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CURRENT REPORTS FROM OVERSEAS

No. 80

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*Prepared under the direction of
The Chief of the Imperial General Staff*

THE WAR OFFICE,
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FOREWORD

1. "Current Reports from Overseas" are issued down to lieutenant-colonels' commands, and to the commandants of certain schools and establishments, for their early information and to help them to form their own ideas.

2. In the operation described in Section 1 of this issue, only sound training and the confidence of every soldier in his ability to destroy the enemy and complete his task could have overcome the apparently insuperable difficulties of a seaborne assault against a defended town by so small a force. In Section 2 a commanding officer tells of the experiences of one of the follow-up battalions in this assault.

3. The contents of this pamphlet are not official lessons, nor do they necessarily represent the views either of the commander-in-chief of the theatre of war concerned, or of the War Office. They should not, therefore, be regarded as accepted doctrine.

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CURRENT REPORTS FROM OVERSEAS

No. 80

SECTION 1.—THE ASSAULT ON FLUSHING (See Maps 1 and 2)

(This account is based on a narrative received from
Combined Operations Headquarters)

Opening situation (see Map 1)

1. Towards the end of October 1944, the operations to clear the approaches to the port of Antwerp were still in progress. On the south side of the Scheldt Estuary the Canadians had captured Breskens on 22 October, and were driving the Germans westwards towards the sea. To the north Walcheren Island was still in enemy hands, though to the east the island of South Beveland was in the process of being wrested from their grasp.

2. A plan had been devised to attack Walcheren from the west, south, and east, as soon as possible after the fall of Breskens. An infantry division was to force its way along the causeway from South Beveland, while two forces were to carry out seaborne landings at Flushing and Westkapelle. The landing at Westkapelle was given to a commando brigade group, but this narrative is concerned with the assault on Flushing by one commando, followed up by an infantry brigade.

Topography

3. The whole plan of attack was governed by the extent of the floods that resulted from the breaching of the sea walls by the R.A.F. By the end of October the greater part of the island was under water, including the streets of Middelburg and the northern part of Flushing which, for the assault, was divided into a number of sectors, each of which was given a code name.

4. The principal buildings in Flushing were grouped in the sector known as *Seaford*, which from the landward side could only be approached through *Bexhill* and *Dover*. The only beach suitable for an assault landing was the pre-war bathing beach in front of the Hotel Britannia which, as all reports showed, was heavily defended. From the hotel a raised promenade, with the sea on one side and floods to a depth of 4 feet on the other, led into the town, and from the south-east end of the beach a high sea wall ran round

to the entrance of Wester of Koopmanshaven. To the east of this small harbour the sea wall continued to the start of the promontory near the Oranje Molen—a brick-built windmill and a very conspicuous feature on the waterfront ; so far in its length the sea wall presented a complete obstacle against any assault landing.

5. From the Oranje Molen a sloping dyke wall ran round the promontory into the small bay called Ooster of Dokhaven—a mud flat at low water. Air photographs showed that the bank at the far end of this bay inclined at an easy angle, but that both the bay and the promontory were protected by anti-landing stakes. Two groynes ran out into the sea on either side of Ooster of Dokhaven, and from the base of the eastern groyne the dyke wall continued to the extreme tip of the mole at the entrance to the main harbour. At this tip there was another possible landing beach, but again the only route into the town was very exposed and narrow, this time along the mole itself.

6. The beaches to the east of the main harbour entrance were not suitable for landing operations, since the ground was completely flooded ; besides, the assaulting troops would be on the wrong side of the Walcheren Canal.

Enemy dispositions

7. Information about the German garrison of Walcheren was limited. The main battery position and prepared defences were pin-pointed, but the identifications and dispositions of the various enemy units were difficult to ascertain. 70 Division was known to be back again on the island after a short trip to the Ghent area, because units of this formation had been involved in the hard fighting in South Beveland and suffered many casualties. In all probability elements of 64 Division had also escaped to Walcheren from the Breskens "pocket," and at least a part of a large organization called 89 Fortress Depot was known to be on the island. The final estimate of the strength of the garrison was about 9,000 all ranks, of which rather less than one third was thought to be in Flushing.

8. The defences of the town were formidable. The whole waterfront was wired and, as already described, the dyke walls and beaches were screened with anti-landing stakes, some with shells fixed to them. A system of mutually supporting pillboxes and strongpoints—to which was added a whole mass of fortified houses, barracks, and a bomb-proof tower—covered all approaches. Flak emplacements had also been sited so that they could be used in a dual air and ground role, while artillery support was available from batteries located to the north-east and north-west of the town.

Planning

9. The commando that carried out the assault included two French commando troops and had the following additional sub-units either under command or in support* :—

One section of a Dutch troop of the Inter-Allied commando.

A commando group reconnaissance party.

A FOO and Royal Artillery representative party.

One squadron of LVT (for stores).

One platoon of Royal Engineers from GHQ troops.

One landing craft obstruction clearance unit.

The light section of a Canadian field dressing station.

One section of a pioneer company.

A detachment of naval beach commandos.

A detachment of naval beach signals.

10. The force, whose total strength was about 550 all ranks, embarked in 20 LCA. The objectives were fairly obvious. Once seized, the two bottlenecks, *Bexhill* between the ship-building yards and the lake called Spui of Binnenboezem, and *Dover* between the lake and the sea, would give control over *Seaford* and the main town area to the west. The commando's intention, therefore, was to capture that part of Flushing south of the harbour up to and including *Bexhill* and *Dover*.

11. The assault was to be supported by five field regiments, three medium regiments, and certain sections of heavy and super-heavy batteries, while four additional medium regiments were available for counter-battery fire. In the early stages, the headquarters of the follow-up brigade was to control the operation from Breskens and, until brigade tactical headquarters arrived, the command of all forces in Flushing was vested in the commanding officer of the commando.

12. The most difficult part of the plan was to find a suitable landing point. Information had been received that the bank at the landward end of Ooster of Dokhaven (*Uncle Beach*) was a dump for rubble and rubbish and, for this reason, likely to provide firm going for vehicles. Unfortunately the anti-landing stakes prevented the first flights from going straight for *Uncle Beach*, but it was hoped that the troops would be able to get ashore by scrambling over the dyke walls somewhere in that area. The exact spot, however, could not be chosen in advance. There were several enemy strongpoints in the vicinity but it was believed that these could be rushed and overcome, provided the touch down of the landing craft followed closely on the lifting of the artillery concentrations.

* A commando consists of six troops, each of which is organized into a headquarters and two sections. Each section is approximately as strong as an infantry platoon. One troop is a heavy weapons troop and contains a section of medium machine guns and a section of 3 inch mortars.

13. The following plan was eventually adopted. The commando group would land in the area of *Uncle Beach* in three flights at 0545 hours on 1 November. The first flight, consisting of reconnaissance elements and a section of 1 Troop, was to find a place where they could climb the dyke wall and overcome any local opposition. They were to be followed by a second flight consisting of the rest of 1 Troop, 2 Troop, a small detachment from commando headquarters, the landing craft obstruction clearing unit, and naval beach personnel. This flight was to sail in as soon as the first flight gave the signal and form the beachhead proper. 2 Troop was to secure the right flank and seal off any Germans there might be in *Falmouth*, while on the left flank 1 Troop was to clear the buildings up to and including the Arsenal Barracks.

14. The third flight with the rest of the commando group was at 15 minutes' call. Its general task was to pass through the beachhead, secure the two bottlenecks *Bexhill* and *Dover*, clear the various barracks along the Boulevard de Ruyter (marked A on Map 2), and seize the municipal offices in Bellamy Park (marked B on Map 2). In more detail, the objectives given to 3 Troop were the small harbour entrance at *Brighton*, Bellamy Park (marked B on Map 2) and the barracks at *Hove*. 5 Troop was to follow closely on the heels of 3 Troop, storm the barracks at *Worthing* and press on to *Dover*, while 6 Troop, with the medium machine gun section from 4 (Heavy Weapons) Troop under command, was to seize and hold *Bexhill*.

15. Later on, *Seaford* was to be cleared by 1 Troop after it had taken the Arsenal Barracks, and it was intended that 3 Troop should mop up *Eastbourne* after completing its tasks at *Brighton*, Bellamy Park (marked B on Map 2), and *Hove*. 1 and 2 Troops were then to assault *Falmouth*. The leading battalion of the infantry brigade was at 40 minutes' notice, with one company ready to reinforce earlier if required. The commando's bulk stores were to be swum over in LVT when the anti-landing obstacles had been removed and the situation permitted.

16. The assault was to be supported by both aircraft and artillery. Heavy bombers were to soften up the enemy defences before D day, their last attack finishing at H minus 15 minutes on 1 November. The artillery programme was arranged to continue the bombardment from H minus 15 to H plus 90, with one of the three medium regiments standing by to answer calls from the FOO. Two increments, fired by the heavy and super-heavy guns, could be added to this basic fire plan if the weather prevented the bombing on D day, in which event the bombardment was to start at H minus 60. Once the basic fire plan was completed, the guns were available to engage on call any of a large number of pre-arranged targets.

Preliminary moves

17. The commando moved to Breskens on 31 October. The harbour there had been badly damaged and part of it was still mined and booby-trapped. None the less, one wooden jetty was in use and alongside it the LCA were moored. Across the water the cranes of Flushing were clearly visible. During the afternoon a small naval craft sailed down the Scheldt, laying a smoke screen to cover the LVT swimming down from Terneuzen. Unfortunately this smoke screen stopped immediately opposite Breskens, and the Germans took the hint and proceeded to shell the harbour. Although this shelling was accurate and heavy, and caused a few casualties, none of the LCA received any damage, though the dory which was to be one of the leading craft was badly holed and had to be replaced by a LCP. It was fortunate, too, that the commando had just finished a practice embarkation.

18. After this incident, all hope of attaining surprise seemed to vanish, but in any case it must have been obvious to the Germans that the presence of LCA in Breskens harbour portended an attack on Walcheren, since that island had to be cleared before the Allies could use the port of Antwerp.

19. The commando moved down to the harbour at 0315 hours, and one hour later its embarkation had been completed. At 0440 hours the leading craft slipped their moorings and nosed their way out of the harbour. Since the weather was unsuitable for the heavy bombers, the additional artillery bombardment started at H minus 60 (0445 hours), and fires were soon blazing in the town. Suddenly the silhouette of the windmill—the Oranje Molen—was thrown into relief against the glare of the burning buildings and served as an unmistakable guide to the selected landing area. Meanwhile the landing craft cruised between Breskens and Flushing, keeping a keen watch for mines and one-man torpedoes.

The assault

20. At 0545 hours the first flight closed the beach as the artillery concentrations lifted. The leading craft stood into the bay and looked for a suitable landing place. As a result of a misunderstanding one craft moved over too far to starboard and struck some anti-landing stakes, was holed, and sank. However, the craft containing the section of 1 Troop edged into the tip of the promontory on the west side of the bay and landed without mishap. The section quickly scrambled up the dyke wall, cut a gap in the wire obstacle at the top, and was winking the Germans out of their dug-outs before a shot had been fired. White tapes were laid forward inland from the gap and a signal light informed the second flight that the landing had been successfully accomplished and that the way was clear for it to come ashore.

21. An LCP went out to tell the incoming LCA that there was room for only two craft to approach the landing place together. At this moment the Germans opened up with red tracer from 20 millimetre cannon located at *Brighton*, but the fire was high and all craft of the second flight beached without casualties.

22. By this time the section of 1 Troop already ashore had cleared the promontory of the enemy and, in so doing, had captured a strong pillbox containing a 75 millimetre gun. This section now took up a defensive position along Oranje Straat (marked C on Map 2), while the other section of 1 Troop, landing in the second flight, made straight for the Arsenal Barracks. 2 Troop passed along the promontory and turned right handed to run up against a dual-purpose 50 millimetre gun in an emplacement on the east corner of *Uncle Beach*. One section assaulted this defence work and captured it and 25 prisoners, among whom was the company commander of the strongpoint area. This section then stormed along the waterfront from pillbox to pillbox, ably supported by fire from the 50 millimetre gun that it had just captured. The second section of 2 Troop cleared the ground inland from the waterfront, and by 0900 hours the whole troop was firmly established along the line of Piet Hein Straat (marked D on Map 2).

23. By now the enemy were thoroughly aroused, and when the third flight came in at about 0630 hours, it encountered considerable opposition from machine guns and 20 millimetre cannon located at *Brighton* and from small arms from *Falmouth*. None the less, the flight successfully beached alongside the Oranje Molen promontory and very few casualties were suffered. One boat, which contained much of the heavier equipment taken for the initial stages of the operation, including the two 3 inch mortars and the No. 22 set and handcart belonging to the Royal Artillery representative party, hit a stake about 20 yards out and sank in 3 feet of water. All the equipment was rescued and cleaned up on the promontory under moderately heavy fire; the mortars were ready for action half an hour later. The time was now about 0715 hours and it was just getting light.

Clearing the town

24. Shortly after the third flight was ashore, the section of 1 Troop holding positions along Oranje Straat (marked C on Map 2) rejoined its parent body and the whole troop proceeded to mop up posts along the sea wall near the Arsenal Barracks, which had been found empty. The Germans at *Brighton* were still being troublesome and, later, when the troop moved off to clear *Seaford*, one sub-section had to be left behind to subdue their fire.

25. Meanwhile 3 Troop, from the third flight, were the first through the beachhead and quickly reached Bellamy Park (marked B on Map 2). Its movements were considerably hampered by the German strongpoints at *Brighton*, so that one section had to be left to watch this flank while the rest of the troop moved towards the barracks at *Hove*, at the same time being forced to drop off connecting posts to prevent enemy infiltration in its rear. Consequently by the time the remaining section arrived at its objective, it was not strong enough to clear the barracks and, after some sharp street fighting, it was forced to wait for reinforcements. In the meantime, 6 Troop with the medium machine gun section had been led straight to *Bexhill* by a former police inspector of Flushing and held this important bottleneck throughout the battle.

26. 5 Troop made for *Worthing* as planned, but, after some fighting in the town, it found that the enemy were too numerous in this district to allow it to penetrate to the barracks. At about 0930 hours the troop was relieved by a company from the first battalion of the infantry brigade to land and pushed on to *Dover*. Here a Flakvierling and a machine gun post were causing trouble to the troops in Boulevard de Ruyter (marked A on Map 2) and Goosje Busken Straat (marked E on Map 2), but this opposition was soon neutralized by sniping at the crew of the Flakvierling, mortaring the strongpoint, and firing PIAT bombs at the embrasures.* Towards nightfall 5 Troop took up positions to connect with 3 Troop and at the same time to block Goosje Busken Straat (marked E on Map 2) and Spui Straat (marked F on Map 2).

27. At 1600 hours 1 Troop, having completed its task at *Seaford*, came into commando reserve and, shortly afterwards, was ordered to reinforce 3 Troop in its attack on *Hove*. The work of clearing the barracks proved slow and difficult and, since the number of casualties mounted as darkness set in, the decision was taken to consolidate on the line reached and resume the attack at first light.

28. Throughout the day there had been great activity at *Uncle Beach*. The landing craft obstruction clearance unit cleared the obstacles at record speed under considerable shell fire, and elements of the leading battalion landed soon after 0830 hours. The unloading of stores started and the pioneers worked with a will, ably helped by an ever increasing stream of German prisoners who were most useful in keeping the beaches clear and handling the loads over the mud flat. By the early evening the first two battalions of the follow-up brigade had crossed the Scheldt and disembarked over the beach; as each sub-unit arrived, it was sent forward into the town to reinforce the troops in those areas where fighting was still heavy.

* A Flakvierling is a four-barrelled 20 millimetre AA gun.

29. Command in Flushing was exercised by commando headquarters in a shelter near a searchlight post on the Oranje Molen promontory and captured in the initial assault. From this shelter the Royal Artillery representative and the FOO carried on a vigorous and unflagging artillery duel against any enemy batteries or strongpoints that proved troublesome. The artillery plan and control organization, tested by innumerable calls for concentrations on many widely separated targets, never once failed. When the number of guns available was not enough for the task, Typhoons were called up by means of the air support signal unit's tentacle at brigade headquarters in Breskens.

30. At 2200 hours the brigadier landed at Flushing. By that time the main town area was securely in our hands—though some enemy strongpoints still remained to be mopped up—and the possibility of any German infiltration had been prevented by the firm grip exerted by our forces on the bottlenecks at *Bexhill* and *Dover*. The brigadier decided that on the next day (2 November) the two battalions ashore would methodically start to clear the rest of the town beyond *Bexhill*, while the commandos would finally secure *Hove*, *Worthing*, and *Dover* and then work along the sea front in the direction of the Hotel Britannia.

Mopping up

31. The night 1–2 November passed quietly enough, except for a determined attempt by the Germans to break through at *Bexhill* with the help of flame throwers. This attack was stopped by the accurate marksmanship of the French. Then, at first light, one of the follow-up battalions moved off northwards from *Bexhill*, supported by 6 Troop and the medium machine gun section.

32. Meanwhile 1 Troop started the final mopping up of *Hove* and *Worthing*, which it had completed by midday with the loss of few casualties. Away to the east, 2 Troop, which had so far been patiently holding the right flank in the area of Piet Hein Straat (marked D on Map 2), began to move down the length of *Falmouth* spit. It encountered little or no opposition, though rifle and mortar fire from the far side of the harbour was disconcerting.

33. The German military and naval commanders had their headquarters near the Hotel Britannia and the presence of these august personages must have stimulated the German troops in this area, because 5 Troop had a hard task to mop up *Dover*. The enemy's main strength there lay in a large isolated pillbox on the waterfront with a Flakvierling emplacement beside it, but many of the houses in Goosje Busken Straat (marked E on Map 2), and especially those on the corners nearest the sea, were also strongly defended.

34. At 0700 hours 5 Troop started to attack down Goosje Busken Straat. Progress was necessarily slow since any attempt to advance in the street itself was quite out of the question and both sections had to "mousehole" their way forward through the houses. One section succeeded in finding an excellent position for its PIAT on the roof of a cinema.

35. After advancing for several hours in this methodical way, the troop was preparing for the final assault on the strongpoint (the pillbox and the Flakvierling emplacement) when it was ordered to pull back to allow Typhoons to give the position a preliminary strafing. The aircraft flew almost parallel to the waterfront to avoid inflicting casualties on 5 Troop and very successfully shot up the strongpoint. The troop then resumed their advance until it reached the corner house overlooking the strongpoint and opposite a building at the near end of Boulevard Bankert (marked G on Map 2), which the enemy still held. The garrison of this building bolted and was mown down by withering fire from the whole of 5 Troop. Then, just as a volunteer was about to dash across to the pillbox entrance with a made-up charge, a white flag fluttered from a loop-hole. Three officers and 54 very shaken Germans were taken prisoner and *Dover* was at last clear of the enemy.

36. That evening the commando was given another task ; it was to make a second landing further up the coast in order to help the rest of the commando brigade that had landed near Westkapelle. This assault, which was due to take place at first light the next day (3 November), was eventually cancelled, but, in the meanwhile, the commando had been concentrated and took no part in the final clearing of *Flushing*, which was completed by the infantry brigade. The first direct assault on the waterfront of a strongly defended port since the raid on Dieppe in August 1942 had thus been successfully concluded.

Notes

- (a) Despite the fact that it would be difficult to find the exact point of landing in the dark, the decision was taken to make the initial assault at such an hour as to enable the sub-units to reach their objectives before first light. Negligible casualties and the complete confusion of the enemy were the result. Much training had given the troops confidence in their ability to operate at night, and their successes during the first hours of the operation can be ascribed to this training, to the careful briefing of each individual soldier on specially prepared maps and air photographs, and to the fact that sub-units strictly adhered to their pre-selected tasks. Enemy pillboxes were by-passed in the darkness by troops with more distant objectives

and mopped up later in attacks from all sides. It was the opinion of the commanding officer that darkness had proved so good a friend in this assault, that he would always be prepared to sacrifice artillery preparation in order to make use of it on similar occasions.

- (b) Speed of movement in the open limited casualties during the early street fighting. Provided there was no hesitation, either in the decision to move or in the movement itself, snipers were rendered less effective, and the troops were able to maintain their momentum by darting from cover to cover in comparative safety.
- (c) Previous training in the ability to locate, by its sound, the origin of a weapon fired in a built-up area, proved invaluable. Every method was employed to get to grips with the Germans, and back gardens, roofs, and "mouseholing" were all used as lines of approach; *Dover* was reached by "mouseholing" the entire length of a street. For this reason every man carried a small made-up charge and had been instructed in its use.
- (d) The fire plan was equal to every occasion, and calls for fire were answered immediately. Although the FOO could not function in the streets, he was invaluable as a fire control officer. Before any artillery concentrations were put down on a strongpoint, preparatory to an assault, the leading elements among the infantry were always withdrawn to a safe distance. The 3.7 inch howitzers, which were brought over in the later stages of the operation, made excellent close support weapons and carried out accurate and spectacular shooting against snipers concealed in the cabins of the cranes on the far side of the harbour. One of these guns was even mounted in a second floor room to support the final assault on *Dover*.
- (e) In Flushing, signal communications were maintained by No. 18 sets and, throughout the whole battle only one troop was out of touch by wireless, and even then for less than half an hour. All sets were waterproofed; the Royal Artillery representative's No. 22 set, although immersed when the LCA, on which it was carried, sank, was operating 15 minutes after being brought ashore.
- (f) Every soldier should have a real knowledge of first aid. In street fighting medical orderlies frequently cannot get forward to deal with casualties, whose evacuation is often delayed for several hours.

SECTION 2.—THE ATTACK ON THE HOTEL BRITANNIA

(This narrative has been received from the commanding officer of a battalion that was part of the follow-up brigade during the assault on Flushing described in Section 1.)

37. "My battalion crossed unopposed to Flushing on the night 1/2 November and the next day took over positions in the town that had already been gained by the commando.

38. "At approximately 2130 hours on 2 November, I received the order to attack a German strongpoint and headquarters based on the Hotel Britannia (*see* Map 2). H hour for this attack was fixed for 0315 hours on 3 November to coincide with a seaborne landing by the commando on the far side of the gap in the sea wall to the north-west of Flushing, but this commando assault was later cancelled.

39. "The distance between the forward positions and the objective was about one mile, and the intervening ground was known to be under water. The likely depth of the water at the time of attack could not be estimated, since the floods were tidal and their depth changed hourly, but it was not expected to be greater than one foot six inches. It was thought that the objective itself was held by approximately fifty Germans, and little opposition was anticipated en route.

40. "The attacking force consisted of three rifle companies together with fifteen men of the carrier platoon, dismounted and organized into two sections, each of which was armed with three Bren guns and a PIAT; one mountain battery was available for close support. The rest of the battalion was to remain in Flushing, where one company was still actively engaged and could not be withdrawn. No transport of any kind was available for the operation, although three Weasels followed up with assault boats in case they were required, and two more Weasels were later sent up to evacuate casualties. Support from the mainland consisted of concentrations, first by two medium regiments from 0145 to 0210 hours, and later by four field regiments from 0245 to 0315 hours. Two gunner officers with a No. 22 set on man-pack accompanied battalion headquarters. All concerned in the operation were carefully briefed with the aid of large-scale street maps, defence overprints, and air photographs. Each man carried 150 rounds of SAA and an increased scale of grenades and wore only such equipment as was necessary for the carriage of ammunition. 'Mae Wests' were worn under windproof smocks and probably saved several lives.

41. "The battalion moved off at about 0145 hours on 3 November and reached our forward posts without incident, but immediately we had passed through them we encountered water, the average

depth of which was three feet on the road itself, increasing to five feet or more on either side of the pavements. Although it was a clear night with a full moon, the water made it no easy matter to follow the route that had been mapped out, and the floods also had the effect of making communications difficult. As a result the advance was considerably slowed. Nor was the water the only difficulty with which the battalion had to contend, for no sooner had we entered it than we encountered shell fire and it was necessary to halt companies in such cover as was available until the gunner officers could assemble their No. 22 set clear of the floods and gain contact with the mainland. Once this had been done the shelling ceased and the advance continued.

42. " The plan was to assault from the north with two companies and for the third company and the two dismounted sections of the carrier platoon to give covering fire from the flanks. The start line was a suburban road about three hundred yards short of the objective. When the battalion deployed on the start line the leading companies reported that the water ahead of them was five feet deep and running strongly. They proceeded to reconnoitre alternative routes and soon reported that they had found a way in from the north-east and were within seventy-five yards of the first objective, a pillbox at the foot of a steep bank below the hotel. Since no enemy opposition had as yet been encountered I ordered the two leading company commanders to make a quick plan and attack. The assault, covered by Bren and PIAT fire directed on to the pillbox from nearby houses, went in at 0415 hours and quickly succeeded. The pillbox was captured and thirty-five prisoners were taken. Soon afterwards two platoons forced their way into the hotel itself—a vast building on the sea front—and began the work of clearing the enemy from their stronghold.

43. " It was now approximately 0700 hours and getting light, and the enemy were fully awake. Sixty prisoners had already been taken, but opposition was still strong. All buildings were occupied by snipers ; a machine gun and a 20-millimetre gun were sited on the roof of the hotel, and a further machine gun and 20-millimetre gun were firing from adjacent pillboxes. When daylight came it was found that the hotel and surrounding buildings were completely ringed by a concrete trench system and that the Germans covered all approaches to the hotel ; nor was there any dead ground except that immediately in lee of the steep bank previously referred to.

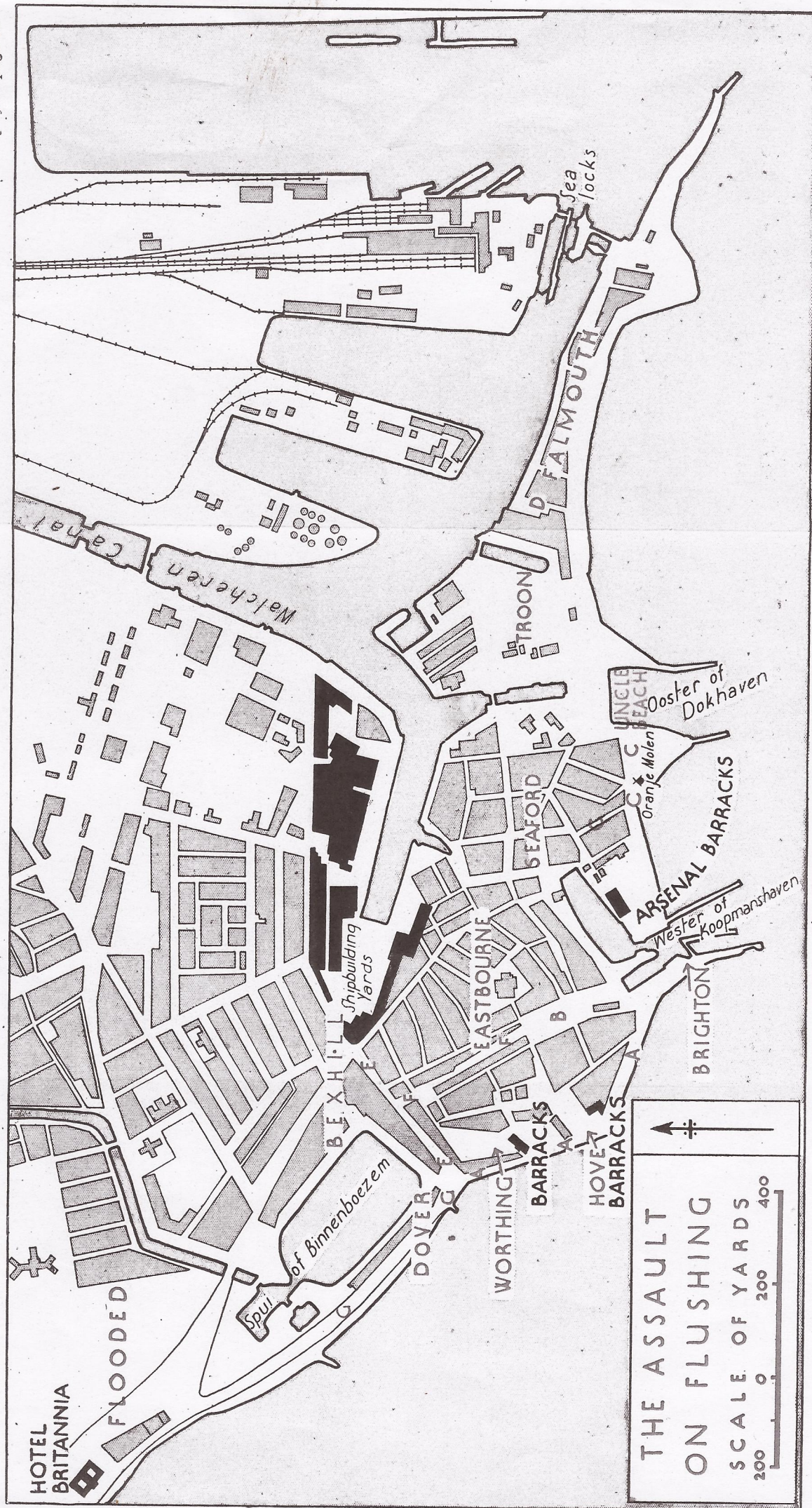
44. " The situation now became a little tricky. Not only were the Germans present in large numbers, well protected by concrete and fighting hard, but two company commanders had been killed and it was difficult to gauge the progress of the platoons inside the hotel. It was quite impracticable to call for fire support, since our troops

were so closely engaged with the Germans. The house occupied by battalion headquarters became the target of unwelcome attention from the enemy and it was necessary to move elsewhere. It was then that I sent the intelligence officer back to brigade headquarters to report and bring up more ammunition in a Weasel. I left the signal officer to move battalion headquarters and went forward myself to see what was happening. I was in sight of the battle and had just spoken across the deep floods to the one remaining company commander when I was wounded. The time was about 0800 hours.

45. "The tide of battle now changed. The battalion, under the command of the surviving company commander, who proved himself fully equal to the responsibility suddenly thrust upon him, gradually assumed complete control. As pillboxes were reduced and trenches assaulted, so did the Germans surrender in ever-increasing numbers. The hotel was now on fire and burning well, and by 1000 hours all was over, except for the mopping up of isolated posts and stray snipers and this task, too, was completed by 1200 hours. Fifty dead Germans were counted, and prominent among some six hundred prisoners was Colonel Reinhart, commander of the Flushing garrison. Our own casualties were two officers and seventeen other ranks killed, and one officer and sixty other ranks wounded.

46. "The operation was a complete success, and this despite the flood conditions and the unexpected strength of enemy resistance. I attribute this success to two factors. First, that every man knew what he was expected to do, and secondly, the excellent manner in which junior leaders took charge when necessary and made good use of the lessons learnt during the course of their long training."

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MAP 2