

TNA WO 218/199

FRANKS

INDEPENDENT OPERATION IN AREA
NORTH OF LOYTON

Presented by
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2nd S.A.S. Regiment.
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INDEPENDENT OPERATION IN AREA TO THE NORTH OF LOYTON.

The party under command of Lieut. Rousseau set off on the night 9/10th Sep. The main tasks allotted were the railway Nancy - Saarburg and the road Luneville - Blamont - Saarburg.

On completion of their tasks they were to join the main Loyton base or exfiltrate through the lines.

The party in order of dropping consisted of:-

Lieut. Rousseau.
Cpl. Pichon.
L/Cpl. Galmard.
L/Cpl. Maziere.
Pct. Centolle.
Pct. Le Chevalier.
Pct. Camerona.
Pct. Martin.
Pct. Wilkinson.
Pct. Reichenstein.

The plane found the D.Z. and the party dropped blind to the East of the "Foret de Rechicourt at Q 395065 from about 300 ft.

There was a delay between numbers 5 and 6, and as a result the stick grouped in two separate parties on the D.Z. and did not regain contact.

Lieut. Rousseau's party.

Report by L/Cpl. Maziere.

9/10th Sep.

On dropping I made contact with my Lieutenant, Cpl. Pichon, Galmard and Centolle. We searched but could not find the others. About 900 metres away we noticed light signals, which we heard later came from 600 Germans working on fortifications. Lieut. Rousseau ordered us to move to the wood at Q 372055 where we spent the night.

10th Sep.

At dawn, Lieut. Rousseau and I went out to recon the D.Z., we saw some people there who we could not distinguish as German soldiers or civilians. We found no trace of our comrades and returned.

At about 10.00 hrs our officer and Centolle went to a farm at Q 374064. The people there were surprised but were told that we were from an advanced patrol. The farmer said the Germans came at all hours every day.

10/11th Sep.

We waited until nightfall before setting off for our task, but found out that we had arrived a day too late as the Germans had blown the

railway that same day and had destroyed the railway station at Avricourt.

12/13th Sep.

We moved on for three days and found a farm labourer who brought us something to eat and also a guide. He took us to Repaix, Q 335015, where we were lodged by the Cure in the church tower for five days.

19th Sep.

We heard from the Cure of Domovre, V 312961, that advanced American patrols were at V 292993, and that the five missing men of our stick had been found and would be brought to the church at Repaix.

Cpl. Pichon was ordered to wait there for them. Lieut. Rousseau, Galmard, Centolle, and I, left at 21.00 hrs with the guide for La Croix Blanche, Q 316009, where the Cure of Domevre was waiting for us. We went by way of Verdenal and came to La Croix Blanche at 22.00 hrs.

Lieut. Rousseau was taken to the Americans by the Cure and we slept the night there.

20th Sep.

We took five prisoners in action with the Americans, and then wished to move through Igney, Q 319042, to Repaix to find our five missing men. We arrived at Igney on foot at the same time as the American armoured cars. The population was overjoyed, and asked us to dine. Just then, firing began outside and we all jumped up with our arms. We fired at a German S.S. officer in a car outside who was killed. The Americans withdrew without saying anything to us, and the Germans began to arrive in strength. Lieut. Rousseau decided to make for the wood of Igney. As we entered it at Q 325046 there was a shot, and Centolle fell. The Lieutenant and Galmard went to the right and I to the left. It was the last time that I saw them. I returned to the village of Igney and hid with some civilians. Three days later they told me that Lieut. Rousseau had been taken prisoner the same day and shot at Avricourt, Q 315061, and that Galmard had been shot at Foulcroy, Q 352048. The night after he was wounded, Centolle reached a farm where he has been looked after. His wound made him too weak to follow me. The two Frenchmen who told me about Lieut. Rousseau and Galmard are:

Jean Tribou,
Igney,
Meurthe-et-Moselle.

M. Verdenal,
Cultivateur à Igney,
Meurthe-et-Moselle.

The former is now, I believe, at General Le Clerc's H.Q. I had crossed the line with him and made contact with Allied Forces on the 10th October.

Pvt. Reichenstein's party.

Report by Pvt. Reichenstein

9/10th Sep.

I landed with Wilkinson and Martin about 300 metres from the village of St. Georges. We buried our parachutes and moved in the direction of Ibigny, Q 385051.

About a kilometre further on we met Camerena and Le Chevalier who did not know where the others were. We split up and searched the area and then made for the R.V., the small wood at Q 375055. Here we slept until morning, when we searched the wood without success.

10th Sep.

We waited there until nightfall as there were many Germans in Ibigny. I heard a loud explosion from the direction of Rechicourt, which we heard later was railway demolition undertaken by the Germans.

I found an enclosure in the wood round a farmhouse. I crept up to it and saw some German soldiers.

At last light we moved off to the wood Southwards, and after crossing the main road from Paris to Strassburg, we crawled past the German frontier control post. We were heard but they could not find us. We came to a wood in which work was in progress, and after a little while we lay up for the night.

11th Sep.

We were awakened at 06.00 hrs by Germans going past on their way to dig trenches at the edge of the wood. We moved off and came to a farmhouse called La Vine Q 395055. The farmer was a Pole named Margovski. He was very nervous as there were Germans in Cirey-sur-Vezouse. He put me in touch with a Gendarme from Cirey, who said that it was impossible to reach Pierre Perceé, the Colonel's base, as it had been raided, and that the party had left a few days before. He also told me the Gestapo was patrolling the area very thoroughly. We slept that night in the wood.

12th Sep.

The Gendarme came back again with news of defence work in progress at Baccarat, Val et Chatillon, Petitmont, St. Sauveur, Bremeuil, Parux and Montreux. He also said the Gestapo was in Badonvillers and had a 2nd S.A.S. O.R. prisoner, and a captain who was either British or American. He said he would bring us any further news of where Colonel Franks was.

15th Sep.

I was in the farm when some Germans came to requisition food. We left by the back door and marched to the north, and went round Frenonville towards a small wood at Q 359007. About 200 yards from the wood we were fired on but managed to reach it.

16th sep.

We moved off at 06.00 hrs to the west and called at a farm for food. We continued during the night instead of lying up as we had seen patrols out with dogs. On the way we walked 200 yards through water to confuse them, and lay up in the wood at Q 386005.

17th Sep.

In the morning we saw a cowherd whom we sent to fetch food. He came back with a message from the priest that one of our men was hiding in the church. We found it was Cpl. Pichon. Five minutes after we had met him, three German trucks loaded with ammunition came past. We attacked them, taking one prisoner and killing the rest. We blew up the truck with plastic. We then moved on to Autrepierre, Q 312016. On the way we improvised some mines with fog signals and plastic, which we laid on the road (we heard afterwards from civilians that these had knocked out some enemy transport).

We met the Americans at Autrepierre, and slept the night with a tank crew there.

18th Sep.

At 02.00 hrs the tank was attacked by two Germans with a bazooka (Panzeraketenbuechse) which knocked a hole in the turret of the Sherman tank. The Germans ran away, leaving behind a German steel helmet, a gas mask (the property of Gefreiter Bender), and an S.A.S. jumping jacket with D.B. Reynolds written on the collar.

I believe the Germans were captured by the Americans the same day, but I am not sure as we were sent off to Luneville.

*Am Webb whether Major Reynolds had his
jumping jacket on when he left on his Recce.*