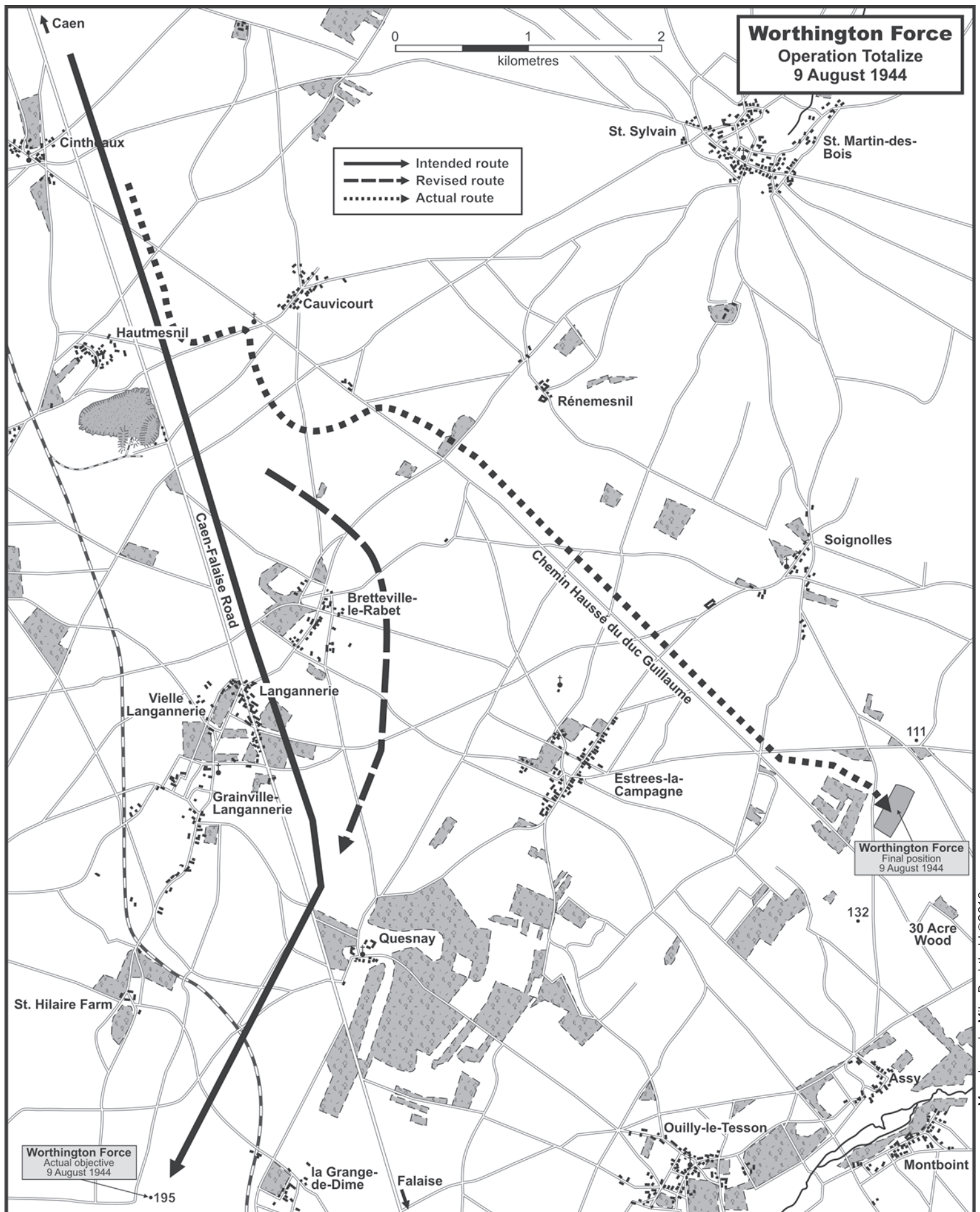
The Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) and "C" Squadron of the BCRs did not stop until they reached the high ground shortly before 0650 hours. Lieutenant-Colonel Worthington made the decision to create a fortress position inside a rectangular field on a piece of high ground that offered good visibility of the surrounding countryside. At 0650 hours Worthington reported to HQ 4th CAB that they had arrived

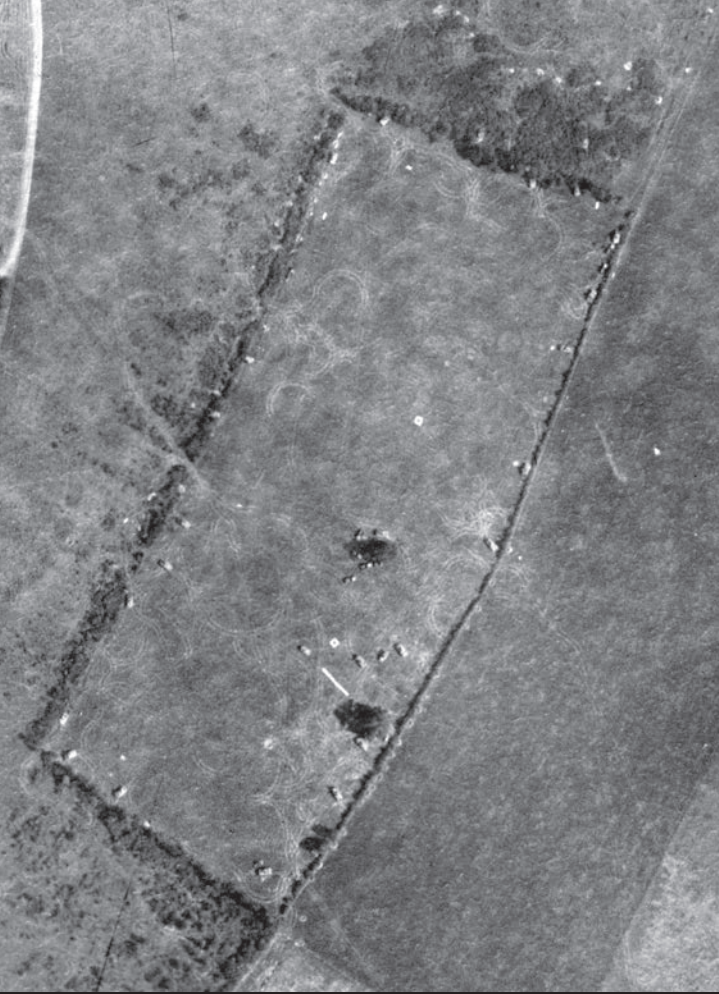
at Point 195, "No evidence of enemy occupation - but recent signs. Few lorries destroyed, slit trenches and tools about. We are holding until our friends come fwd to consolidate."²¹ At this point nobody knew that Worthington Force was far removed from its objective. In fact, the battlegroup was 2000 metres due east of Estrées-la-Campagne near Point 111,²² and over 6000 metres northeast of Point 195. Neither Worthington nor Brigadier Booth knew that the battlegroup was lost. This had two deadly consequences. There would be no reinforcements, and even more importantly, there would be no protection or support from the artillery.

During the advance to the objective the battlegroup became spread out. As dawn broke, "B" Squadron of the BCRs, lagging behind the vanguard, stopped north of Estrées-la-Campagne to check their location. After consulting his map Major J.H. Carson, the squadron commander, realized the battlegroup was in the wrong place. He was in the process of reorienting his force to advance to Point 195, and had already despatched his No.2 Troop to the correct objective, when he received a radio order from Worthington to "advance to high ground in front." Carson had no choice but to join the rest of the battlegroup.²³ During this pause the two lead companies of the

Algonquins, "B" and "C," were able to catch up with Carson's squadron. Major Monk deployed 10 Platoon to check out Estrées, but they quickly returned and reported the village to be unoccupied. By the time his men had returned from their recce the tanks along with "C" Company had disappeared over the hill so Monk followed their tracks. Upon arrival at Point 111 he realized that 10 Platoon was missing so after reporting to Lieutenant-Colonel A.J. Hay, the commanding officer of the Algonquins, he set out to find his missing men:

By the time I reached them, they had all but annihilated a German gun position consisting of about 30 all ranks, 2 88 mm guns and about 10 motorcycles. The platoon which had been trailing the rest of the company by about 200 yards, had been fired at by this German position. Lieutenant Clare Dutcher, 10 Platoon commander, without hesitation, changed the course of his two vehicles, and rushed the position headlong, debusing on top of the Germans. They killed all but five who were taken prisoner. The motorcycles and guns were put out of action. The German prisoners were terrified, and with good reason since in the excitement of the moment, the bayonet had been freely used. This whole episode took less than 15 minutes.²⁴





LCMSDS Air Photo 3/3190

This rectangular wood is the final position of Worthington Force. This air photograph, taken on the morning of 9 August 1944, allows us to see the Sherman tanks of the British Columbia Regiment arrayed around the perimeter of the field. Worthington's tank and command post are visible around the tree near the centre of the position. The small white squares and the white line in the position are air recognition panels displayed to prevent attacks by friendly aircraft.

After neutralizing this position 10 Platoon joined the rest of the battlegroup on the objective.

Not all the subunits from Worthington Force made it to Point 111. "A" Squadron of the BCRs along with "D" Company of the Algonquins were last in the order of march. Upon reaching the vicinity of Estrées-la-Campagne the Shermans came under fire from an enemy force. By this time the tanks had lost the cover of darkness. What followed was a daylight, close quarter battle with an enemy armoured force supported by anti-tank guns. The outcome was never in doubt. "A" Squadron was annihilated.²⁵ Lieutenant John Stock, commander of No.4 Troop, "B" Squadron, was still making his

way forward as "A" Squadron was being destroyed. He recalls:

We suddenly saw that A Squadron, which was slightly off to our left, were having a tough time of it. These were the first Shermans that we had actually seen destroyed in battle. We had seen many films of the 8th Army in action in Africa, with smoke slowly curling out of the turrets on knocked out tanks, but not so with Shermans. When a Sherman was hit by anti-tank fire, particularly from the 88, there seems to be an immediate explosion and flames roared 20 or 30 feet out of the top of the turret. This was followed by two of three explosions of high octane gas and the high explosive shells and the ammunition racks exploding. As I watched through binoculars, the

first tank that I saw hit was that of Captain Ray Tiffen, the Battle Captain of A Squadron. What I described suddenly happened and his whole tank became a roaring torch of flame. Most of the rest of the squadron followed suit.²⁶

Though the squadron claimed the destruction of two Tiger tanks and an anti-tank gun, as many as 17 Shermans from the squadron were destroyed. Only two tanks from "A" Squadron were able to break through and join up with the regiment.²⁷

The men of the Algonquins' "D" Company could only watch helplessly while this was taking place. Major G.R. Sidenius, the "A" Squadron commander, ordered

Major A.K.J. Stirling, the commander of "D" Company, to hold back until his tanks had cleared the way. When Stirling realized what was happening to the tanks he tried to take his company forward, but was unable to move due to heavy mortar, tank, anti-tank and machine gun fire directed at his men. After trying without luck to contact the rest of the regiment Stirling withdrew his men to a hill overlooking Bretteville-le-Rabet. Stirling sent a fighting patrol into the town where they linked up with the Lake Superior Regiment who were clearing the town. After committing his company to complete this task Stirling was ordered late in the day to St. Hillaire Farm north of Point 195 which they captured without a fight. They were joined here early on 10 August by the remaining elements of the battalion. Neither "A" or "D" Companies of the Algonquins were able to join the rest of the battalion at Point 111.²⁸

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The Fight on the Hill

The calm which surrounded the arrival of the battlegroup at Point 111 belied the firestorm that was soon to be unleashed. Worthington had established his troops on a defensible piece of high ground that he thought to be (or be near) Point 195. His position was in a rectangular field 300 yards long by 100 yards wide. It offered good visibility and fields of fire over the surrounding terrain. It also provide some protection as it was bounded on the south by a wooded area, to the west by a broken hedge and small thicket, to the north by a thin line of tall trees and to the east by stubble fields.²⁹ Worthington had ample time to establish his defensive positions, but he did not know that he had stirred up a hornet's nest. The German reaction to this penetration of their line was swift and unmerciful. The Canadian

and British attacks at the start of Operation Totalize the previous day had penetrated the main German line of resistance and smashed the 89th Infantry Division. The night of 8/9 August was spent trying to piece together a new line to hold the Allied advance. The 12th SS Hitler Youth Panzer Division, commanded by SS-Oberführer Kurt Meyer was now holding the line. By this point in the Normandy Campaign the 12th SS was a shadow of its former self having been heavily mauled, primarily by the Canadians, over the previous two months. However, it was still a formidable force. Meyer redeployed his forces to prevent a breakthrough to Falaise. The heights north of Mazières and Rouvres were covered by Kampfgruppe Krause; from Point 140 to the Caen-Falaise highway north of Quesnay were held by Kampfgruppe Wallmüller; Point 195 and its approaches was held by the 3rd Battalion, 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment along with stragglers from 89th Division. The tanks of the division, along with 501st SS Tiger Battalion, were positioned in Quesnay Woods.³⁰ The depth of the advance by Worthington Force was first discovered by SS-Obersturmführer Bernhard-Georg Meitzel who had been sent from Quesnay Woods to Point 140 to located Kampfgruppe Waldmüller. As he approached Point 140 his light armoured car was fired on by the lead tanks of the BCRs who were already in the area. Meitzel's vehicle was not hit and he was able to return to Quesnay Woods. Upon receiving Meitzel's report SS-Obersturmbannführer Max Wünsche immediately organized his tanks to launch an attack on the Canadian position lest they establish a firm hold on the ground.³¹

Worthington calmly organized his defences. Command of the tanks was delegated to Major T.B. Baron, officer commanding "C" Squadron. At this point in the day he had

available 31 Shermans and one light recce tank.³² The tanks were positioned around the perimeter of the field, interspersed with the half-tracks which had carried the infantry. Lieutenant-Colonel Hay similarly deployed his infantry. "C" Company was placed along the southeast and southwest edges of the wood while "B" Company covered the northern portions. The 3-inch mortars of the mortar platoon were situated in the southwest corner of the wood. "D" Company was tasked to cover the northwest and southwest edges of the wood, but it never arrived. The infantry were not bothered as they prepared their positions, but they found it very difficult to dig trenches in the hard gravel fields.³³

After reporting back to Wünsche, Meitzel returned to the area seeking to obtain more information on the Canadians' intentions. A shell from a Sherman tank destroyed Meitzel's armoured car and he was thrown from the turret, breaking his arm in the process. He was quickly made a prisoner by a Canadian tank crew.³⁴

Worthington Force did not come under serious fire until about 0800 hours, over an hour after their arrival. In their advance to Point 111 the Canadians had passed through elements of Kampfgruppe Krause which had been ordered to take up new defensive positions exactly where Worthington Force now sat. The result was a sporadic and disjointed initial response to the Canadian battlegroup. Harassing fire targeted the Canadians from a small wood (referred to on modern topographic maps as 30 Acres Wood) located on a piece of higher ground 700 metres to the south. At the same time fire was also directed at the Canadians from the northeast. The tanks deployed around the perimeter of the field at Point 111 returned fire, but with no definite targets their response was ineffective. Worthington attempted to eliminate this fire. One troop of tanks was sent to the north but it

was knocked out by fire from unseen German guns soon after leaving the battlegroup position. At 0900 hours a second force, composed of two troops from "B" Squadron, was sent out to capture 30 Acres Wood.³⁵ Lieutenant John Stock's No.4 Troop (down to two tanks) led the way to the wood while Lieutenant John Scudamore's No.3 Troop provided covering fire and smoke. Despite heavy fire Stock and his troop sergeant made it to the copse where they discovered a network of enemy bunkers and trenches. He was in the process of firing high explosive shells into the position when his tank came under fire. The first shot, fired by a Tiger tank, narrowly missed and hit a large tree next to the Sherman. The German gunner did not miss the second time as he put his shot through the front right sponson of Stock's Sherman, killing the co-driver and igniting the fuel and ammunition. The resulting explosion blew the rest of the crew, including Stock, out of the tank. Subsequent shots knocked out the tank of Sergeant George Wallbank. Major Carson and his battle captain, Johnny Hope, also had their tanks destroyed as they moved forward to join Stock. Aerial photographs taken mid-morning on 9 August pay mute testament to this engagement showing the burning hulks of the Canadian tanks beside the wood.³⁶

After the tanks were destroyed Major Carson led some of the survivors into the wood where they "annihilated one enemy section of infantry."³⁷ Back at the main position Worthington watched the destruction of his tanks and made arrangements to rescue the survivors. He told Lieutenant Jenkinson to take a half-track to bring back the wounded. The driver assigned to the mission did not think much of the task, answering, "who me?" when told he was to drive the carrier.

Before the carrier arrived Stock helped to get his remaining members of his crew back to the battlegroup

at Point 111. Along the way he came across Sergeant Wallbank:

I found him stretched on the ground moaning, with one foot completely blown off and the boot lying about four feet from the stump with a long piece of achilles tendon still attached. George had always been a great athlete and he always stated that he would rather get it completely than lose a limb. He was staring down at the stump of his leg and looked up at me and said, "You still have your pistol, kill me." I tried to assure him that all would be well and reached in my battle dress for a morphine syrette...After a few minutes George relaxed a bit from the effects of the morphine.³⁸

Stock was in no shape to help Wallbank to safety. Indeed when he arrived back at the main position he needed immediate first aid to deal with his painful burns. Jenkinson remembered that Stock was virtually unrecognizable due to the swelling of his face. In spite of the German fire the half-track made it to the survivors and Lieutenant Jenkinson helped to administer first aid to those in need. A series of German near-misses showered the group with dirt and shrapnel and injured a number of men including Lieutenant Jenkinson. The half-track driver took a number of wounded men back to the main group leaving the rest to crawl back, including Jenkinson and Sergeant Wallbank who was missing a foot.³⁹ They were able to make it back on their own.

By 0930 hours all the survivors had returned to the position. The entire affair at 30 Acre Wood had lasted only 30 minutes.

The first major counterattack on the Canadian position was made at about 1000 hours. It came as something of a relief to the men defending the position as German mortar fire on the position was suspended during the attack and the

men finally had something concrete at which to shoot. Major Carson estimated that this attack was made by about 200 infantry and four tanks. It was defeated with heavy casualties.⁴⁰ The Germans made numerous attempts during the course of the day to break into the Canadian position, but each attempt was repelled, often with heavy German losses.

Soon after the battlegroup defeated the first major German counterattack, Worthington held an improvised orders group at his tank near the centre of the position. Present were Worthington, Hay, Stock, and Major W.S. Macpherson, commander of "C" Company, along with his company sergeant-major, A.J. Primeau. As the men were talking a German armour-piercing round struck the side of Worthington's command tank. CSM Primeau was killed in the blast and a fragment struck Hay severing his leg. A tourniquet was placed on Hay's leg to stop the bleeding. Macpherson assumed command of the Algonquins even though his back was filled with shrapnel as a result of the same shell.⁴¹ Major Monk estimated that by late morning over half the tanks that made it to Point 111 had been destroyed.

About noon Worthington ordered the remaining half tracks to collect the wounded and make a "mad dash to safety." The vehicles were loaded with Lieutenant-Colonel Hay, Major Carson, and Lieutenants Stock and Jenkinson, among others. The half-tracks displayed prominent red crosses, but were still fired on as they ran the gauntlet to safety. At least two of the six carriers, and perhaps more, made it to Allied lines.⁴²

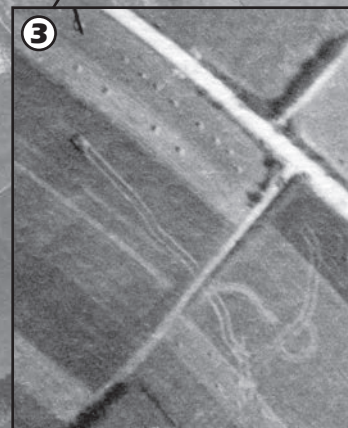
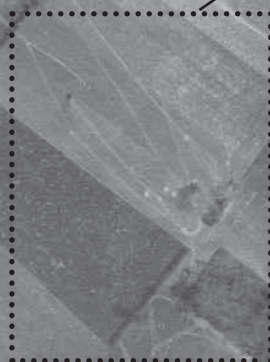
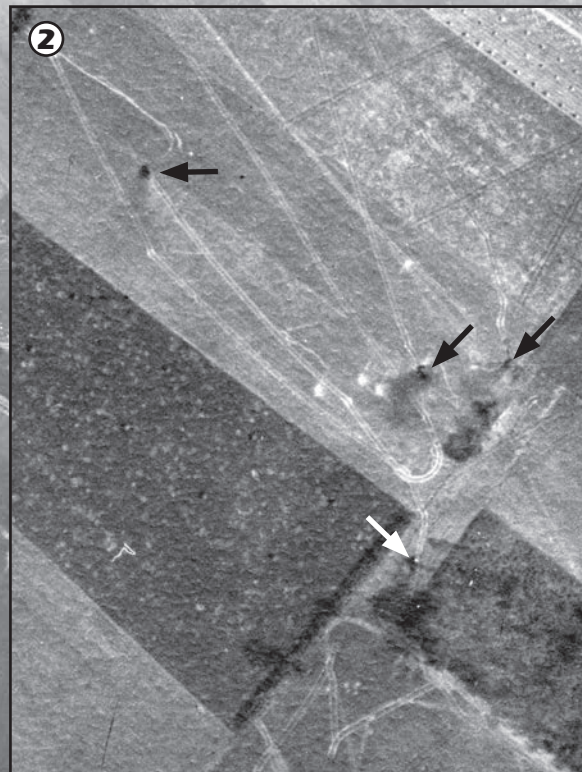
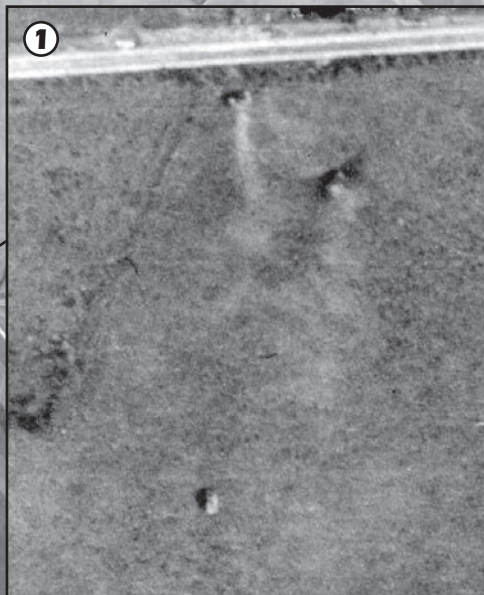
While the fight was taking place at 30 Acres Wood the battlegroup still had no clear idea of its true location. At 0748 hours HQ 4th CAB radioed the BCRs requesting their position. The reply came seven minutes later that they were on their objective at Point

195. An hour later another request for a location check received the same answer. This was the last recorded message between HQ 4th CAB and Worthington Force.⁴³ Major-General George Kitching, commander of 4th CAD, and Brigadier Booth became "deeply disturbed" by the silence coming from Worthington Force. Most of the chatter recorded in the 4th CAB radio log on 9 August related to their attempts to get information on the location of the missing battlegroup. The first attempt to find Worthington Force was made at 0914 hours when the Governor General's Foot Guard (GGFG) were ordered to proceed to Point 195. Though urged repeatedly to get moving, the GGFG did not start forward until late afternoon when they completed the clearance of Bretteville-le-Rabet. A great deal of effort was expended to locate the missing battlegroup but nobody thought to look outside the immediate vicinity of Point 195.

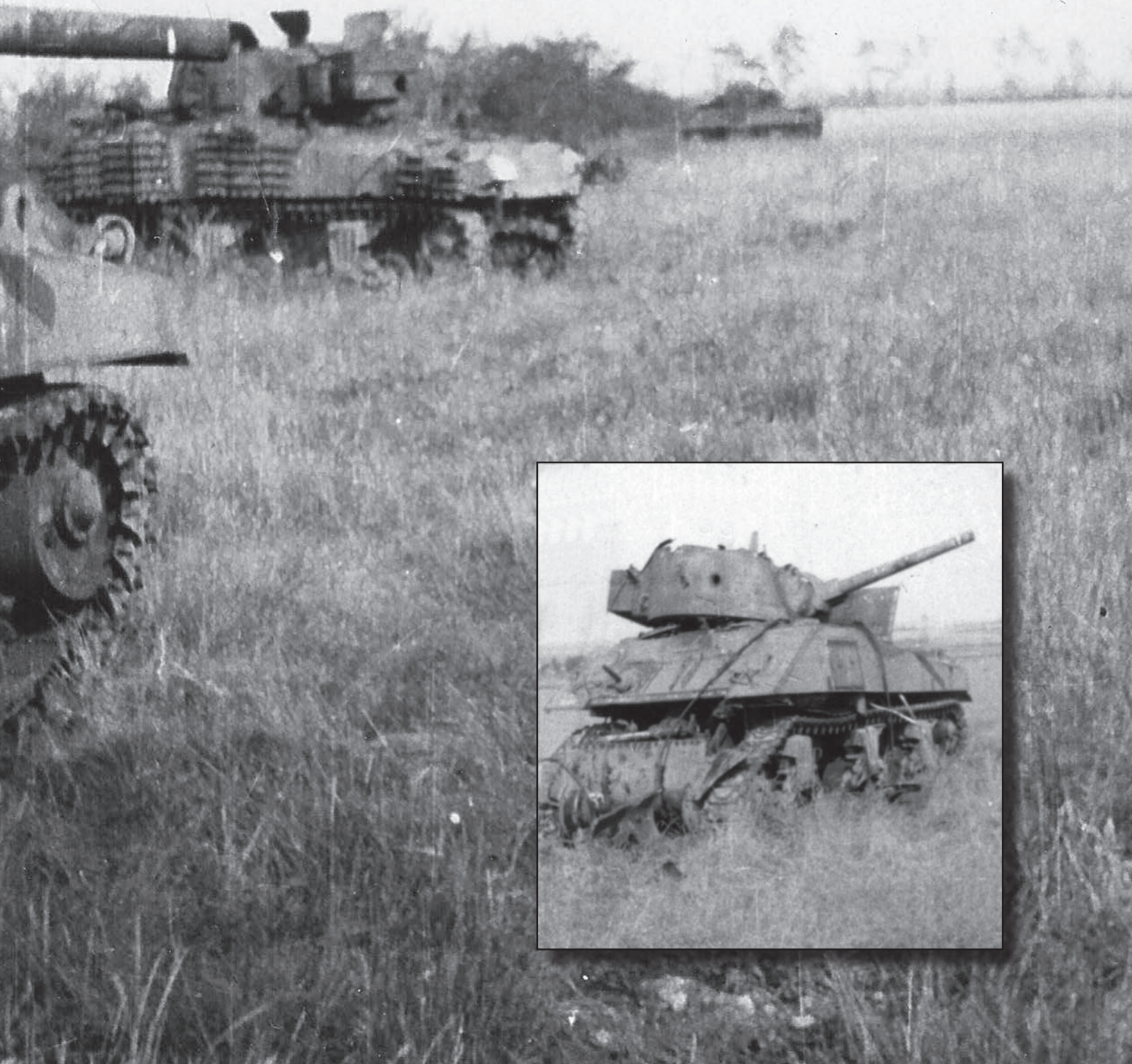
A clear indication of this comes from the reaction of Major-General Kitching. He stated in his memoirs that he thought the battlegroup had overshot its objective and ended up further south in the vicinity of Potigny. Brigadier J.N. Lane, the commander Royal Artillery of 4th CAD, set off in his personal Auster aircraft to search for the battlegroup.

This remarkable air photo captures the battle in progress during the early afternoon of 9 August 1944. The half-tracks have departed the battlegroup position to carry the wounded to safety but the results of the morning's engagements are still evident. To the north of the rectangular field are the burning Shermans that Worthington sent out to deal with German fire coming from that direction (See 1). At the bottom of the photo is 30 Acre Wood and the still burning Shermans of Major Carson, Captain Hope, Lieutenant Stock and Sergeant Wallbank (See 2). All the tracks in the fields south and east of 30 Acre Wood belong to enemy forces. At least one German tank has been captured in this photo (See 3).

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In 1945 members of the British Columbia Regiment returned to the rectangular field near Point 111 and found many of their Shermans still sitting where they had been destroyed on 9 August 1944.



Though he could not cross over the front line, he flew straight down the main highway until he could see Falaise. The location of Worthington Force would have been clearly visible to him at the height he was flying and its exact position would have been obvious with the thick columns of black smoke emanating from the

knocked out Shermans. However, if he did see them he must have believed the tanks belonged to the Poles and was not the missing battlegroup.⁴⁴

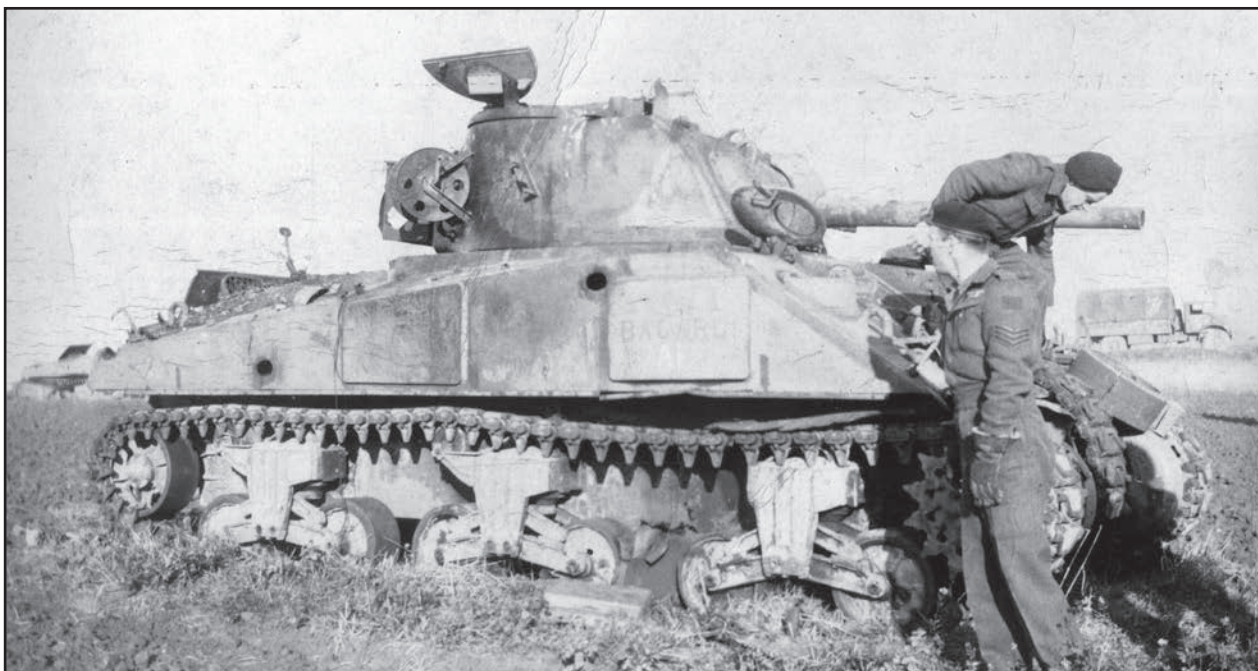
The apparent radio silence from Worthington Force was caused by the deteriorating fortunes of the now trapped battlegroup. The arrival of two surviving tanks from "A" Squadron brought the unwelcome news that their approach route was now closed. The destruction of the tanks at 30 Acres Wood signalled the arrival of the German armour sent by Wünsche to deal with the battlegroup. According to the Kurt Meyer's memoirs, Wünsche despatched five Tigers directly from Quesnay Wood to attack Point 140 from the west while sending a second group of 15 Panthers around to attack from the east. The Panthers would act as the hammer to the Tigers' anvil.⁴⁵

The battlegroup was out of touch with the higher echelons of command during most of the day, but there were numerous contacts with Allied units during the course of the day that held the tantalizing

opportunity of finding the lost battlegroup. The first Allied troops contacted by the casualties who were evacuated was Lieutenant J.E. Brooks of the reconnaissance troop. He had been ordered to hold near Bretteville-le-Rabet. Brooks' after-action report notes that he talked to Lieutenant Stock who "gave me a message from the CO [Worthington] to the effect that the regiment could hold the position with some assistance and also that their position was in Square 0947."⁴⁶ Unfortunately, this map reference placed the battlegroup just north of Point 195 and nearly six kilometres from their actual location. The communications difficulties did not end there as Brooks was unable to contact brigade headquarters and instead passed the message on to

somebody in the CGG who were still fighting in Bretteville-le-Rabet. There is no record that the CGG relayed this message back to brigade.

Though Worthington was unable to contact brigade headquarters, he was in contact with his supply echelon during the course of the day. At 1100 hours Regimental Sergeant-Major Jay, the officer commanding the Admin Report Centre, received a message from Worthington to bring forward the reserve of ammunition. His attempt was prevented by heavy German fire which destroyed at least one of his vehicles, a Crusader anti-aircraft tank. Jay contacted elements of the Polish Armoured Division who were operating in the area, but their attempt to deal with the German resistance also resulted in



the loss of a number of Polish tanks. Jay stated, "The air conditions [radio reception] was very bad and I had trouble getting through to my unit. I last heard from the CO at 1415 hours, but spoke to his operator several times until 1500 hours then all communications were lost to us. I then tried to contact Brigade on the Q link but could not get through to them."⁴⁷ Though it is unknown if Worthington was ever able to communicate the battlegroup's true location to RSM Jay, it is of great note that he was in regular contact with him for most of the day and none of these messages were received at, or forwarded, to brigade.

The battlegroup received regular support throughout the day from the Royal Air Force. According to Major Monk, two Hawker Typhoons appeared over the Canadians "fairly early in the morning." After circling the position the aircraft attacked the battlegroup with rockets and cannon fire. The RAF pilots would have been thrilled to find such a target - dozens of tanks and other vehicles in the open beyond the bomblines on which they had been briefed. As it was in an area where no Allied forces were known, or supposed to be, the pilots attacked. The Canadians were quick to get out recognition signals which were acknowledged by the aircraft overhead. The recognition panels are clearly visible in the aerial reconnaissance photos taken before noon. What is not clear is why word of the battlegroup's location was not relayed to army headquarters. The RAF continued to support the battlegroup throughout the day. It must be questioned why there was no communication between the RAF and army headquarters. Would the RAF not report the presence of a substantial and unexpected Allied force beyond the bomblines? And if such a report was made, would the army not make every effort to determine the identity of this force? But, this did not happen.



Photos courtesy BCR

The RAF returned at regular half-hour intervals and attacked German positions all around Point 111 where they were "heartily cheered many times during the day."⁴⁸ On one particular occasion "C" Company of the Algonquins saw "the enemy mustering on the high ground to the south [in the vicinity of 30 Acres Wood]. However, the Typhoons arrived back and strafed the enemy who were caught in the open and suffered heavily."⁴⁹ Lieutenant Ken Gartley, the officer commanding 11 Platoon, "B" Company of the Algonquins, also praised the air support:

Our rocket-firing Typhoons...gave us good support by silencing the enemy guns. However in their

absence we were suffering heavy casualties from the mortar and arty fire which surrounded us.⁵⁰

Kurt Meyer was dismissive of the role of air power during the battle stating that even though his tanks were out in the open and "looked like targets on a range," the Typhoons ignored his men and directed their attack against the Canadian positions.⁵¹ Meyer records only the one air attack and it is likely that he is describing only the initial appearance of the RAF on the battlefield and not any of their subsequent attacks.

The battlegroup received limited support during the afternoon from the 1st Polish Armoured Division as it advanced south from St. Sylvain. Like the RAF, they too initially fired on the Canadians but once recognition smoke was released the friendly fire stopped. The Poles attempted to drive forward to support the Canadians. Approximately 1500 metres from the battlegroup the Germans recognized the threat posed by the Poles and began to concentrate their fire on them. This provided a temporary, but desperately welcome, relief for the Canadians. A further advance brought the Poles within 300 metres of the Canadian position where they broke up a German formation massing to attack the battlegroup. Despite their attempts to move forward the Poles sustained serious losses and were forced to withdraw without making direct contact with the battlegroup. By late afternoon there was no further support provided by the Poles and intense German fire once again was directed at the Canadians.⁵²

Another avenue of contact for the battlegroup was through the artillery net. Captain M.A. Baker of the 19th Field Regiment was one of the forward observation officers (FOOs) assigned to the battlegroup. He was in radio contact with his regiment throughout the day, and as late as 1830 hours he reported, "enemy

attacking with heavy mortaring.”⁵³ Lieutenant Ken Gartley recalls that about noon one of the forward observation officers, possibly Baker, contacted an artillery command post in the rear. The battery fired three rounds of smoke, but it fell some 1800 metres short.⁵⁴ This intriguing information indicates that someone in the Canadian lines was aware of the location of Worthington Force, but the information was not shared with anyone who could intervene.

In spite of all these outside contacts, the battlegroup was unable to relay their location to anyone with the ability to intervene in their situation.

* * * * *

Late in the afternoon, perhaps around 1500 or 1530 hours, Worthington took stock of their situation. He realized that his remaining infantry were well entrenched and he made the decision to evacuate his remaining tanks. At this point only eight tanks of his original 55-60 that had started the advance were still mobile. These Shermans broke out of the position and all but one were able to link up with Polish forces. A liaison officer with the Poles reported this event to HQ 4th CAB at 1500 hours but this information does not appear to have provided Booth or Kitching with any information upon which they could act.⁵⁵

One of the most remarkable aspects of this drama is that the battlegroup had repeated contacts with Allied forces during the course of 9 August, but this did not generate intelligence that allowed 4th CAB to positively influence the battle. The RAF was aware of the location of the battlegroup as were the Poles, radio contact had been made with RSM Jay and at least one artillery unit, and two separate groups had escaped (the half-tracks with the wounded at noon and the eight tanks later in the day) and run the gauntlet back

to Allied lines. Also, “D” Company of the Algonquins never made it to Hill 111 but they had advanced far enough forward to know the general direction taken by the battlegroup. Somehow none of this information made it to anyone who could send support for the lost men.

By late afternoon it was clear the end was near for the battlegroup. Worthington held out hope that relief was imminent and intended to fight to the finish. He had maintained his cool all day long, calmly directing the battle. He emerged unscathed from the shell that killed CSM Primeau and severely wounded Lieutenant-Colonel Hay in the morning, one of his many close calls during the day. His luck ran out at approximately 1730 hours. Worthington was dealing with yet another German counterattack and had just visited the Algonquin mortar platoon when a mortar bomb landed at his feet killing him instantly.⁵⁶ Major Macpherson assumed command of the battlegroup. He agreed with Major Monk to attempt the extrication of the survivors once darkness fell. German pressure on the position continued to constrict the perimeter, bringing infantry and armour within a couple hundred metres of the Canadian battlegroup. Lieutenant Gartley was there at the end:

At last light the Germans started to line up an attack to wipe out the remainder of the attacking force that had moved in so boldly that morning. The first information of this was in C Coy area when we heard machine gun and rifle fire; thence the roars of a tank and the shouting of infantry. Almost simultaneously we hear shouting to our rear as another force was moving in from east to west along the dead ground...Lt. Blais had the fwd pl in C Coy and was taken prisoner along with his men when they were overrun.⁵⁷

As the Germans swarmed into the position, small groups of men made their escape as best they could. Some reached Allied lines that night while others returned with harrowing tales after many nights on the run.

Worthington Force fought gallantly, but the battlegroup was destroyed and losses were catastrophic. The BCRs, in their first battle, lost 47 tanks (44 Shermans, 2 Stuarts, 1 Crusader) and suffered 112 casualties (40 killed, 38 wounded and 34 prisoners of war). Over two days, 9 and 10 August, the Algonquins suffered 128 casualties (45 men killed or died of wounds, 38 wounded and 45 prisoners of war). The vast majority of these would undoubtedly have come from the two companies at Point 111. Stacey’s opinion resonates well: “Such losses would have been deeply regrettable even had they been the price of success. Unfortunately, they were suffered in the course of a tactical reverse which did much to prevent us from seizing a strategic opportunity of the first magnitude.”⁵⁸

* * * * *

The Dénouement

Long after the battle had finished, aerial reconnaissance photographs have given us a look back in time. Stacey’s explanation that the battlegroup mistook the east-west road at Estrées-la-Campagne for the north-south Caen-Falaise highway does not make sense. The battlegroup was already off course by the time it had advanced that far south. The error in navigation was made much earlier. Stacey was right that the battlegroup followed the wrong road, but it was the Chemin Haussé south of Caucourt that they misidentified. It was close to the Caen-Falaise highway. It was wide and straight where the battlegroup picked it up, and in the darkness, dust, smoke, chaos and confusion of the unit’s first battle, it appeared

to go in the correct direction. To complete the perfect deception, as the first shadows of doubt crept into the minds of those leading the battlegroup, dawn broke over the battlefield revealing a tantalizing piece of high ground directly in front of them. It could only be their objective. Worthington ordered the battlegroup to make for the heights as quickly as possible so as not to lose the element of surprise. Though the Canadians arrived at the wrong location and missing some of its elements, it was still a formidable entity, entrenched on favourable ground of its own choosing. The bold advance by the battlegroup had stolen the initiative from the Germans and forced the enemy to take steps to react to the Canadian breakthrough. The fatal problem on 9 August was not the navigation error, but the inability of the Canadian command and control system to react to the unexpected event and turn a negative into a positive.

Artillery support for the battlegroup completely failed on 9 August 1944. Three units – 19th and 23rd Field Regiments, and the British 11th Medium Regiment, along with a FOO from each regiment – were allocated to support the battlegroup. It was clear from the start, however, that the field regiments would not be able to support the initial moves of the battlegroup. As the battlegroup moved off prior to dawn, only the British medium regiment was in a position to provide artillery support. The two Canadian field regiments spent the afternoon and evening of 8 August located south of the village of Rocquancourt. These units were not ordered forward until dawn on 9 August. The maximum range of the Sexton's 25-pounder gun meant that it was incapable of supporting the battlegroup upon its arrival at Point 195.⁵⁹ At 0500 hours 23rd Field Regiment was ordered to a new gun position south of Cintheaux.



Photo by Mike Bechthold

The Worthington Force memorial near Point 111. The plaque reads:

IN MEMORIUM

To the soldiers of the 28th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The British Columbia Regiment) CAC and the Algonquin Regiment who, on the 9 August 1944 in the surrounding area of Hill 140 Gave their Lives for Freedom.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN

Unfortunately, in the words of the unit's history, "The regiment pulled a boner." The regiment's adjutant incorrectly deciphered the new map coordinates and the unit ended up over three kilometres northwest of their assigned position. This mistake took the regiment out of the battle for most of the day and they did not arrive at their new position between Hautmesnil and Urville until late afternoon.⁶⁰ The 19th Field Regiment also remained out of the battle until mid-afternoon. It was not ordered forward until 1230 hours and only reported ready for action southwest of Cintheaux at 1420 hours. Captain M.A. Baker, the 19th Field FOO, was in contact with his regiment for most of the day. At 1250 hours, just as the unit was commencing its move forward, Baker reported that he was being heavily shelled. At 1700 hours he reported that the enemy was forming for an attack, and 90 minutes later contact with

Baker was lost after he reported that the enemy was attacking supported by heavy mortaring.⁶¹ No where is it recorded what, if any, artillery support was provided to Baker by his regiment. There are many unanswered questions here. Did Baker have continuous contact with his regiment during the course of the day, or do the recorded messages represent the only contacts he was able to make? By the afternoon of the 9th Baker should have been aware that he was not at Point 195. Why was this information not conveyed to his regiment? Or, if it was, why was it not shared with brigade or divisional headquarters?⁶²

The difficulties of the field regiments meant that 11th Medium Regiment was the only possible source of artillery support for Worthington Force during most of the day. The British FOO assigned to the BCRs was Captain M.A. Searle. Upon joining the unit on the evening of 8 August, he stated, "This regiment looked extremely good, very friendly fellows...[who] gave me the impression they were going to 'bust the show wide open.'" Unfortunately, Searle's OP tank broke down just as the advance was starting and he was forced to hitch a ride in the tank of Major Carson. The wireless was not working in this tank, and Searle's wireless operator, Gunner Biggs, found a ride in another tank. After arriving at Point 111, Searle tried to find a working wireless set but each tank he joined was knocked out. As a result, Searle was unable to contact his regiment and the powerful 5.5-inch medium guns were never brought to bear on the enemy.⁶³ The lack of artillery support was not simply a result of the battlegroup arriving at the wrong objective. This undoubtedly contributed to the problem but poor planning, mistaken deployments and a myriad of communication difficulties compounded the issue.

These problems would have been apparent even if the battlegroup had arrived at Point 195 and would have resulted in a much weaker artillery umbrella than the Canadians were used to fighting under.

Even in defeat much was accomplished by Worthington Force. Having broken through the main German line of resistance, the battlegroup posed a dire threat to the entire German position north of Falaise. All available German firepower was brought to bear on eliminating this threat. This meant the destruction of Worthington Force, but prevented any other German initiative on 9 August.⁶⁴ It can also be argued that the German focus on Worthington Force cleared the way for the brilliant capture Point 195 in the early morning hours of 10 August by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada.

The ability of Worthington Force to last as long as it did without support and in the face of concerted and ever strengthening German attacks led by Panthers and Tigers is a testament to the courage and determination of Canadian soldiers involved. Allied doctrine in the Second World War relied on firepower as the cornerstone of any operation. The success of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade in defending Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse, Norrey-en-Bessin and Putot-en-Bessin in the days immediately following the invasion was as much the result of the dominance of Canadian artillery as it was the bravery of the soldiers of the Regina Rifles and Royal Winnipeg Rifles. At Point 111 the Canadians had to fight a daylong battle without any artillery support. If their location had been known and artillery support available there can be no doubt that today we would be celebrating the success of Worthington Force. In many ways, the battlegroup had accomplished the holy grail of Canadian battle doctrine when fighting the Germans.

They had occupied a key piece of terrain that was so important to the Germans that they would commit large reserves to recapture it. The advantage should have fallen to the Canadians who were fighting from prepared positions against an enemy that had to come out into the open to reach them. This battle could have paralleled Arthur Currie's tremendous success at Hill 70 in 1917.⁶⁵ Instead, the battlegroup did not have the firepower to make this happen and Point 111 became Canada's Alamo in Normandy.

It did not have to turn out this way. Worthington Force was lost but there was enough information flowing out of the battlegroup to find it. While it is true that the battlegroup was not where it was supposed to be, it should have been possible for higher headquarters to locate and support the force. There were plenty of indicators that could have led to the location of the battlegroup, but nobody was able to connect the dots in a timely manner. With proper artillery support and the timely arrival of reinforcements the story could have been very different.

Notes

The author would like to thank Keith Maxwell and the British Columbia Regiment for sharing the wealth of documents and photographs contained in their recently reorganized archives.

1. C.P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe 1944-1945 - Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, Volume III (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), p.225.
2. L.F. Ellis, *Victory in the West: Volume 1, The Battle of Normandy* (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 254. Ellis states vehicle losses were 25 tanks, 14 armoured trucks and 14 Bren carriers.
3. Stacey, pp.218-9.
4. Stacey, pp.223-5; Terry Copp, *Fields of Fire: The Canadians in Normandy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp.204-6.
5. Angelo Carravaggio makes the point that it was completely against Anglo-Canadian armoured doctrine for tanks to fight at night and units did not

train to fight in the dark. The hours of darkness were to be spent in maintenance and resupply. Carravaggio lecture, Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, 15 April 2010.

6. W.E.C. Harrison, "Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944. Part III: Canadian Operations, 1-23 August," Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) Historical Section Report No.169, 14 January 1947, pp.87-90.
7. Major L.C. Monk, "An Account of the Battle Participation of the Algonquin Regiment between August 6 and August 11, 1944 (Monk report)," contained as appendix to WD Algonquin Regiment, August 1944.
8. War Diary (WD), 28 Canadian Armoured Regiment (CAR) (British Columbia Regiment), 8 August 1944.
9. J.T. Jenkinson, "The 28th Armoured Regiment (British Columbia Regiment) in the Second Phase of Operation Totalize, August 8-9, 1944," n.d. but written after 1962. BCR Archives.
10. "Narrative of Maj (now A/Lt-col) J.H. Carson, OC 'B' Sqn 28 Cdn Armrd Regt (BCR), of events up to 9 Aug 44," nd, BCR Archives (Carson narrative).
11. Quoted in Monk report, p.3.
12. Carson narrative; WD BCR, 9 August 1944; "An Account of the Battle Experiences of 'D' Coy, Algonquin Regiment, Aug. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 1944 by Major Keith Stirling, O.C. 'D' Coy. Algonquin Regiment (Stirling report)," contained as appendix to WD Algonquin Regiment, August 1944.
13. This position is noted on the Defence Overprint maps issued on 6 August 1944 for Operation Totalize. See "France 1/25000 Sheet 40/14 NW Defence Overprint 'Operation Totalize'" copy in possession of author. The gun batteries are also clearly visible on the aerial reconnaissance photographs taken on 9 August 1944. In particular see Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies Air Photo Collection 102/4136.
14. W.F. Craven and J.L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume 3: Europe - Argument to VE Day, January 1944 to May 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp.250-1.
15. WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
16. Lieutenant A.E. Biddlecombe, "The British Columbia Regiment in Operation 'Totalize,'" n.d. BCR Archives (Biddlecombe Report); Information on the moon state found on the NASA Eclipse website: <<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/phase/phases-1999.html>> accessed 7 December 2009.
17. WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
18. William was on a hunting trip near the town of Valognes (near Cherbourg) when an attempt was made to assassinate him. A jester attached to William's court discovered the plot and informed his master, who fled in the night. He was pursued by the conspirators and it was

- only after a perilous journey that he safely reached Falaise. The incident is believed to have occurred in 1044. In commemoration of his miraculous escape William later punished his enemies by forcing them to construct a raised road to mark the route of his journey from Valognes to Falaise as a lasting memorial of their treachery. (Thomas Roscoe, *The Life of William the Conqueror* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1846), p.53)
19. Aerial reconnaissance photos taken on 9 August 1944 clearly show the route of the battlegroup following the Chemin Haussé straight to the final location of Worthington Force near Hill 140. Air photos taken before 9 August show the ground unscarred by vehicles so there can be no doubt that the tracks visible on photos taken on 9 August belong to the lost battlegroup. See LCMSDS aerial reconnaissance photo boxes 3, 54, 10, 102, 103, and 133.
 20. WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
 21. WD BCR, 9 August 1944; WD HQ 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, radio log, 9 August 1944.
 22. This location is referred to by different names in the various accounts. The BCR war diary refers to it as Hill 143, the Algonquins call it Point 111, while recent accounts refer to the location as les Trente Acres or Point 122 based on modern topographic surveys. For the purposes of this article it will be referred to as Point 111.
 23. WD BCR, 9 August 1944. The war diary relates that No.2 Troop did make it to Point 195: "Meanwhile, No.2 Troop had advanced on centre line decided on in "B" Sqn "O" group, and advanced to Pt.151 Sq. 0947 (Same Sheet), where they were fired upon by two anti-tank guns. After knocking out the guns, No.2 Troop started back, but were hindered by scattered groups of enemy infantry trying to surrender to them. Near ESTREES-LA-CAMPAGNE (same sheet), they met several tanks of "A" Sqn, who had pinpointed an enemy tank, believed to be a Tiger. The enemy moved into the village, and while trying to take it out, three "A" Sqn tanks and one "B" Sqn tank were knocked out. The other two tanks of No. 2 Troop were pinned in the valley, and couldn't move." See also "Lieut B. Wilson Toronto #2 Tp B Sqn" narrative, BCR Archives.
 24. Monk report, p.5.
 25. WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
 26. John Stock, "Troop Leader," dated September 1998, unpublished manuscript in LCMSDS archives, p.28.
 27. WD BCR, 9 August 1944. The troop from "B" Squadron that had been despatched to Point 195 by Major Carson had made it to the vicinity of the objective where they destroyed two anti-tank guns. Without any support they decided to rejoin the squadron. On their return they became part of "A" Squadron's desperate battle.
 - One tank from the troop was destroyed and the rest were unable to proceed.
 28. Stirling report; Monk report, p.5.
 29. Biddlecombe Report.
 30. Hubert Meyer, "12th SS Panzer Division "Hitlerjugend", June to September 1944," MS P-164, Historical Division, Headquarters United States Army, Europe. 23 June 1954, pp.100-2.
 31. Meyer, "12th SS Panzer Division "Hitlerjugend", p.103.
 32. An unknown additional number of tanks would straggle into the position during the morning, including the two tanks of "A" Squadron that were able to evade the fate the rest of their comrades.
 33. WD BCR, 9 August 1944; Monk report, p.5.
 34. Bernhard-Georg Meitzel, "Caen-Falaise, part 2" *Canadian Army Journal* (May 1950), p.71.
 35. Monk report, p.5; WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
 36. Stock, "Troop Leader," pp.29-31.
 37. Carson narrative.
 38. Stock, "Troop Leader," p.31.
 39. Carson narrative; Jenkinson report.
 40. Carson narrative.
 41. Stock, "Troop Leader," p.32; Monk report, p.6. Hay never recovered from his wounds and died in hospital in 1949.
 42. Stock, "Troop Leader," pp.32, 34-6; "The Algonquins First Battle Innoculation by Lt. Ken Gartley, O.C. 11 Pl. "B" coy, Alg. R.," contained as appendix to WD Algonquin Regiment, August 1944; Monk report, p.5; Carson narrative; Jenkinson report.
 43. WD HQ 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, radio log, 9 August 1944. The actual grid reference given by the BCRs (0964) would have placed them immediately southeast of Caen, but this was a transcription error in the radio log as the grid reference 0946 places them at Point 195.
 44. George Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing, 1993), pp.196; Roman Johann Jarymowycz, *Tank Tactics: From Normandy to Lorraine* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p.183.
 45. Kurt Meyer, *Grenadiers: The Story of Waffen SS General Kurt "Panzer" Meyer* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005 (1957)), pp.285-6.
 46. "Report by Lt. J.E. Brooks, of Attack on Hill 195 by 28 Cdn Armd Regt. on 9 Aug 44," BCR Archives.
 47. "Report of RSM Jay," BCR Archives.
 48. Monk report, p.6.
 49. Monk report, p.6.
 50. Gartley report, p.2.
 51. Kurt Meyer, 286.
 52. Monk report, p.7.
 53. WD 19th Field Regiment, 9 August 1944.
 54. Gartley report, p.2.
 55. WD BCR, 9 August 1944; Lieutenant J.T. Scudamore, "Report of Attack on Pt 195," nd, BCR Archives; "Report by Sgt Heffernan S.M. "C" Sqn, on action by 28 Cdn Armd Regt (BCR)," nd. BCR Archive; "Report of Lt. H.J. Armstrong "C" Sqn 28 Cdn Armd Regt Concerning activities on 9 Aug 44," 12 August 1944, BCR Archive.
 56. Monk report, p.7; WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
 57. Gartley report, p.2.
 58. Stacey, p.228. The casualty figures come from Stacey and the WD BCR, 9 August 1944.
 59. The maximum range of the 25-pounder gun mounted in a Sexton was approximately 10 000 metres with charge super, over 2000 metres less than the standard towed 25-pounder gun due to the restricted elevation in the Sexton mount. See British Artillery in World War 2 <nigelef.tripod.com> accessed 10 April 2010. Point 195 was approximately 11 000 to 12 000 metres from the gun positions at Rocquancourt.
 60. Lawrence N. Smith, *The History of the 23rd Field Regiment (S.P.) R.C.A: April 1942 to May 1945* (1945), p.44; WD 23rd Field Regiment, 9 August 1944.
 61. WD 19th Field Regiment, 9 August 1944.
 62. 4th Canadian Armoured Division's other field regiment, the 15th, was in range of both Point 195 and Point 131 all day on the 9th except for two brief interludes when it was moving to avoid enemy fire. There was, however, no FOO from the regiment with Worthington Force, and there is no indication in any of the sources that it was asked to provide support to the lost unit. It is possible that artillery units from the Polish Armoured Division may have been in range of Worthington Force, but no contact was ever made - the physical difficulties would have been compounded by other issues, not the least of which was language.
 63. WD, 11th Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery, August 1944, Appendix B, Capt. M.A. Searle, "Account of an Armoured Battle on 8th [sic] August 1944." TNA PRO WO 171/1052.
 64. For a full discussion of this point see Angelo N. Caravaggio, "Commanding the Green Centre Line in Normandy: A Case Study of Division Command in the Second World War," Ph.D. thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2009, pp.214-216.
 65. The Battle of Hill 70 in August 1917 is considered one of General Arthur Currie's greatest victories. The object of the operation was to cause casualties to the Germans and draw troops away from the Passchendaele sector. The Canadian Corps quickly captured Hill 70, a key piece of terrain overlooking the French city of Lens, and over the next few days the Germans launched no fewer than 21 counterattacks suffering extremely heavy casualties in the process.

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