

Démouville AAR by Roger Burley

Hauptmann Lange scratched the patch over his left eye. He hoped the splinter wounds to his cheek and eyebrow would not cause him to lose sight in that eye. He bent again to look through the range finder he “borrowed” from the artillery company that was stationed near Démouville, until they withdrew this morning. Only two of the 10.5cm Auf Geschutzwagen howitzers remained. His security troops (2 under-strength platoons) should have withdrawn with them, but battalion alerted him just an hour before that the British had penetrated the recon line and headed in his direction. His orders were to hold until dusk, by then reinforcements should reach him.

Hauptmann Lange deployed 1st platoon (Feldwebel Haas) to the west with his Panzerfausts and 2 wine bottles filled with gas and oil to drop on top of any tanks passing below. 2nd platoon (Oberfeldwebel Sedov) similarly armed, deployed near the wheat field to the north and in the church rectory. The SPG howitzers oriented to the north along the road and into the wheat field. Although the field of view was narrow, they were the only long range shot opportunities to the north. His runners were getting tired climbing the church tower to his observation perch. His sniper was covering the wheat field and the road that twisted north out of town.

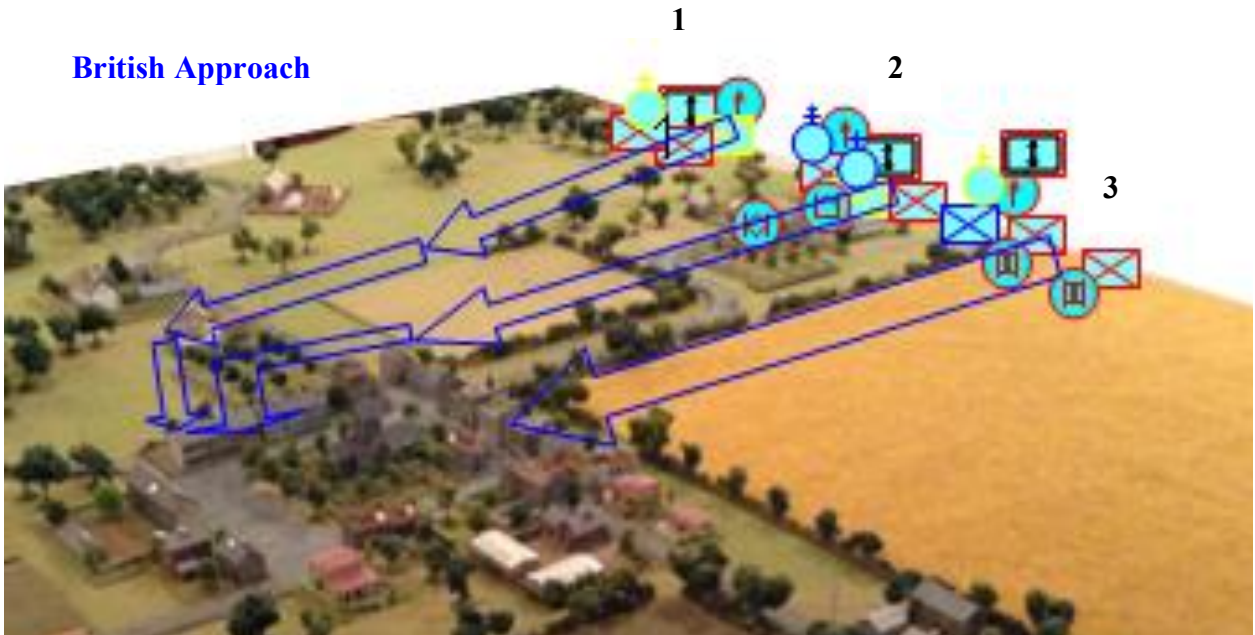


German Positions

FW Haas positioned his veteran squad in the tall red brick building at the road intersection, with a great view to the west. He positioned his MG-42 on the roof of the tall building to the center. His green squad guarded the church gate and focused on the

small alley across the street. OFW Sedov, with his MG-42 and regular squad, occupied the rectory. He sent his professional squad to cover the opening to the wheat field.

British Approach



Captain Evens' company was making good progress towards Démouville. The farms they encountered thus far were empty, but they started seeing evidence of tracked vehicles. The two scout cars were out front on the right flank in front of 1st and 2nd platoons.

3rd platoon approached along the bocage on the west edge of the wheat field. Its heavy punch was the 2 Sherman Vs accompanying 3rd platoon in the wheat field. This gave them room to maneuver and the ability to bombard the town where necessary. The Germans were sure to have Panzerfausts, so he would keep the armor out of town.



As the Sherman Vs came onto the board, one passed through the fire zone of #2 SPG, which took the shot hoping to damage the undercarriage. The shot missed, but caused casualties to the squad following behind the tank.



On its next move, the #2 SPG reversed out of the Sherman's LOS. For its part, the Sherman V set a Fire Zone in the middle of the road in front of the hide site, effectively trapping the #2 SPG, but reducing the Sherman's ability to maneuver (FZ).



The wounded squad got no reprieve, as the German sniper picked off soldiers for 3 rounds before the squad was able to eliminate him.

The Sherman V section leader angled towards the opening in the bocage to his right, providing some cover for the squad behind him. As the two approached the opening, FW Haas' MMG spotted the squad and engaged. Although the squad was essentially in the open, the MMG caused no casualties, and they finally made it safely behind the bocage. The rest of 3rd platoon linked up on the "safe" side of the bocage as well.



Back on the right flank, the two armored cars advanced on either side of a field that was partially surrounded by bocage. The scout car advanced to the last bend in the road and stopped to survey the town. Having heard the cannon and MG fire, he knew the Germans were there in force. The Staghound advanced to the end of the bocage and surveyed the west side of town. There was a lot of open ground leading to the next farm across the road, west out of town.



Behind the cars, the accompanying squads moved up through farms, fields and orchards.





As the platoon moved up behind the scout car, it started slowly forward and began the turn. At that point it passed through the Fire Zone of the German #1 SPG, which obliterated the car, sending shrapnel into the nearby squads.



#1 SPG reversed into the town square to take up a new position covering the west side of town.

FW Haas' MG-42 continued to attack the squads in the field, but the British 1st platoon (Lt Briles) finished setting up the 2-inch mortar and brought the

position under fire. Because the rooftop was small, 1st platoon expended all its rounds without effect. By then, 2nd platoon (Lt. Galt) had finished its setup, and on the second round, scored a direct hit. The MMG team survived 6 mortar rounds and several MG bursts from the Sherman Vs.

Several British units exposed themselves to observation and fire by the veteran German squad in the corner red tile building. The red tile building was a key location, as it commanded the northwest road intersection in town and had a great view of the west side of the church. Hauptmann Lange, FW Haas and the veteran squad had identified all the units approaching the town, that were not hugging the hedgerows.



View from 1st Platoon mortar team.

Once the MG-42 was eliminated, the observation to the north was reduced. Although Hauptmann Lange still resided in the church steeple, few new units presented themselves. As the British came closer, the town buildings started to block the view of their approach. FW Haas was located in a shorter building between the red tiled building and the MG-42 rooftop nest. The veteran squad had an attic window to the west and 3 gables facing the church, but no windows to the north. The squad had constructed several loopholes to increase their fire to the west.



As the veteran squad engaged several advancing units, it drew fire from multiple points – one Sherman and 2nd platoon mortar. Two PIAT teams hurried to get into the fight. The tank round hit the building, causing damage, but the veteran squad (in command range of FW Haas) easily made its suppression save. This occurred each time a mortar round struck the building.

To the west, the Staghound made a dash for the farm to the south. Halfway across the field, the commander fired his smoke mortar and created a small screen for 1st platoon to use in its wake.



To the east, 2nd platoon moved up along the bocage, with 3rd platoon on the opposite side of the road.



As it reached the farm, the Staghound slowed to let the trailing platoon catch up. As it plotted its next move, it continued to creep forward, bringing more of the town into view.



To thwart the developing flank attack, #1 SPG completed its reversal and proceeded to the southwest corner of the town. As it stopped next to the plaza exit, it spotted the Staghound moving around a farm to the west.



Both vehicles fired simultaneously, the Staghound with two rounds and the SPG with one. The Staghound got one hit causing the SPG crew to bail out. The SPG missed, but the vehicle commander was wounded, and the crew bailed out.



Now that the German vehicles were either tied up behind a fire zone or abandoned, the infantry hurried to close on the town from the west. In the wheat field, a Sherman fired and hit the red tiled building again. By this time, the building was severely damaged, and the squad leader yelled through a hole in the wall to Haas that it was time to leave. The squad made its way down from the attic to the first floor as another shell hit the roof.



In the back of the west row of houses, both 1st and 2nd platoons rushed up to clear them. Once inside, the sections looked out over the broad cobblestone plaza, with the church in the middle. The British were sure the steeple was occupied, but unsure of the force in the church. The squads checked for signs in the adjacent buildings. Since the buildings to the north were known to have Germans in them and the church had an opening on that side, one of the squads established a fire zone, to catch anyone passing through it. As they established the FZ, a squad in the next building spotted the green German squad by the opening. When the veteran squad and FW Haas dashed east, to the last building in the row fronting the church, the British section moved behind the church.



All the movement momentarily surprised the squads looking in that direction. Both the green and veteran squads took casualties, but FW Haas's group made it uninjured. Because both units passed through the fire zone at the same time, damage was randomized.



Green German squad moves toward #2 SPG



1st Platoon moves toward the west side of town

On the north side of town, 3rd platoon finally reached the walled-in backyards and approached the buildings. The building, that FW Haas and his veteran squad moved to, stuck out the back and had windows west facing windows that covered the backyards. Additionally, OFW Sedov's professional squad was in the top floor. The 3 units opened fire on the partially exposed squad, causing light casualties before the 3rd platoon got into the buildings.

The Sherman V closest to the road turned towards the west, following the infantry around to the west side of town. The tank was careful to stay out of Panzerfaust range.

The next big push was the churchyard. In preparation, the infantry checked the surrounding buildings and fired into the steeple. The incoming fire suppressed Hauptmann's HQ group, essentially putting him out of action during the British assault. It also made it impossible for him to escape. No other German units were in the church.



Some movement was spotted in the church rectory, and 3rd platoon knew that the building to the north definitely contained Germans. The other ID attempts did not yield additional confirmation.

Both platoons ran across the street and up to the church. One of the PIAT teams fired at the steeple to help suppress any Germans inside, catching it on fire. The British entered the church to clear it, but had to leave because of the fire.



Hauptmann Lange surrendered to the British to also avoid being caught in the fire.



The game was concluded at this point.

The British would clear and secure the town, although capturing the church was by default since the British forces were the last in the building before the fire gutted it to the stonewalls.

Losses: 2 armored cars and light casualties.

The German forces in the northeast corner escaped to the East and #2 SPG made a successful move across the street and then through the town to the southeast. OFW Sedov and his platoon followed in the SPG's wake

Losses: 1 SPG, 1 MG-42, and light casualties.