

The Liberation of Le Plessis Grilmoult and St Pierre-la-Vieille

Le Plessis Grilmoult is 9 kilometres south of Aunay-sur-Odon and lies on the south side of Mont Pinçon.

Mont Pinçon was a key feature of the sector with a radar station constructed on the 365-metre summit by the German Todt organisation with prisoners and some local labour.

Radio beams were transmitted from the radar station which German bombers followed. This beam was bent by the Royal Air Force specialist unit 'Beam Benders' centred at Radlett, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.

Further advance was barred by Mont Pinçon which dominated the whole sector from the River Vire to Odon. From its slopes German observation was uninterrupted and they were able to bring down deadly artillery fire and mortar fire on any movements.

6th August the 13th/18th Hussars in support of 129th Infantry Brigade of the 43rd Wessex Division – 4th Somerset Light Infantry Regiment, 4th Wiltshire Regiment, 5th Wiltshire Regiment made repeated and determined assaults on the western foothills on the western foothills but enemy mortars and machine-guns pinned down the infantry.

Towards evening two Troops of the 13th/18th Hussars crossed an anti-tank ditch and despite the thick scrub and steep escarpments reached the summit. By morning the 4th Somersets and the 4th Wilts reached the top and the Germans were driven out.

Meanwhile the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards attacked from the west under Operation Blackwater which was the code name for capturing Le Plessis - Grilmoult and Danjou

7th August, 'C' Squadron's attack was not successful but two Troops of 'B' Squadron with the 5th Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry of 214th Infantry Brigade made a feint attack on the flank and the main body of the infantry charged straight down the slopes Mont Pinçon. The enemy re-entered Le Plessis Grilmoult and it was finally captured on **8th August**. A number of prisoners were taken and the first 'King Tiger' of the war. 'B' Squadron suffered one casualty who was wounded.

As for the village the Germans mounted a gun in the porch of the 12th century Church which was destroyed by British artillery. The tower survived so did a small part of the beautiful chapter house and the remains of the porch.

9th August 'C' Squadron resumed its attack which was successful but with the loss of the Squadron Leader, *Major Michael Bell*, an officer whose conduct in battle was quite outstanding and seven wounded.

Meanwhile 'A' and 'B' Squadrons made an abortive attempt to push southwards with the loss of two killed and two wounded.

10th August the Regiment prepared to push southwards suffering three killed and two wounded by enemy shelling.

11th August 'A' and 'C' Squadrons of the Regiment attacked southwards with the 2nd Devonshires and the 1st Hampshires of the 231st Infantry Brigade of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division with the intention of capturing St Pierre-la-Vieille which they did a mid-day. The advance came to a standstill and evening was drawing near. In an impossible situation 3rd Troop was ordered to advance whatever the consequences and two tanks of the Troop went straight up in flames.

'B' Squadron was committed and although it was now dark reached their first objective taking a number of prisoners. During this action seven were killed and seven wounded.

12th August the push continued at 0600 hours by 'A' and 'B' Squadrons. The high ground to the right was held by enemy armour, 'B' Squadron having one tank hit with two tank commanders wounded.

The Regiment harboured south of Le Plessis Grimoult and then withdrew west of Aunay-sur-Odon.

Thus ended a most bitter and bloody struggle

'The Great Swan' with the enemy in full - on the road back to Germany!

ROLL OF HONOUR

In memory of members of our Regiment the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards
Who were killed during the Liberation of
Le Plessis Grimoult and St Pierre-la-Vieille

Atkinson J.E.	MacDonald A.
Boyes D.R.	Moffatt F.P.
Bell T.M.	Oliver G.C.M.
Colledge C.	Pointon A.
Collins J.	Phillips E.
Hugill M.R.	Walters G.H.

Woolley A.

For Peace and Liberty

Bibliography

'The First and Last' The Story of the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards by Major J.D.P. Stirling

A Short History of the 8th Armoured Division www.warlinks.com

Le Plessis Grimoult www.roynel.com

Cecil Newton

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