

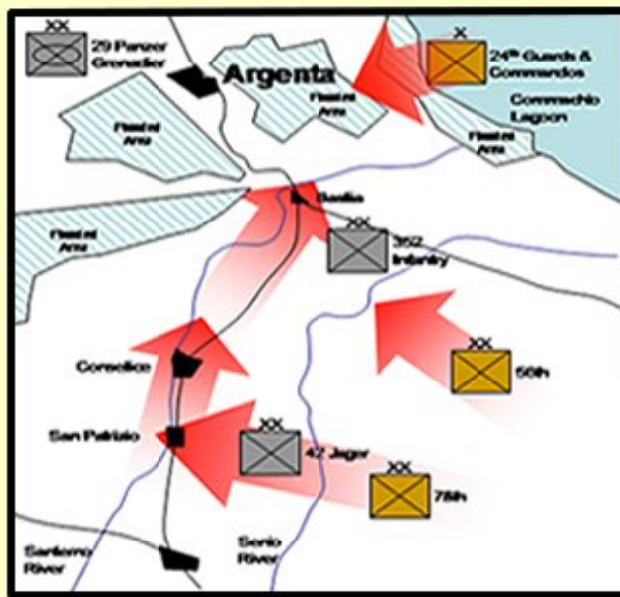


Tom Burgess – Nashcon 2008
1750 Late War Flames of War Tournament
8th Battalion
Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders
36th Brigade, 78th Division
Argenta Gap, Italy
1400 hrs, 11 April 1945



In April of 1945 the climax of the war in Italy was fast approaching. Just to the south of the Po River the German Army held its last fortified line. After this line was broken, the British 8th and US 5th Armies would at last have achieved what Winston Churchill had long pressed for, an open route into the "soft underbelly" of Hitler's Third Reich.

The German LXXVI Panzer Korps which opposed the British 8th Army, had improved its defensive line by breaking local dykes and flooding the area. Only one narrow strip of dry high ground remained for the 8th Army to continue its northward attack on. Centered on the town of Argenta and between the flooded lowlands to the west and the Commachio Lagoon on the east, this corridor was known as the Argenta Gap. The LXXVI Korps commander, General von Schwerin, tasked the 42nd Jager Division and 352nd Infantry Divisions with defending the Argenta area. He placed the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division in reserve ready to reinforce at Argenta or counter an expected allied landing on the coast to the east.



The 78th Division's Attack Towards Argenta



B Sqn, 56th Recce
"Chavesse's Light Horse"
at the outskirts of Argenta

The British plan of attack for Argenta called for the 78th Division to break through the 42nd Jagers, seize San Patrizio, and then turn north, cutting off the 352nd Infantry Division. Major Raymond C. Trowbridge, commanding B Coy, 8 A. & S. H., led the 78th Division attack into the 42nd Jager's defensive zone in front of Argenta. For this task his force included:

HQ B Coy, 8th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (A. & S. H "Argylls")
4th, 5th, and 6th Platoons, 8 A. & S. H.
Scout Patrol 1 & 2, A Coy, 8 A. & S. H.
6 pdr Platoon and a 17 pdr section from the 64th Royal Artillery (Anti-Tank)
C Battery, 132nd "Welsh" Royal Artillery
Troop 3, C Squadron, 48th RTR (Churchill-III)
Troop 2, B Squadron, 56th Recce "Chavesse's Light Horse"

The Argyll Highlanders made a "brilliant advance behind a rolling barrage, taking the disorganized enemy and scattered opposition by surprise." They met resistance from both enemy infantry and tanks but "the battalion kept going, the men being carried on the backs of tanks, firing automatic weapons as they moved." Beginning their attack at 1400, the Argylls crossed the Fossatone Canal by 2020, and seized San Patrizio by 2115 where they captured a German Nashorn unit and destroyed three more enemy Panzers while holding San Patrizio against a local counter attack. The Argyll's had ruptured the first line of the 42nd Jager Division's defenses. On the morning of the 12th, they turned over lead in the main division attack to the Royal West Kents who were brought up to continue the 78th Division's drive north toward the 8th Army Objective, Argenta.