

Sgt.A.Tidy – The Queen’s Royal Regiment (West Surrey)

This soldier’s name has regrettably been incorrectly spelt on our memorial;



his name should have been recorded as ‘A.Tidey’. He was Arthur Albert Tidey who was born in 1916, the son of William and Mary Tidey (nee Matthews), at 6 Bailey Road, Westcott. As a boy, Arthur was active in the Westcott Scouts and became a member of the Rover Crew. He later worked at Gomshall Tannery and became the foreman of the dyeing department. It was at the Tannery that he met his future wife, Esme Charlotte Ellen Ketcher. They married in 1937 and

lived with Esme’s mother at 6 Pathfield Cottages, Shere. They had two children – Mauvereen, born in 1939, and Spencer, born in 1941.

Arthur joined the Territorial Army and served in the 1st/5th Battalion of the Queen’s which had been created when the Territorial Army was expanded in 1939. The battalion became a unit of the 44th (Home Counties) Infantry Division which served in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force (the BEF) before it was evacuated from Dunkirk on 20th May 1940.

After returning to England the battalion was then under training until May 1942 when it was sent to Egypt as part of 131st Brigade to join the 7th Armoured Division, and it was to remain with these formations for the rest of the war. The battalion fought with distinction at the Battle of El Alamein and in May 1943 took part in the capture of Tunis. In September 1943 it took part in the Salerno landing and the subsequent advance into Italy until the 7th Armoured Division was withdrawn to the United Kingdom to prepare for the invasion of northern Europe.

Arthur Tidey fought with the 1st/5th Queen’s in all of the above campaigns; he was a good leader and was a Sergeant in the battalion when it landed in France on 8th June 1944, two days after D-Day. Bayeux had fallen on the first day of the invasion, but Caen, which had also been an objective for the first day, had not been taken. The 3rd Infantry Division had been tasked with capturing the city; after landing on Sword Beach, the Division pushed inland but were stopped 6 km from their objective. The German High Command quickly brought up Panzer tank divisions to strengthen the city’s defences and the task of capturing it became much more difficult.

On 10th June General Montgomery, Commander of the Allied land forces, launched Operation 'Perch' with the aim of taking Caen with a pincer movement. He ordered I Corps to advance round the eastern side of the city while XXX Corps, including 7th Armoured Division (by then known as the 'Desert Rats'), moved round to the west. The start of the eastern advance was delayed; it then met very stiff resistance and was called off as losses mounted. On the western side XXX Corps battled for the town of Tilly-sur-Seulles, defended by the Panzer-Lehr and 12th SS Panzer Divisions, but got bogged down in the thick hedgerows and narrow lanes of the *bocage* countryside. The situation changed when the Germans had to withdraw southwards in the face of American attacks from the west.

As the Germans withdrew, a gap opened in their line. General Dempsey, commanding the British Second Army, ordered the 7th Armoured Division to exploit the gap and seize the key town of Villers Bocage. As the British column advanced, it was ambushed by a group of Tiger tanks. The light Cromwell tanks of the British were out-gunned by the heavier and much more powerful Tigers, and 25 Cromwell tanks and 28 infantry-carrying half-track vehicles were lost in the action. The 7th Armoured Division withdrew into Villers Bocage and were almost surrounded. The Division was eventually forced to pull back seven miles. On 14th July it was withdrawn and replaced by 33rd Armoured Brigade.

Arthur Tidey was wounded during the actions at Tilly-sur-Sielle. He was taken back to a casualty treatment centre, but died of his wounds on 16th June. He is buried in Bayeux War Cemetery which holds the graves of 4,144 Commonwealth service personnel who lost their lives in Normandy. The cemetery also holds the graves of 500 other servicemen, mainly German, who died in the conflict. Bayeux is the largest Commonwealth Forces' cemetery of the Second World War in France.

The battle for Caen continued. A series of operations were launched to take the city, but were dogged by bad weather. Supplies were held up and operations were delayed. There was bitter fighting and progress was slow in the face of fierce resistance. Caen was bombed on 9th July to weaken the Germans' resistance, but 2,000 French citizens lost their lives. The city was almost totally destroyed before it was finally liberated on 19th July 1944.

