

## Part I, Session 41

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1940

Having requisitioned new equipment and an artillery tractor for transport, which came with a Gurkha medic, we set off for the asylum again. We crossed the river then took the country lanes approaching the asylum from the opposite direction. Navigating the country lanes with poor maps and no signs is not easy and we went a little off course but having spotted this we made it to the asylum. We parked the vehicles about half a mile away and covered them with camouflage netting. As Kelly was badly wounded from the previous visit we left him to guard the vehicles. A task for which he was well suited being able to drive and operate the guns on the armoured car should it become necessary.

Arnold Evans and James, the new boy, went ahead scouting. We followed the tree line as much as possible. As we approached the asylum I spotted a Panzer tank at the end of the building, a machine gun post in one of the upstairs corner rooms, there was also movement in the central tower. There was 50 yards between the building and the woods. The rest was open ground. Evans and I crept round through the woods to look at the front of the building. There was a scene of devastation. All of the trees, bushes, statues had been flattened by a tank which was sitting in front of the main entrance. There was a half track over the far side of the grounds with a heavy gun, possibly the same one that we engaged in our last visit. There were a few open windows on the third floor of the building but no sign of movement so we crept back to report to the others.

With what we had seen it was clear that we could not approach undetected during the day so we settled in to wait for darkness. During the day we saw very little movement. One of the tank crew got out to relieve himself. A couple of German trucks turned up and started unloading barrels of fuel. When this was complete a half track did a tour of the building relieving the tanks and other half track in turn so that they could refuel. That was the last activity that we saw during the day.

As dusk settled the tank engines fired up and spot lights came on. This was going to be a little more difficult than we had hoped for. The Germans were both prepared and not green troops. McKye pulled a neat invisibility trick and took the plastic explosives and time pencils to place on the tank tracks from the underside of the tank so there was little chance of spotting the explosive. The idea was to place them so that as the tank moved it would crush the time pencil which would detonate the plastic and blow off the track disabling the tank so that it can not chase us during our retreat.

We had decided that the only way to find our missing mage was to take a hostage and persuade them to tell us where he was being held. Our target was the utility building where the train tracks stopped and where the half track was parked. We approached crawling on our stomachs behind the smashed remains of a line of trees. Once again the scouts were up front and we had just made it to the utility building when the half track spotted the rest of the team. I am not sure how. It simply stopped and spun the spot light straight at them. There was no searching with the light. It was as if they knew exactly where they were. My only conclusion was that they had a mage with them and he had spotted our guys magically possibly because they were running active magic defences. I understand that this stands out like a light house to somebody who is looking. The troops got out of the half track and engaged our guys. Evans took a pot shot at the spot light and missed I hit it and at least then there was darkness again so that observers in the main building could not see what was happening. Our guys took care of the German infantry and somebody must have tossed in two grenades as there were two separate explosions from the back of the half track. This rumbled off into the distance seemingly uncontrolled.

All this noise had disturbed the 8 men in the utility building who came after us. A couple of grenades

and some quick shooting soon dispatched them. However a bell is now ringing in the tower above us. We need to silence this and then move on before more Germans come to investigate. Strike fast hard and move on to keep the enemy off balance and looking in the wrong places. We think that we can hear a tank moving around which is bad news. The time pencil should have detonated and destroyed the track so it looks as if we may have failed on that target which does not bode well for our eventual retreat.

Just waiting for the officers and the rest of the men to catch up with us and let us know which way we are going to head now.

Sgt Arnold.

## Part II, Session 42x

Having regrouped in the goods shed the plan is to go on looking for a prisoner who will give us an idea of where our missing mage is being held assuming that he is still alive. Besides the rail entrance and exit the only other doors to the goods shed are in the side wall. We slipped through these double doors into a long room with a door in the far end wall and a single door in each side wall. McKie and Ginger covered the right door while Evens opened it. I covered the other two doors staying out of line from the door being opened. There was some sharp talking in German and then 4 men in white coats wearing red crosses. Apparently these four had been sorting through large boxes of medical supplies. Smythe interrogated them and at first appeared not to be making progress beyond what sounded like Name Rank and Number. After a while they said something else which Smythe translated to us as "there may be something of interest in the chapel". At this point we bound and gagged the Germans and started to investigate the building further. At the far end of the room where the Germans had been was a door. This led into the laundry which was piled high with hundreds of blood stained sheets. We checked the piles of sheets with bayonets but they were just huge piles of sheets. McKie and Rogers went up the bell tower to silence the bell that was ringing. Though we had already created quite enough noise ourselves with the grenade explosions. I had seen movement up this tower when we had first observed the asylum during the day. McKie could not open the trap door so he placed some of the plastic explosive we had and used a time pencil to detonate it. That brought down the trap door and a large ammo crate that spilled belts of machine gun ammunition onto the floor. This settled it. If there was a machine gun nest up the tower and there was room for several we would never make it into the main building. At this range we would be ducks in a shooting gallery. The ammo crate was followed by a grenade dropped from the top of the tower. McKie went back up to investigate and capture the machine gun post if possible. Apparently he saw two Germans with sub machine guns looking down through the trap door. He shot and believed killed both. One fell through the hatch to the floor below. As he approached the trap door, now just a gaping hole, two more grenades were dropped onto the stairs. McKie could not avoid them by going down the stairs so he jumped up through the trap door and got shot, lots. Smythe was not in the best of moods. We came here to deny at all costs a captured mage to the Germans and now it seemed that we had just lost another mage to them. Perhaps he should not send critical assets out on point! He sent Rogers and myself up the tower to sort out the mess. Typical leave it to the sergeants to sort out the mess. Up we went carefully and quietly. We could not avoid being seen on our approach as it was an open staircase. Two grenades were thrown at us so we both leapt for the hatch. Rogers was ahead of me and went through first. There were three remaining Germans. Two of whom were struggling with jammed guns. I dropped the one with the working gun then quickly turned on a second and dropped him. The third man dropped his jammed gun, pulled two grenades and dropped them at his feet with an impolite expression on his face. Rogers lunged for the German and I grabbed a dead German and threw the body onto the two grenades. It took most of the blast but we still took some light injuries. McKie was crumpled unconscious in one corner. Wanting to make a quick exit from the tower as we had attracted far too much attention I decided the quickest way to disable the MG32 was to drop it down the tower the second floor room below. This I did and as I did it I spotted that the staircase had collapsed. There was a lot of rubble in the room below and the narrow passage leading to the stairs down to the ground floor was blocked. I understand now that Evans and Smythe had tried to reach us from below but could not get through the rubble. Again improvisation was called for. I grabbed the bell rope and then stripped the dead Germans of their uniform jackets, trousers and belts linking them all together to form a makeshift rope. We looped this round McKie to lower him. There seemed little point going down the inside of the tower as our exit was blocked so we had to go down the outside onto the roof below. By this time a tank had arrived and an anti tank gun both of which were pointing at the tower. Having selected a side of the tower that was not being watched we lowered McKie on the rope. It was not quite long enough but we did not have time to make changes. I quickly climbed down to McKie and cut the rope loop round his chest dropping him the last 6 feet

onto the roof. Climbing down the last section of the rope holding on with just my hands I was able to drop easily onto the roof. Once down I beckoned for Rogers to follow. At first he looked tentative and then he came down far faster than I expected. That must have hurt but to his credit he just grunted. We then had to repeat the exercise using out belts to lower McKie the last two stories to the ground then climb down using one of the cast iron drain pipes for aid. Once down I left Rogers with McKie and went to find Rana, the medic, and the others that we had left in the goods shed. After a couple of minutes Rana had brought McKie round. And patched up Rogers and myself. AT this point I spotted a section of 8 Germans making their way towards us. I pointed them out to the others and we all took aim waiting for them to get closer until they spotted us. At that point we opened up. I dropped two in quick succession. Then we had to duck back inside the goods shed to avoid grenades that had been thrown. While we were in the goods shed an grenade was thrown in so we rushed out again throwing our own grenades as we went. Only 2 Germans got up and ran. I dropped them both before they got very far.

Our next job was to link up with Evans and Smythe again. Creeping back into the goods shed I was able to get to the double doors through which we had first entered the building. They were shut. We had not shut them. I pushed them gently just enough to move one a little. The response was the sound of many gun actions being cocked. Far too many for just Evans and Smythe. I went back to report to McKie. I suggested that we need to go in fast and hard. That meant blowing the doors or the wall and following up immediately with grenades. McKie looked at the wall and decided that he did not have enough explosive to be sure of blowing a good sized hole. McKie placed the charges on the doors and we took shelter below the level of the platform. When the doors blew McKie threw in a grenade. Owen used suppressing fire to keep them pinned. Rogers miss threw a grenade and I threw an grenade in. There were shouts and sounds of running feet. The Germans either ran away or were killed in the blast. The had exited by the door at the end of the room. I crept back to the door on the left through which we had found the doctors. I called out to Smythe and Evans the we had secured the room for now and it was safe for them to come out and rejoin us. While I was doing this McKie scavenged some grenades from the dead Germans. We were running very low at this point.

At first Smythe seemed to be contemplating retreat but we had orders and we had not yet found our missing man. We did have a clue to look in the chapel which was the nearest part of the main building to us. We followed the route taken by the exiting Germans which led us into the bakery. There we found a baker hiding in a cupboard stinking of urine and excrement. Smythe spoke to him in French then translated for us. Apparently he had been there for three days. The Germans had turned up and had systematically shot all of the patients and staff. He had managed to hide from them for three days. Well that accounted for all of the blood soaked sheets in the laundry. The baker was able to give us exact details of how to get into the back of the main building. Through the mack of the main foyer and then into the chapel. This was a help but it also meant a long flat out sprint rather close to a tank and the anti tank gun. It would be tough. There were bound to be other machine guns and troops around who would be shooting at us as we ran. The plan was hit and run. We would prepare a satchel charge using the plastic explosive and grenades. If we met trouble in the chapel then we would simply blow it and hope for the best. However we would still have to evade the tank on our escape. I suggested that McKie could try his invisibility trick and place a charge on it and the gun, set them off and then retreat to the rendezvous point. This was to be the place where we had gone to ground and observed the building during the day. If this was not possible then get back to Kelly at the vehicles. If we had not turned up within 45 minutes of McKie then Kelly and McKie should leave in the armoured car and we would do our best to get back. Somewhere that plan changed a little as McKie took all of the remaining plastic for the tank and gun charges and left us without any form of satchel charge!

Anyway we ran for it. We got about half way before the shooting started. That was better than I had dared hope for. I heard somebody curse having got hit but I was not sure who. We burst through the door into the corridor, Turned left and went through the back of the foyer and stopped at the chapel doors. WE opened a door carefully. The stench of death was overpowering. The chapel have been

stacked full of all of the dead bodies. It was going to be one hell of a search. WE left one person on guard at the door and the rest of us went in. The more eyes looking the sooner we would complete the search.

Surely we should have heard an explosion from outside by now?

As we started to make our way into the chapel, the dead bodies, hundreds of them, started to move.

Oh S\*\*\*!

### Part III, Session 43

Arnold called out to Williams as he was loading a rifle grenade but there was no response. The grenade was fired into the roof in an attempt to bring the roof down on the hundreds of now walking dead. The shot was good but the explosion failed to bring down the roof. Meanwhile Smythe tried turning the leading bunch to slow down the rest then turned and ran for the door. Unfortunately this had little effect. The few that were turned just wandered off rather than standing still and slowing down the rest. James and Rana ran for the door grabbing Arnold on the way. Once through the door it was closed and tied shut again. At this point the doors to the west wing burst open and foot steps were heard but there was nobody there. At least not visible. The disembodied voice of McKie announced his presence just before Owen and others hosed the area. He explained that the baker was actually an occult aware German who had attacked him while he was invisible! James checked the doors into the west corridor while Rana looked at McKie's wounds. James saw nothing through the west doors so went across the foyer to look through the east doors. As he was looking he caught sight of a reflection of a German squad at the West doors behind him. The Germans opened fire shattering the glass of the door and then threw 3 grenades through. Arnold dodged out of the way but Rana, McKie and Evans all went down in the blast. Two grenades were thrown by us in return which drove the Germans from the doorway. Evans went to Rana to stabilise him. Arnold went to McKie who was also bleeding badly. It took a little time but Arnold stabilised McKie and Smythe stabilised then started to bring round Rana using miracles. Another grenade came from the Germans. I grabbed McKie, Smythe grabbed Rana and Owen grabbed Evans. We dragged them all out of the way. Smythe eventually brought Rana round again. After the German grenades had gone off Arnold crept down the wall to the doorway and threw his last hand grenade into the corridor. There were shouts in German and four Germans raced into the foyer. James opened fire on them and then the grenade went off. It must have detonated other explosives as the blast was far greater than usual. Three of the Germans were killed outright and Arnold shot dead the fourth. The blast started fires in both the east and west corridors. These started to spread rapidly cutting off our exits. This left us with just one option and that was to go out over the rubble pile in the front of the foyer. Arnold crept up the rubble pile and looked for the enemy and in particular the Panzer that had been there. James followed to the top of the rubble pile while I crept down the front of the pile. There was no sign of Germans or the Panzer. I signalled the all clear and the squad moved up with Rana and Rogers carrying the unconscious McKie. Arnold put on McKie's invisible cloak and ran out of the front of the building about 50 yards to check the building for observation posts. The two Panzers were still at the ends of the building. There were some Germans in an upper room dismantling a machine gun post. The fire was spreading into the upper floors. Arnold ran back to the rest of the party to report his observations. There is very little cover out the front of the building now. The plan was to move along the west front of the building until we were within about 100yds of the woods then make a run for it under the continued cover of darkness. Arnold handed over most of his kit to the rest of the squad and then picked up McKie for the run. WE got about half way when the first shot was fired. It was a heavy round and exploded close to Rogers who went down but got straight up again. The second round came close to Arnold who shrugged off the minor injury and kept running. There were a couple more rounds but they did not come close. We all made it to the woods without further injury. The rounds had come from the Panzer at the west end of the building which then opened up with the machine gun but we were too far into the trees by then. We crept through the woods round to our original observation point. Once there we spotted two Germans at the half track in the field. This was the half track that we had previously attacked and killed all the crew. Arnold took careful aim and killed both Germans with a single shot each. James then crawled out the the half track with Arnold covering his movements. The Driver and gunner in the front were both dead as were the two who had been checking out the half track. James pinched a couple of hand guns from the dead Germans and disabled the machine gun before crawling back to us. The debate is now what to do next. We could use the half track as disguise to get back close to the building. McKie had reported to us that the occult German had been dragging him towards the

Panzer and he suspected that it may hold Williams. However McKie is still unconscious and unable to contribute any further information. A second plan is to mine the roads and wait for the Germans to evacuate catching the vehicles with the mines. Hopefully the Germans will be evacuation Williams which will save us the bother of searching for him further within the buildings. This all assumes that Williams is still alive. If he is then he will be evacuated and intercepted by us. If not then his remains will burn. Either way we aim to deny him to the enemy as ordered. The half track might yet prove useful but to the machine gun mounted on it if we can get it into a suitable position. We might be able to work our way round the road to the front gate and take out the other damaged half track guarding that gate. However we are in a poor state for a sustained fight against armoured targets.

#### **Part IV, Session 44**

We headed back to the vehicles leaving James to observe the buildings. His orders were to return to the vehicles if anybody approached. There was no sign of the Panza but there were figures running from the main building to the utility building. The half track rumbled down the road to the utility building and then turned towards where James was hiding. James retreated but did not return to the vehicles as ordered. The half track went out into the field where the other half track had stopped. It parked alongside the other one and then men gout out of one and into the other. Both vehicles then started up and turned onto the north road leaving the grounds. James followed as far as he could leaving an arrow point which way he had gone so that we would be able to follow when we returned from the vehicles with the land mines. While we were carrying the mines back to meet up with James we heard two load explosions from either ends on the main building. The Panza tanks were no more so two out of three is not too bad.

We mined the north road to stop anything else leaving that way. By this time the half tracks have about a 30 minute head start on us as we planned what to do next. The nearest town in the direction in which the half tracks left is only about 8 miles so the vehicles would already be there or beyond. We decided to mine the south road as well to stop anything else arriving or leaving by that route. Just as we got to the front of the building there was a large explosion from the rear. Unsure what had caused this we crept back to check. It would appear that the fuel dump had exploded. There was no sign of movement anywhere and no sign of the other Panza. Added to that the remains of the Panza that we could see looked as if it had exploded from the inside rather than from the outside. It is possible that the plastic explosive penetrated the bottom of the tank and detonated internal ammunition. What was left was a smoking ruin with no turret. We finished the minim of the south road at 2:30am. The show seems to be over here!

We decided to try to track the vehicles that left on the north road so we head back to get our own vehicles. McKie was driving the armoured car, Smythe commanding and Owen on the 50cal. Rogers was driving the Scammel, Arnold and James were in the cab so that they could get out and check the road at each junction for signs left by the tracked vehicles on the road. Rana and Kelly were in the back so that Kelly could provide cover with the Brengun. The road headed north and then turned to the east. At the first junction we got out and inspected the road. The German vehicles had turned right which was south. We continued down this road for a while then stopped as the silhouette of two building one either side of the road cam into view. James and Arnold scout ahead on the left side of the road close to the hedge. The buildings are about 400 feet from the armoured car. Arnold and James slipped through the hedge. James moves up through the orchard. He is spotted and a burst of machine gun fire from the corner of the building catches him. Owen responded with a burst of 50vcal from the armoured car which removed the problem. Arnold took careful aim at the machine gun post in the other building. Rogers starts to back up the Scammel to keep it out of range as it is a soft target. Arnold dropped one of the two Germans on the second

machine gun post and then was hit by fire from that gun. Arnold promptly moved and found cover again. Shells started coming in from beyond the buildings the first went wide but the second and third found the armoured car blowing off the mirrors and radio antenna.

The Scammel was still reversing down the road when Kelly dismounted with the Bren gun to add support. McKie drove the armoured car through the hedge to break the line of sight to the artillery piece that had been firing. Owen finished off the other machine gun post with the 50cal. Arnold took up a sniping position on the artillery piece. The crew looked to be getting ready to limber the gun. Arnold dropped one man and the other hid. Arnold approached the buildings while Kelly was running up behind the right hand hedge. There is a large explosion from the artillery piece and the main house collapsed onto it. Kelly inspected the remains but there was nothing left. Arnold entered the barn which was empty. He shouldered the rifle drew the pistol and climbed quietly into the loft to check on the Germans. They were dead but the MG34 was OK and there were about 400 rounds for the information. There does not seem to be any signs of prolonged occupation. No empty ration packs etc. It could have been the same gun from the asylum but they could not be sure. Any tracks of vehicles turning off the road and into the farm yard were covered by the rubble from the building.

The tracks on the road continue on towards Wavre. We stopped short of the edge of town. James and Arnold scouted ahead checking the main road at every junction. Arnold got clipped by a bullet twice on the way in to town while inspecting the road but he and James found the Panza in the rail yard on the far side of town. We heard two other vehicles start up possibly the half tracks. There were plenty of goods wagons and vans in the yard but no sign of a locomotive. On the way back Arnold stumbled crossing a road and got hit again going down. James dragged him into cover and stopped the bleeding. James stripped Arnold of his second rifle and rifle grenades then carried him back to the vehicle where Rana worked on him with the last of the medical kit. Smythe then brought him round with a prayer.

The question on every bodies mind now is what to do next? A head long charge into the rail yard would probably be suicide. We have a few land mines left which we could jury rig to the rail lines outside town. If Williams was in one of the vehicles and the Germans intend to transport him by rail then they will need a train to arrive and leave at some point.

What next. We are all in poor shape. We have no medical supplies left and very few grenades. A few land mines but nothing really that kill a Panza unless it rolls over a land mine. It may be time to leave.

Sgt Arnold.