

## Linne Action

Op 19 februari 1945 vertrok bataljon van Cadier en Keer naar Montfort en Linne. A. company, B. company *809th Tank Destroyer Battalion* en C. company *80th Tank Battalion*. Ze namen de posities over van de Britse *46th Commando Brigade*: de A. compagnie Aan den Berg in Montfort; de B. compagnie aan het Station in Maasbracht Beek en de C. compagnie in Linne. Een peloton van tanks en een peloton *tankdestroyers* werden toegevoegd aan de drie compagnies. Het lag in de bedoeling om op 26 februari de driehoek Linne – Roermond – Sint-Odiliënberg schoon te vegen van de vijand. Eerst werd de Sodafabriek ingenomen, waarbij ongeveer 20 Duitsers werden gedood. Later werden nog enkele Duitsers gedood bij het bezetten van enkele huizen. En dan oprukken naar de Linnerhei?

(Translated from Dutch)

On February 19, 1945, battalion van Cadier en Keer left for Montfort en Linne. A. company, B. company *809th Tank Destroyer Battalion* and C. company *80th Tank Battalion*. They took over the positions of the British *46th Commando Brigade*: the A. compagnie Aan den Berg in Montfort; the B. company at the Station in Maasbracht Beek and the C. company in Linne. A platoon of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers were added to the three companies.

The intention was to clear the triangle Linne – Roermond – Sint-Odiliënberg from the enemy on 26 February. First, the soda factory was taken, killing about 20 Germans. Later some Germans were killed while occupying some houses. And then advance to the Linnerhei?

### **8th Armored Division The Thundering Herd After Action Reports 58th A.I.B. – S-3 Report – February 1945**

26 Feb 1945

B Co moved out as planned and crossed LD at 0600 with company in column in order of 2nd platoon, 3rd platoon and 1st platoon in reserve. The AT platoon was split in three sections and one section allotted to each rifle platoon. Tanks and TD's were held in reserve in vicinity of Spielmanshof without resistance. However, after reaching a point 773856 they were pinned down by machine gun and mortar fire coming from the east side of Roer River. Artillery supporting fire

was called for and was placed on coordinate 765863 partially silencing the enemy action and permitting the pinned down platoon to maneuver to the right. Intense enemy machine gun fired from the Heide Woods continued to slow down the advance of the 2nd platoon. 3rd platoon followed advance of 2nd platoon while the 1st platoon was held in reserve at the line of departure. It was then decided that with tanks and infantry tactics attack would be made on Heide Woods. All three platoon withdrew to woods vicinity of coordinate 773845 and plans were organized for attack. After a three minute artillery preparation on the woods, five tanks with 2nd platoon of Co B mounted jumped off for the attack at 1530. 1st platoon followed the advance dismount(e)d in skirmish formation. 3rd platoon was held in reserve in woods. At approximately 1700 the woods were cleared of enemy forces except for the northwest tip. At dark with the 2nd platoon on left and 1st platoon on right, they deployed along north edge of the woods and dug in for the night. Tanks were withdrawn inside Heide woods while the 3rd platoon moved to a position 761856, with plans to attack the NW tip pf Heide woods morning of 27 Feb. It was estimated that approximately ninety Germans were killed in the attack.

A Co, in column of platoons, with 1st platoon leading, followed by attached tank platoon of tanks, 3rd rifle platoon, AT platoon acting as rifle platoon and second platoon crossed line of departure at 0610, advanced through woods at 773843 while tanks by-passed the woods on the left advancing parallel with the infantry. Up to this time there was only scattered small arms fire being encountered by our troops. The advance of our 1st platoon slowed considerably, so the 3rd platoon took over the lead while 1st platoon reverted to the rear of the column. Upon reaching a position at 780856 contact with a section from 88th Reconnaissance was made who reported suspected enemy machine gun positions. Tanks were put on the line and fired at these suspected targets. From this position with tanks, 1st and 3rd platoons as a base of fire, the second platoon advanced across the open ground and took objectives assigned 780858. Platoon reorganized north side of woods. The 3rd platoon mounted on tanks and 1st platoon dismounted pushed forward until minefield was encountered. Riflemen dismounted and guided tanks through minefield successfully. Company the reorganized at this newly won position and TD's advanced to a position at 778855.

Plans were formulated for further advance. 2nd platoon jumped off again at 0900 from a position 780858. After advancing to the right front for approximately 300 yards, what was thought to be platoon leader of 2nd platoon signaling that all was clear, remainder of company advanced forward and met an intense artillery, mortar and machine gun barrage coming from pillboxes on east side of Roer

River inflicting several casualties on our troops. Two tanks were put out of action by mines while maneuvering for positions to fire on pillboxes. Artillery fire was called for but was not effectively placed and enemy guns continued to pound our men. TD's were brought up to fire at pillboxes and were successfully in laying down some smoke while our rifle platoons withdrew to a position at 779856. It was then decided that what appeared to be 2nd platoon leader signaling for advance was probably a German observer signally for artillery barrage. Order was given to dig in and the company remained in this position for the night.

27 Feb 1945 While A and C companies held their present positions, B Co jumped off for an attack on NW tip of Heide Woods. 3rd platoon of B Co with four tanks and 2 TD's jumped off at 0830 and by 0930 had taken the woods with no opposition. 1st and 2nd platoons of B Co withdrew to Spielmanshof for reorganization leaving a small holding force at Heide Woods. Upon returning to their original positions they were met by a heavy artillery and mortar barrage and several casualties resulted. At 1030 word was received that the battalion was to be relieved by the 15th Cavalry Group. No further advance was made.

28 Feb 45. Bn departed vicinity of Montfort and route to Huckelhoven, Germany. Because of congested road conditions progress was slow and orders changed. Our new march objective was named to be vicinity of Wegberg, Germany. At close of period the battalion was on the road.

For the Battalion Commander  
s/James Dykeman  
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S -3

## **Comments on the combat action of the 58th AIB in the vicinity of Roermond, Holland, February 1945**

The significance of the Linne-Heidewoods action, which took place south of Roermond, Holland, during the period 19 February 1945 – 23 February 1945, so far as the 58th AIB was concerned, was that it was the battalion's initial contact and fighting with the enemy, i.e. elements of the German Army. How to understand by being under fire and to cope with it, can only be learned by being under fire. The first time can be traumatic for both the individual soldier as well as the fighting unit.

Coming from Cadeer en Keer, Holland, on the 19th of February 1945, the battalion relieved the 1st British Commando brigade and elements of the British 7th Armored Division in the vicinity of Montfort, Holland, on a 5500 yard front line with the enemy, which extended from the Roer River to the Maas River, facing Roermond, Holland. The British 7th Armored Division was located to the left flank across the Maas and elements of the German Army were to the right flank across the Roer River as well as to the front.

Our position vicinity of Montfort extended along a line from the Maas River, vicinity Brachter [Beek], generally eastward and just south of Linne and the Heide Woods, continuing eastward to the Roer River.

Our mission, at first, was a defensive one, with aggressive patrolling for the purpose of determining the enemy's strength and disposition. Company C was on the left, general just south of Linne; Company B was in the center generally just south of the Heidewoods; and Company A on the right extending tot the Roer River. C Company, 80th Tank Battalion, C Company, 809th Battalion, and a platoon of engineers were attached to the battalion. Each rifle company was ordered to actively patrol to its front with officer-led-patrols. Several lieutenants were killed in these actions and others wounded. As I recall, Lt. Boggs Hall and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. George Southern come to mind as being among the officers that were killed. (See after action report of Combat Command R for casualty count.) One aggressive officer-led-patrol of approximately platoon size, from Company C, lost contact with the rest of its Company for part of a day and a night. It had been surrounded and lost radio contact, which later it regained. Although it could have fought its way out, it could not evacuate its casualties and fight to extricate itself, so remained behind the enemy lines in a defensive position, until aid could arrive. Later, the platoon was relieved during the battalion attack, which was

ordered on the 26th, but not until after the platoon's casualties were first evacuated on the supporting tanks which were sent out in front for this purpose. This action occurred near the (Merum) factory [Sodafabriek] north of Linne. Enemy fire was quite fierce during the initial part of the evacuation. Lt. Ralph J. Elias, the platoon leader, was later awarded the silver star, partly for his leadership during this action. He subsequently was given command of B Company because the quality of his battle leadership. He became an outstanding combat company commander and was later given a Battlefield promotion to captain.

On the morning of the 26th of February, the 58th AIB was ordered to attack in force. The attack advanced through Heidewoods and Spielmanshof. Treadways mounted on tanks bridged an anti-tank ditch north of Linne. Two tank companies from the 80th Tank Battalion, C Company 809th T.D. Battalion and an engineer platoon were attached to the 5th for the attack. In addition, four artillery battalions were in support. Two miles were gained during the attack. Also, much enemy equipment, ammunition, and 80 POW's were captured, as well as numerous enemies killed.

Each company reinforced with two platoons of tanks and a platoon of T.D.'s advanced and overcame strong initial enemy fire.

A Company, on the right, was finally forced to partially withdraw to near its starting position, because of heavy artillery and anti-tank flanking fire from across the Roer River to the east, after clearing the enemy to its front.

B Company, in the center, after some delay at the start of the attack and failure to use its tank support properly in the beginning, proceeded with its tank-infantry teams in the attack and cleaned out the Heidewoods and beyond with dispatch, while under considerable enemy fire from the woods.

C Company, on the left, attacked along the axis of the railroad (see map) and after taking care of the "Lost Patrol" and its casualties, went on against some fierce German counter attacks to advance and clear about two miles toward Roermond. On the 27th of February the 58th AIB was ordered relieved by the 15th Cav. Gp. and began movement at once to the Roer River to the southeast, vicinity of Hilfarth [Hückelhoven]. The Roer was crossed and the battalion with attachments moved on to Wegberg, Germany. About this time, the battalion and its attachments was designated as a Task Force, one of six such fighting units in the division (the three armored infantry battalions and the three tank battalions were so named after respective commanders). Thereafter it remained almost in constant enemy contact throughout March and April 1945, with much hard fighting.

The Task Force finally concluded its fighting activities, attached to CCB, and was used in the final assault and seizure of Blankenburg [in het Harz-gebergte] on 20-

21 April 1945. This was followed by the clearing of the Harz Mountains of SS Troops and juncture with the 1st Infantry Division near Hüttenrode. The battalion then went into occupational duties.

Much was learned from the initial action at Roermond, some of which was brought out in the after action report on February 1945, by the Commander of Combat Command R.

However, I believe that not the least of these lessons learned by the 58th AIB at Roermond, was how to conduct one's self under fire during battle, which is an important intangible lesson. This lesson usually comes as a shock to each participant in every initial combat action, as one observes actual casualties for the first time, and yet carries on in the performance of his duties. This initial battle experience affects the functioning of the fighting units as well as individuals. For example, the fighting at Roermond undoubtedly contributed to the successful launching of the 58th AIB with its attachments as a truly effective fighting task force of the 8th Armored Division.

While the above may not add much to your knowledge of what transpired at Roermond during February 1945, nevertheless, it may give you more of a perspective as to what the fight there did for the 58th AIB as a whole and as a part of the 8th Armored Division.

I believe that the 9th Army in April 1945 was ready to defeat or beat anyone, including the Russians in going to Berlin and being the first there. This idea was brought out by General William Simpson, the 9th U.S. Army's Commander, in a talk to all his commanders, down to and including battalion commanders at Munchen Gladbeck [Mönchengladbach], in late April 1945, just shortly before the American and Allied Armies were halted at the Elbe.

I also believe that the 8th A.D. would have been one of the greatest contributing factors to the 9th Army's success had the order to take Berlin ever been given. Still further, for whatever it may be worth, the 58th AIB would have stood proudly in the forefront among the fighting elements of the 8th A.D. had the order occurred. However, I admit there may be some bias in this view point.

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28 October 1986

**8th Armored Division The Thundering Herd  
After Action Reports  
Combat Command R - February Operations**

(...)

25 Feb

(...) 1615 message from Tornado to put plan 'B' into effect, 58th AIB prepared for CCR attack, to begin 260600. Mission was to clear enemy from triangle ROERMOND, LINNE and ST. ODILIENBERG (Plan 'B').

26 Feb

Companies 'A' and 'D', and Mortar Platoon 80Tk Bn remained attached to 58th AIB. Assault Gun Platoon attached 405th Armd FA Bn. At 0545, artillery preparation by 405th Armd FA Bn started in accordance with plan, and all companies of 58th AIB crossed LD at 0600. 7th AIB was in reserve. One platoon tanks, one platoon TD's and one squad Engineers was with each company of 58th AIB. Advance was slowed by concertina wire and slight small arms fire. The AT Ditch was found free of mines and under cover of smoke, 'C' Company occupied a factory about 200 yards NE of the AT ditch, killing 20 enemy. After 'C' Company had advanced beyond AT ditch, elements of 'C' company 53rd Armd Engr Bn immediately set to work cleaning road blocks on LINNE-ROERMOND Highway. The block consisted of a number of large trees that were felled across the highway, a crater 20 feet across and 12 feet deep, and both Teller and Schu mines. [Schützenmine 42] The trees were removed with the aid of a tank dozer and the crater bridged by moving up sections of treadway with a T32 Recovery Vehicle with special attachment designed for the purpose. The effective work of the Engrs made it possible for traffic to move along the highway in a very short time after the Assault Troops had passed. 'B' Co 58th AIB reached SPIELMANSHOF where the advance was stopped by machine gun and mortar fire from HEIDE WOODS. Artillery fire partially silenced this and a tank-infantry attack cleared HEIDE WOODS except for the NW tip. 'A' Co 58th AIB advanced about 2,500 yards and were pinned down by heavy mortar, machine gun and artillery fire from E of ROER R. Forced to withdraw 1.000 yards to protection of woods.

27 Feb

Companies 'A' and 'C' of the 58th AIB remained in position while Co 'B' attacked

NW tip HEIDE WOODS at 0830, and cleared the weeds with no opposition. Commanding Officer – 15th Cav Rcn Sqd reported to Commanding Officer-CCR, that this unit would relieve CCR. All units alerted to move upon completion of relief. Companies 'A' and 'D' 80th Tk Bn relieved from attached 58th AIB. 'B' Co 80th Tk Bn attached 58th AIB.

### 28 Feb

Relief by 15th Cav Rcn Sqd was completed at 0130. CCR left BRACHTERBEEK HOLLAND at 0405, crossed IP at 0430. Arrived vicinity WEGBERG, GERMANY 2345.

### **Raymond Ross, 'Heide Woods battle (latest description 11-11-00)'**

Feb 23, 1945 Orders from XVI Corps – 8th Armored Division

1. Initiate reconnaissance in force to determine the extent to which the German had reinforced their lines.
2. Clear the enemy from the Roermond-Linne-St.Odilienberg triangle.

After aggressive patrolling by Co B, 58th AIB on Feb. 24 and 25, the orders for the 58th AIB and Co. B. specially were issued for Feb. 26.

Feb 26 Orders: attack on 3,000 yard front. Co C, B and A abreast aided by 80th Tk. Btl. (See map).

53rd Engineers cleared mines for Co. B and concertina wire for Co. C.

Co. A. was ordered to clear the town of Spielmanshof on the right flank just south of Heide Woods, then proceed north.

Co. C on extreme left flank was headed toward Roermond.

Part of the 7th AIB was in reserve, and Troop A, 88th Recon[naissance] was attached to 58th AIB.

The Division 405th Field Artillery fired support (rolling barrage) for Co. B from Linne. They moved their fire to Spielmanshof to assist Co. A, leaving Co. B vulnerable just as they approach enemy positions in Heide Woods.

What follows is from memory, interviews and diaries.

Co. B tracked about four miles from Linne and the Villa to a road directly south of Heide Woods and about 1500-2000 yards from the trees. A farm stood directly in front of us, approximately 800-900 yards away. We tracked ahead with the 2nd platoon in the lead followed by the 3rd (behind tot the left flank) and the 1st (behind and to the right flank).

We encountered no fire from the farm, but we could hear our artillery crashing



north of the farmhouse. The Germans had retreated to the tree line another 800 yards north (the actual woods).

We parked our tracks and waited for tanks on a tree lined road only 100 yards north of the farm (toward Heide Woods). A platoon of five tanks from the 80th Tank joined the lead 2nd platoon. One man was assigned to each tank to man the 50 caliber during marching fire. The rest and the three rifle squads followed the tanks on foot. The 1st and 3rd platoons were on the flanks and to the rear.

The second platoon led by Lt. Mc. Dermott and T/sgt. Legrid moved out first. Despite the rolling artillery barrage we received mortar and machine gun fire from the start of our advance.

With Co. A stalled by intense fire from Spielmanshof, the 405th Artillery halted the rolling barrage covering B Company and directed their fire in support of A Company. Without the rolling barrage the Germans were able to increase their defensive firepower on B and C companies.

The medics, anticipating casualties, had set up an aid station in the abandoned farmhouse.

Despite our marching fire, we took casualties early on. The tanks were getting out of formation. A runner was killed trying to get messages to the B Company commander who was suffering battle fatigue back at the farm aid station.

The situation turned grim when two tanks went down and two of the gunners on the three remaining tanks were lost. S/Sgt. Rucks was wounded and S/Sgt. Vasey was killed. Only Sgt. Ross was still firing from the middle tank. Lt. McDermott, leading the attack, was cut down by machine gun fire. His last order to Ross was to keep going and to "pour it on." Lt. Southern was killed at about the same time. The other platoons had also lost their officers. The captain was relieved of command. Co. B was now run entirely by noncoms; all five officers were gone. T/Sgt. Legrid moved up and took command of the 2nd Platoon.

The 2nd Platoon pressed on to within 50 yards of the woods when they met Panzerfausts. Sgt. Ross's blue goose rounds struck a Panzerfaust as it was being launched. Ross directed the tank to fire his big 75 mm at a bunker now visible. The high explosive round careened off the ground, jumped the bunker, and exploded in the trees. Before the tank could get off another round - now 10 yards from the bunker - a platoon of Germans running out with their hands in the air. They were followed by the rest of their company emerging from the woods. The battlefield went silent and Col. Artman arrived in a jeep and ordered the tanks to stand in place. He informed us that the 2nd Platoon was being relieved. The mortar squad assisted the medics in picking up American and German casualties.

The next morning Co. B. was again on line, some mounted up in tracks or on tanks. That order was canceled and the 2nd platoon and part of the 3rd were

ordered into the woods on foot. As the men reached a clearing some 200 yards into the woods, mortar fire erupted. There was also a farmhouse and a broken silo. Two squads ducked into an elaborate zigzag trench system and cleared it throwing concussion grenades into the large dugout rooms. The mortar fire stopped as the Germans retreated out of the area.

The medics arrived with a jeep (six litters) to pick up casualties.

The German had planted many shu mines and antitank mines in the clearing. The medical jeep was blown up and there were still more casualties. Engineers and more medics gingerly worked their way through the mines retrieving our casualties. B Company was then ordered to get out of there and stand down.

This particular fight was over and our mission was somehow accomplished.

T/Sgt. Legrid was later awarded a battlefield commission; Sgt. Ross was promoted to Staff Sergeant.

The 58th AIB lost 58 men, most from Co. B. The 80th Tank lost four.

The aid station was moved a few days later. The farm and surround was now firmly in Allied hands (Feb. 27)

The division was then ordered to clear the area from the Roer to the Rhine.

### **Fragmenten uit Eric Munnicks, *Van kazemat tot kelderleven. Roermond 1940 - 1945*, pag. 527-532**

#### **'Bridgehead Lerop'**

Het groene licht voor de aanval op het bruggenhoofd Lerop werd op 25 februari om 16.15 uur ontvangen door Colonel [Robert J.] Wallace. Om de aanval te ondersteunen werd het 7e Armoured Infantry Battalion aan C.C.R. [Combat Command Reserve] toegevoegd. Op 26 februari ging de aanval van de C.C.R. rond 06.00 uur van start. De Duitse tegenstand was vooral op de Linnerheide en bij de Sodafabriek zwaar.

Het 58e Armoured Infantry Battalion [AIB], onder commando van [kolonel] George Artman, begon vroeg in de ochtend gesteund door tanks van het 80e Armoured Battalion aan een opmars in de richting van de Linnerheide en de Sodafabriek. Er waren drie aanvalsgroepen samengesteld, ieder bestaand uit een compagnie infanterie gesteund door enkele tanks van het 80e Armoured Battalion. Allereerst moest de B-Company de Linnerheide bezetten. Verder oostelijk kreeg A-Company de opdracht het gebied rond Hoosden en de hoeve de Boschberg [Posberg], noordwestelijk van St. Odiliënberg te bezetten. De belangrijkste taak had C-Company. Zij moest (gesteund door Engineers voor het opruimen van versperringen en mijnen) optrekken in de richting van de Sodafabriek en dan verder naar Merum.

Wegversperringen en mijnenvelden vertraagden de opmars aanzienlijk. Ook de enorme prikkeldraadversperringen en de tankgracht leverden grote problemen

op. De mijnenvelden langs de Rijksweg van Linne in de richting Roermond werden door Amerikaanse Engineers opgeruimd.

Tegen 08.00 uur bereikte men de Sodafabriek. Diverse Duitsers vonden er de dood. Toen men bij de tankgracht arriveerde werd de situatie langzaam onhoudbaar voor de Amerikanen. Vanuit de omliggende huizen werden ze beschoten met mitrailleurs.

### **Mortelshof**

26 februari. Een peloton van de B-Company van het 58e AIB kwam bij Mortelshof in de problemen. De groep werd zwaar beschoten door Duitse mitrailleurs en mortieren vanaf de Linnerheide en de omgeving van Melick. Het radio-contact was verbroken. Om uit de impasse te komen renden twee Amerikanen over de velden terug naar hun eigen linie in de omgeving van de huidige vuilstortplaats. Hier konden ze de Amerikaanse artillerie instrueren. Wat volgde was een zware artilleriebeschieting in het bosgebied van de Linnerheide.

Het Amerikaanse peloton trok zich vanaf Mortelshof in de loop van de ochtend terug. Aangezien de meeste tegenstand vanaf de Linnerheide kwam besloten de Amerikanen om de Linnerheide stormenderhand in te nemen. Om 15.30 uur beklommen 45 Amerikaanse infanteristen 5 tanks en reden naar de Linnerheide. Met alle wapens schietend bereikten ze rond 17.00 uur de noordelijke rand van de Linnerheide.

Een kilometer ten zuidoosten van het bosgebied deed de A-Company wanhopig pogingen om op te rukken in de richting van hoeve [Overen]. Zwaar Duits mortier- en artillerievuur vanuit de omgeving van Melick belette een snelle opmars. De samenwerking tussen infanterie, tanks en artillerie was niet optimaal hetgeen zelfs resulteerde in een tijdelijke terugtocht. Later in de middag kon men toch meter voor meter oprukken tot de omgeving van [Overen].

### **Sodafabriek**

Aan de linkerzijde kwamen de Amerikanen van de C-Company van het 58e AIB in de problemen tussen de spoorlijn en de Sodafabriek. De Amerikanen van luitenant Ralph Elias waren vroeg in de ochtend van de Veestraat in Linne vertrokken. Nadat de tankgracht was overwonnen, sloop men het fabrieksterrein op. Captain Elias vond in een van de gebouwen de lijken van 6 jonge Duitse soldaten die waren geëxecuteerd door eigen soldaten. Waarschijnlijk hadden ze geprobeerd te deserteren. Heftig Duits vuur vanaf de Linnerheide en vanuit Merum isoleerde rond 09.00 uur 2 pelotons van de C-Company. Snel werd het 7e AIB te hulp geroepen. De A-Company van dit bataljon, met als commandant Major Munci werd naar de Sodafabriek gedirigeerd. De eerste 4 Duitse krijgsgevangenen werden binnengebracht. Ze behoorden tot het opleidingsbataljon

van de 8e Fallschirmjäger Division. Een uur later werden er ook andere gevangenen binnengebracht die behoorden tot de 406e Division zur besonderen Verwendung en de 176e Infanterie Division. Dit gaf aan dat de Duitse verdediging bestond uit een bonte mengeling aan troepen. Rond 13.00 uur werd ook de C-Company van het 7e AIB vanuit Linne naar voren gedirigeerd. Deze eenheid moest over de Rijksweg optrekken in de richting van Roermond en vervolgens ter hoogte van Hattem afbuigen naar Herten. Vanuit de Sodafabriek zou de A-Company dan Merum binnentrekken. De plannen waren gereed en het wachten was op groen licht om te mogen starten. In de avond kwam echter het bevel van generaal Devine om geen offensieve acties meer te ondernemen. Er werden nieuwe verplaatsingen van Amerikaanse eenheden voorbereid. Kolonel Wallace was allesbehalve tevreden met het optreden van zijn troepen. Letterlijk schreef hij in 1945: 'De infanteriecommandanten faalden om optimaal voordeel te halen uit de samenwerking met tanks en artillerie. Er werden zo onnodig verliezen geleden. De samenwerking zal flink moeten verbeteren.'

Naar Amerikaanse schatting sneuvelden op 26 februari tussen de 80 en 90 Duitsers. Velen werden begraven in veldgraven. Diversen werden vermist (In 1985 werden op de Linnerheide nog de stoffelijke resten van 3 Duitsers gevonden.) Aan Amerikaanse zijde vielen er 22 doden en raakten er 40 Amerikaanse soldaten gewond.

[...]

### **Over de Roer**

27 februari. De reden voor het afbreken van alle acties in de avond van de 26e februari was terug te voeren [op] het bevel van luitenant-generaal Simpson om de 8e Armoured Division te verplaatsen naar de omgeving van Hückelhoven waar de divisie de Roer moest oversteken. De aflossing, door eenheden van de Amerikaanse 15e Cavalry Group, zou in de loop van de 27e februari plaatsvinden. Toch werden er in de ochtend van de 27e februari nog verkenningen uitgevoerd vanaf de noordelijk bosrand van de Linnerheide in de richting van Lerop. Gesteund door 3 tanks wisten de Amerikanen het laatste kleine bosgebied in het noordwestelijk deel van de Linnerheide zonder tegenstand te ondervinden te bezetten.

Tot hun grote verrassing troffen de Amerikanen in de stellingen geen Duitsers meer aan. Tijd om verkenningen uit te voeren in de richting van Lerop en Roermond was er niet meer. In de loop van de ochtend arriveerde de aflossing. De Duitse generaal Kuhlwein zag blijkbaar in dat handhaven van het bruggenhoofd zinloos was. Hij gaf bevel alle troepen op de noordelijke oever van de Roer terug te trekken. Bij dit besluit speelde ook een rol dat de Amerikaanse opmars ongeveer 15 kilometer oostelijk steeds bedreigender werd.

De Amerikaanse opmars ten oosten van Roermond was intussen goed op gang

gekomen. Op 26 februari werd Erkelenz bereikt en na zware gevechten ingenomen. Een dag later werd Hückelhoven bereikt. Het Duitse opperbevel moest nu snel ingrijpen om te voorkomen dat de troepen aan het Maasfront en Roerfront tussen Vlodrop en Venlo omsingeld zouden worden.'

Excerpts from Eric Munnicks, From casemate to cellar life. Roermond 1940 – 1945, p. 527-532

### Bridgehead Lerop

The green light for the attack on the Lerop bridgehead was received by Colonel [Robert J.] Wallace at 4:15 p.m. on February 25. To support the attack, the 7th Armored Infantry Battalion was assigned to C.C.R. [Combat Command Reserve] added. On February 26, the attack of the C.C.R. starting around 06:00. The German resistance was especially heavy on the Linnerheide and at the soda factory.

The 58th Armored Infantry Battalion [AIB], commanded by [Colonel] George Artman, started an advance early in the morning, supported by tanks of the 80th Armored Battalion, in the direction of the Linnerheide and the Soda factory. Three assault groups had been formed, each consisting of an infantry company supported by some tanks of the 80th Armored Battalion. First of all, the B-Company had to occupy the Linnerheide. Further east, A-Company was ordered to occupy the area around Hoosden and the Boschberg [Posberg] farm, northwest of St. Odiliënberg. C-Company had the most important task. She had to advance (supported by Engineers for clearing barriers and mines) in the direction of the Soda factory and then on to Merum.

Roadblocks and minefields slowed the advance considerably. The huge barbed wire barriers and the anti-tank ditch also caused major problems. The minefields along the Rijksweg van Linne in the direction of Roermond were cleared by American Engineers.

At 08:00 they reached the soda factory. Several Germans died there. When they arrived at the tank ditch, the situation slowly became untenable for the Americans. They were shot at with machine guns from the surrounding houses.

### Mortelshof

February 26. A platoon of the B-Company of the 58th AIB ran into problems near Mortelshof. The group was heavily shelled by German machine guns and mortars from the Linnerheide and the vicinity of Melick. Radio contact was lost. To get out of the deadlock, two Americans ran across the fields back to their own lines in the vicinity of what is now the dump. Here they could instruct the American artillery. What followed was a heavy artillery bombardment in the forest area of the Linnerheide.

The American platoon withdrew from Mortelshof during the morning. Since most of the resistance came from the Linnerheide, the Americans decided to take the Linnerheide by storm. At 3:30 pm 45 American infantrymen mounted 5 tanks and drove to the Linnerheide. Firing with all weapons, they reached the northern edge of the Linnerheide around 5 p.m.

One kilometer south-east of the wooded area, A-Company made a desperate effort to advance in the direction of [Overen] homestead. Heavy German mortar and artillery fire from the vicinity of Melick prevented a rapid advance. The cooperation between infantry, tanks and artillery was not optimal, which even resulted in a temporary retreat. Later in the afternoon they were able to advance meter by meter to the area of [Overen].

### Soda Factory

On the left, the Americans of the C-Company of the 58th AIB got into trouble between the railway line and the soda factory. The Americans of Lieutenant Ralph Elias had left early in the morning from the Veestraat in Linne. After the anti-tank ditch had been conquered, they crept into the factory grounds. Captain Elias found in one of the buildings the bodies of 6 young German soldiers who had been executed by his own soldiers. They probably tried to desert. Intense German fire from the Linnerheide and from Merum isolated 2 platoons of C-Company around 09:00. The 7th AIB was quickly called to the rescue. The A-Company of this battalion, commanded by Major Munci, was directed to the soda factory. The first 4 German prisoners of war were brought in. They belonged to the training battalion of the 8th Fallschirmjäger Division. An hour later, other prisoners belonging to the 406th Division zur besonderen Verwendung and the 176th Infantry Division were also brought in. This indicated that the German defense consisted of a colorful mix of troops. Around 13:00 C-Company of the 7th AIB was also directed forward from Linne. This unit had to advance along the Rijksweg in the direction of Roermond and then turn off towards Herten at Hattem. The A-Company would then enter Merum from the soda factory. The plans were ready and waiting for the green light to start. In the evening,

however, General Devine ordered no more offensive action. New movements of American units were being prepared. Colonel Wallace was anything but satisfied with the performance of his troops. He literally wrote in 1945: "The infantry commanders failed to take full advantage of the cooperation with tanks and artillery. Unnecessary losses were suffered. The cooperation will have to improve considerably."

According to American estimates, between 80 and 90 Germans were killed on February 26. Many were buried in field graves. Various were missing (In 1985 the remains of 3 Germans were found on the Linnerheide.) On the American side, 22 were killed and 40 American soldiers were injured.

[...]

About the Roer

February 27. The reason for breaking off all action on the evening of February 26th was due to Lieutenant General Simpson's order to move the 8th Armored Division to the vicinity of Hückelhoven where the division was to cross the Roer. The relief, by units of the US 15th Cavalry Group, was to take place during the course of February 27.

Nevertheless, in the morning of February 27, reconnaissances were still carried out from the northern forest edge of the Linnerheide in the direction of Lerop. Supported by 3 tanks, the Americans managed to occupy the last small forest area in the northwestern part of the Linnerheide without encountering any resistance.

To their great surprise, the Americans no longer encountered any Germans in the positions. There was no more time to carry out reconnaissance in the direction of Lerop and Roermond. In the course of the morning the relief arrived.

The German general Kuhlwein apparently realized that maintaining the bridgehead was pointless. He ordered the withdrawal of all troops on the north bank of the Rur. Another factor that played a role in this decision was that the American advance about 15 kilometers to the east became increasingly threatening.

The American advance east of Roermond had meanwhile made good progress. Erkelenz was reached on February 26 and taken after heavy fighting. Hückelhoven was reached a day later. The German high command now had to

intervene quickly to prevent the troops on the Maasfront and Roerfront between Vlodrop and Venlo from being surrounded.”

### **Lijst van gesneuvelde Amerikaanse militairen van 58th AIB bij Herten-Linne op 26/27 febr. 1945**

1. Andronis Christ J., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), C-company, Illinois – Margr.
2. Balestrucci Frank M., SSGT (sergeant), C-company, Pennsylvania – Margr.
3. Burns J.W., SSGT (sergeant), C-company, Texas – Margr.
4. Crooks, Robert L., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), B-company, Iowa – Margr.
5. Demcovitz, Bernhard, E., PFC. – –
6. Famularo Nicholas A., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), C-company, Pennsylvania – Margr.
7. Fields Carl W., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), C-company, Arkansas – Margr.
8. French Wyman J., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), C-company, Oregon – Margr.
9. Fretz Russell G. jr., CPL (korporaal), C-company, Pennsylvania – Margr.
10. Hall Boggs C., 2LT (2e luitenant), C-company, West Virginia – Margr.
11. Heney Philip J. jr., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), C-company, New York M
12. Jones M.W., korporaal –
13. Kelso Thomas R., soldaat 1e klasse –
14. Love, Earl F., PFC (soldaat) A-company, Virginia – Margr.
15. McDermott .... (luitenant)
16. Moran Francis V., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), A-company, Connecticut – Margr.
17. Opolko Nicholas, (PVT) soldaat, B-company, Massachusetts – Margr.
18. Pickard Charles B., PFC (soldaat 1e klasse), C-company, Iowa – Margr.
19. Southern, George F., 2LT (2e luitenant), B-company, New Mexico – Margr.
20. Vasey, Henry R., sergeant –
21. Weller, Charles, sergeant –
22. –
23. –

[Ontleend aan †]Jan van der Steen, Herten; [www.fallennotforgotten.nl](http://www.fallennotforgotten.nl): *8th Armored division 152 casualties in the Netherlands* die (her)begraven zijn op de Amerikaanse militaire begraafplaats in Margraten en enkele gesneuvelden staan alleen vermeld *In tornado's Wake*, 210-212].