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**Above:** In the early hours of June 6, 1944 — D-Day in Normandy — a German NCO, Unteroffizier Karl Finkenrath, a member of an engineer company of the 716. Infanterie-Division, executed two (if not more) captured British paratroopers of the 6th Airborne Division who had just come down on Norman soil as part of the massive airborne landings on the eastern flank of the Allied invasion. The killings took place in the courtyard of the Ferme du Lieu Haras, a large stud farm in the

village of Hérouvillette, where Finkenrath's unit was billeted. The premeditated killing of unarmed prisoners of war constituted a war crime and after the war Finkenrath would be called to justice for his acts and sentenced to death by a British Military Tribunal. This picture of the farm and its courtyard buildings was taken by the War Crime Investigation Team to be used as exhibit during the trial. **Below:** Still a stud farm today, the Lieu Haras remains practically unchanged since the war.

# THE HEROUVILLETTE MURDERS

In March 1942, the German 716. Infanterie-Division arrived in Normandy to assume defence of a long stretch of the Atlantic coast. Originally, the division held the whole front between the Vire river in the west to just beyond the Orne river estuary in the east. However, from March 1944, when the 352. Infanterie-Division arrived to take over the western half of its zone, the division was responsible for a narrower sector, still 30 kilometres wide, from Asnelles in the west to Franceville-Plage in the east.

On arrival in the area, the divisional engineer battalion, Pionier-Bataillon 716, set up its headquarters in Caen, at No. 83 Rue de Geole, close to divisional headquarters. Major Günter Koch, the battalion commander, distributed his three companies along the coast. By June 1944, the 1. Kompanie, 180 men under Hauptmann Leo Mölter, was stationed north of Caen, its platoons spread out over the area. The 1. Zug was with the

infantry of Grenadier-Regiment 736, the 2. Zug was west of the Orne bridge at Bénouville and the 3. Zug at Sallenelles, near the mouth of the river.

Mölter requisitioned a large stud farm at Hérouvillette for use as his command post. Called the Ferme du Lieu Haras, it lay at the western end of the village, a long tree-lined lane leading to it from the D513 Hérouvillette to Sainte-Honorine-la-Chardronnette road. Beside the farm lay a horse racecourse and training gallop. The Germans also requisitioned the house of André Morel, which stood along the main road beside the entrance to the stud farm, and the company transport section was stationed with their four horses and two carts in the farm across the road from the entrance. Mölter himself was billeted with a family in the village and some of his men, under the company sergeant-major, Hauptfeldwebel Heinz Hartwig, were billeted in the local pub. In all

By Carl Rymen

there were about 24 to 28 soldiers of Company Headquarters based in and around the Lieu Haras farm.

The inhabitants of Hérouvillette were not at all pleased with the arrival of the Germans. Henri Balliere, owner of the Lieu Haras (and Mayor of Hérouvillette), refused to live under one roof with the Germans and, as soon as they requisitioned his property in 1940, had gone with his family to live in his other house in nearby Touffréville. Marie Voloszin, then 24 years old, had been working as a cook in the Lieu Haras farm for five years and by 1944 had been living among the Germans for two years. Her husband was held prisoner of war in Germany and she disliked the Germans intensely, especially the company's silent and unfriendly equipment NCO, Unteroffizier Karl Finkenrath. In all

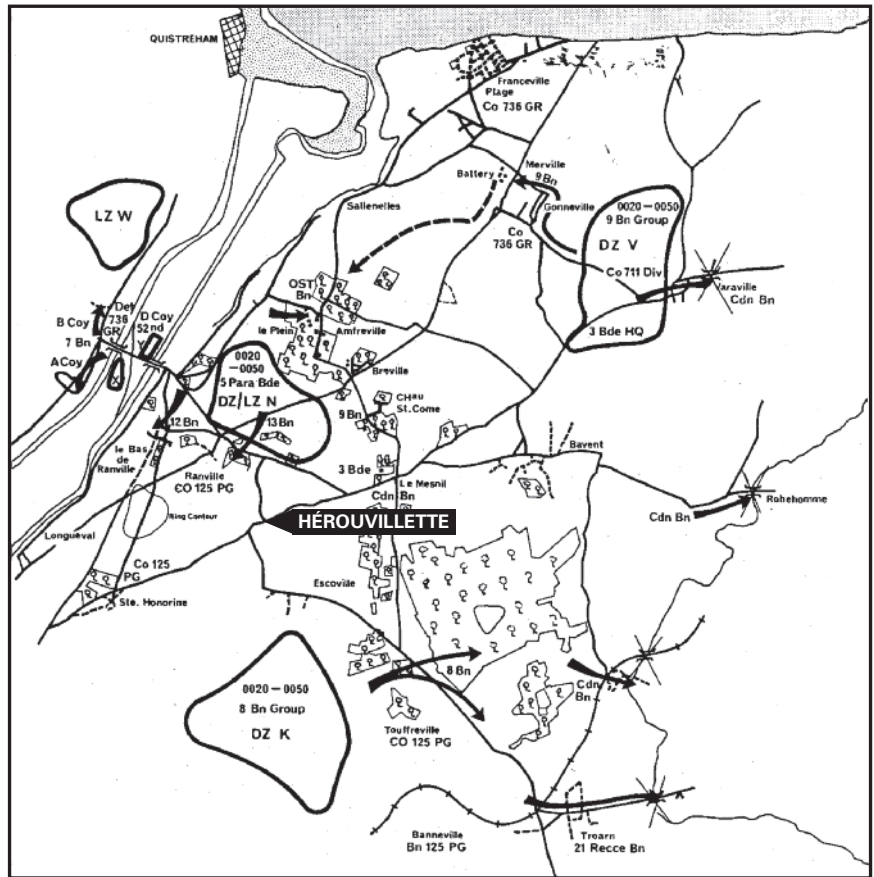


Ever since they arrived in the area, the German engineers worked on preparing their coastal sector of the Atlantikwall for defence: they dug trenches, laid mines, constructed concrete defence works, etc.

In April 1944, the Germans ordered the locals to help them with erecting three-metre-high wooden poles in the open fields around the village, part of a scheme initiated all along the Atlantic coast to prevent enemy glider landing operations. One of those called up for this work was 19-year-old André Launay. At first the French labourers did what they were told to do, but after a while they started to know their German guards and their work slackened. With bread and wine they could negotiate their work conditions with some of the Germans, whose ration was rather meagre. More than once the guards told their work detail: 'Go there but when the officers come: *Arbeite!*' André had chats with some of the soldiers who were especially talkative when alone, for instance Obergefreiter Otto Reinhardt, who believed that the invasion would take place somewhere else and had no fear of the Tommies, or the Russians, but when asked about the Americans, would always react with a: '*Ruhe! Arbeiten!*' When the more-fanatic Germans were around, the others kept silent. Sometimes the young Frenchmen tried to make fools out of the Germans by placing the wooden posts with the sharp end upwards and the stump downwards. When the Germans then told them that was not the correct way, they would play dumb: '*Comment? ... Pourquoi? ... Aha!*'

None of the Germans nor any of the villagers realised that, across the Channel, their little village figured largely on the planning maps of the British 6th Airborne Division, busily preparing its role in the forthcoming D-Day invasion. Just one kilometre north of the village, over on the other side of Ranville, lay Drop Zone N, where the division's 5th Parachute Brigade was planned to come down, while two kilometres to the south, beyond Escoville, was Drop Zone K, where the 8th Battalion of the 3rd Parachute Brigade was scheduled to be dropped. Hérouvillette itself, known by its code-name 'Oakeggar' on the airborne planning maps, was not a D-Day target as such, initial defence positions to be taken up by the 5th Parachute Brigade extending only to the southern edge of Ranville, but the village was to be occupied by the 2nd Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry of the 6th Airlanding Brigade on D+1.

On the evening of June 5, 1944, the people of Hérouvillette had no idea what was in store for them. If so, Mayor Balliere would have had troubles to calm them. André Launay stayed the night as usual at the farm of Marcel Pilet, his uncle, which was situated



**Hérouvillette lies east of the Orne river, some seven kilometres inland from the coast, and just south-east of Ranville. As such, it lay right in the heart of the area of the British airborne landings, being located about midway between Dropping Zone N near Ranville, where the 5th Parachute Brigade was to come down, and Dropping Zone K near Touffréville, where the main force of the 3rd Parachute Brigade was to land.**

on the road from Le Mariquet to Hérouvillette. In the Lieu Haras farm everything had gone quiet. Mölter had left to sleep in his billet in the village. The others had gone to bed as well. Only Obergefreiters Peter Eismar and Otto Reinhardt were on guard duty outside and Unteroffizier Paul Huisgen and Obergefreiter Fritz Kron were on duty in the manor house.

At 0007 hours on June 6, six Horsa gliders, carrying the British coup de main parties tasked with capturing the bridges over the Orne river and the adjoining Canal de Caen at Bénouville, cast off to land close to their objectives, thus opening up the British part of Operation 'Overlord'. Their tug aircraft,

Halifax bombers of Nos. 298 and 644 Squadrons, carried on inland another few miles to bomb another objective, a powder factory near Caen.

The sound of the bombs woke up Hauptmann Mölter in his billet in the village. He was used to bombing as in preceding nights the RAF had regularly struck targets in the area: the coastal battery at Merville, the city of Caen or the batteries along the coast. However, this time, looking out of his bedroom window in a southerly direction, he saw something new: flares in the sky and parachutes! Mölter got dressed as quickly as possible, forgetting his helmet and even his boots, jumped on his bicycle and started pedalling to the Lieu Haras.

His men at the stud farm and in the farm across the road had also seen the parachutes. Obergefreiters Eismar and Reinhardt heard noises and saw some light flashes in the distance, but initially did nothing. It was only when Unteroffizier Kron and Obergefreiter Huisgen came running out of the company office and saw what was happening that the alarm was sounded. Shouting '*Fallschirmjäger! Fallschirmjäger!*', they, together with Feldwebel Anton Sürth, woke up the other men, ordering them out into the courtyard. For a while there was panic. Unteroffizier Franz Wirtz and Obergefreiters Willy Mostrum and Michael Hommelsheim were instructed to get the rifles, which were stored in the shelter behind the farmhouse, and these were then passed out to the men.

Shortly afterwards, about 0035 hours, Mölter arrived at the farm on his bicycle. Eismar immediately reported that he had seen a lot of parachutes above the large fields to the south and south-west. Mölter, still in his bedroom slippers, told his men that the most



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likely attack was to come from the big fields behind the farm and ordered them to follow him to the racecourse.

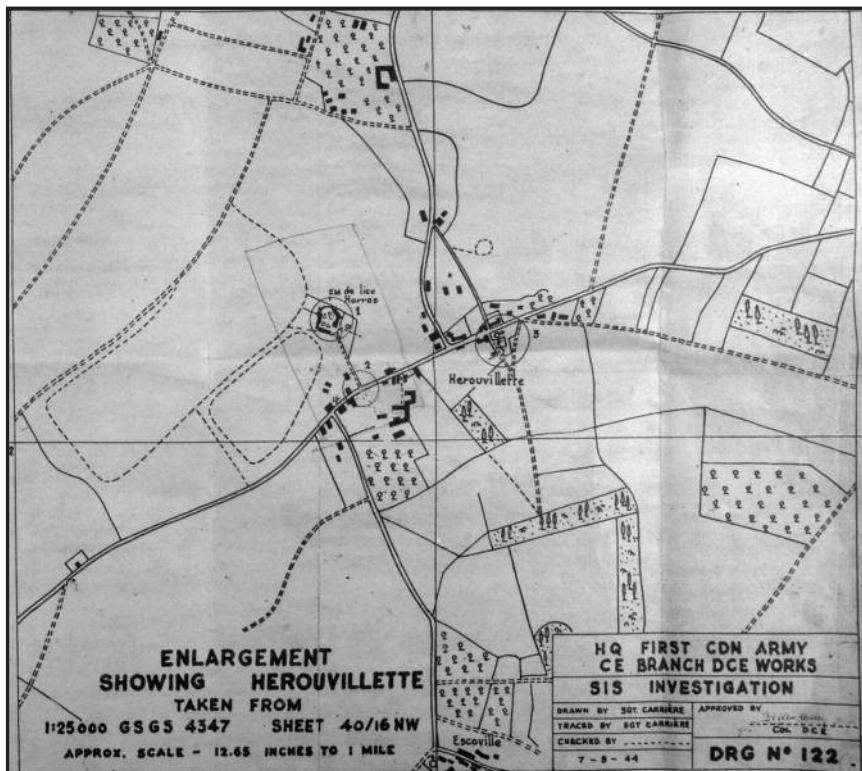
The paratroopers which the Germans had seen coming down was one (of two planned) pathfinder sticks of the 22nd Independent Parachute Company who were dropped on Drop Zone K at 0020, together with one (of two planned) sticks composing the advance party of the 8th Battalion under Major George Payne, to mark the zone with lights and a Eureka beacon for the battalion's main force due to come in at 0050. (The other pathfinder stick for DZ-K and the second 8th Battalion stick had mistakenly been dropped on DZ-N.)

At the racecourse, Mölter had been giving his orders for a quarter of an hour when suddenly, at 0050 hours, the main force of the 6th Airborne Division started to come over. As soon as the Allied aircraft crossed the coast, the searchlights at Cabourg opened up. Seeing a mass of paratroopers coming down in the fields to the north-west, Mölter immediately ordered his men to open fire on them. He then quickly sent everyone to their combat stations along the avenue of trees behind the farmhouse and the outer side of the adjacent garden wall. Obergefreiters Hans Schürmann, Ludwig Krugmann, Franz Königs, Erwin Rauchstädt and Willi Schäkel were ordered to take up positions along the avenue leading to the racecourse. Unteroffizier Wirtz and Obergefreiter Kron were told to take up a position 100 metres from the farmhouse, also in the direction of the racecourse. Feldwebel Sürth and Obergefreiter Karl Stark had to guard the main entrance to the courtyard, patrolling between the two wings of the farm building. Obergefreiter Alexander Rappo, Johann Lüke, and one other soldier were put in the farm across the road from the Lieu Haras. Thus Mölter's main defence was to the north and west of the farm.

Unteroffizier Huisgen was sent back to the company office to phone Major Koch at Battalion HQ at Caen to inform him about the parachute landings, which he did at about 0100. Unteroffizier Finkenrath, the equipment NCO, was ordered to the ordnance room, located at the end of the farm's left wing, to prime the hand-grenades with the help of a second soldier. All men then visited Finkenrath one at a time to collect their primed grenades.

The Germans were immediately in fire contact with the paratroopers that had landed and shortly after suffered their first casualties. Unteroffizier Bert Kühn and Obergefreiter Ludwig Krugmann were wounded, Obergefreiters Josef Langenkamp and Otto Reinhardt received serious wounds from which they would later die.

The mass of paratroopers that the Germans had seen coming down were those that landed on Drop Zone N, one kilometre to the north. They comprised the three battalions of the 5th Parachute Brigade — some 2,000 men in all — but also a sizable number of troops and a few gliders that were supposed to come down on Drop Zone K, three kilometres further south. Not realising that they had been released in the wrong place, the pathfinder team for DZ-K had unknowingly set up its K-coded lights and Eureka beacon on Drop Zone N, and this led to three out of six gliders and the majority of paratroops destined for DZ-K to mistakenly land on Drop Zone N. The paratroops comprised one stick of 3rd Parachute Brigade Headquarters; a large part of the 8th Battalion, mostly from C Company, including the company commander, Major George Hewetson; and several sticks of the 3rd Parachute Squadron, RE, including their commander, Major Tim Roseveare (whose specific task it was to blow up the vital bridges across the Dives river at Troarn and Bures on the far side of the Bois de Bavent forest). The three mis-landed Horsa gliders (Nos. 221-223 from



The Ferme du Lieu Haras lay at the western end of Hérouvillelette, between the village's main crossroad and the turn-off to Escoville.

Block 36 of Serial 16 from Blakehill Farm towed by Dakotas of No. 233 Squadron) were bringing Jeeps, trailers, motorcycles, bicycles, TNT explosives and medical equipment for the paratroops.

Both Major Hewetson and Major Roseveare quickly realised that they had been dropped in the wrong place and, independently of each other, began collecting their men and equipment in order to start on their way to their proper operational area as soon as possible. In the distance to the south they could make out the green and red Very lights that were fired from their own unit RV on Drop Zone K at Touffréville.

The Germans at the Lieu Haras farm could see that many of the enemy paratroopers that had just landed were moving towards a red light (probably the 13th Battalion's RV), which was visible in the direction of the coast. Shortly afterwards, as Mölter returned to the racetrack to inspect his men, he noticed a parachute hanging in a tree and a man trying to get out of his harness. He immediately took the man prisoner and searching him, found his pay book and discovered that he was a British officer. He ordered Eismar to inform division by phone about the prisoner. Eismar went to the company office and ordered Königs to do so. Mölter handed the British officer over to Finkenrath with orders to lock him up and guard him well. Finkenrath bound the prisoner's hands, then took him to the ordnance room.

Mölter went to see what was happening on the road. When he returned to his office one of his men informed him that Oberst Ludwig Krug, the commander of Grenadier-Regiment 736 (to which Mölter's company was affiliated), was on the telephone and he took the call. In the middle of the conversation the line went dead. By now Mölter had no way of communicating with his other platoons. His 1. Zug was somewhere with the infantry, 2. Zug could not get across the canal as the bridge at Bénouville was in enemy hands and the 3. Zug had to stay in Sallenelles.

Around 0200 three military policemen from the divisional Feldgendarmarie-Trupp arrived in a vehicle to collect the captured

officer. Hauptfeldwebel Hartwig took them to Finkenrath, who handed over the prisoner to the provosts.

Meanwhile Obergefreiter Schäkel had been ordered by Feldwebel Helmut Lindert to go to the farm's coal shed as he had seen a paratrooper in that area. Lindert wanted Schäkel to kill the enemy soldier silently, so that he would not give away their position. Schäkel found the paratrooper still in his harness and motionless. He struck him with his rifle butt (which damaged the weapon) but, as the soldier did not move, Schäkel assumed that he was dead. He reported back to Lindert who ordered him to get a new rifle. Later that night Mölter ordered Finkenrath to check if the soldier was still alive or not. He found the man some six metres from an air raid shelter and three metres from the tree-lined driveway to the farm. He was dead.

Meanwhile, the first of the airborne troops that had mis-landed on Drop Zone N had set off to their proper operational zone three kilometres to the south-east. By 0230, Major Roseveare had gathered six officers and 30 men of his own sapper unit, some 20 men from the 8th Battalion and a medical Jeep and trailer of No. 2 Section of the 224th Parachute Field Ambulance with four occupants at Le Mariquet, just east of Ranville on the southern edge of Drop Zone N. A sufficient quantity of explosive and demolition equipment had also been collected from kitbags and container loads and loaded on to six trolleys. With no time to waste, Roseveare and his men set off in the direction of Touffréville, en route for their bridge objectives at Troarn and Bures. Taking the small road south from Le Mariquet, moving cautiously through the night, they passed the farm in which André Launay was listening to the sounds of war outside and reached the outskirts of Hérouvillelette. Roseveare had no idea that there were some 30 Germans in the Ferme du Lieu Haras, who could easily stop him if they decided to defend the village crossroads. However, nothing happened. They turned right at the crossroads, passed the entrance to the Lieu Haras and then turned left into the

**Right: The soldiers murdered by Finkenrath were taken prisoner during a number of combat incidents between other members of his unit and British airborne troops that occurred shortly after one another at the entrance to the farm. Each of these skirmishes led to one or more wounded soldiers being taken prisoner and escorted into the farm.**

Escoville road. As Roseveare later wrote: 'We passed through Hérouvillette and Escoville without incident. If there were any Germans there they must have pulled the bed clothes a little higher.' Mölter's men were there but their eyes were fixed on the fields to the south-west and north-west and none of them saw the engineer party pass through the village. Later that night, making good use of the medical Jeep, Roseveare's men successfully blew the bridges at Bures and Troarn (see *After the Battle No. 1 and D-Day Then and Now*, Volume 1).

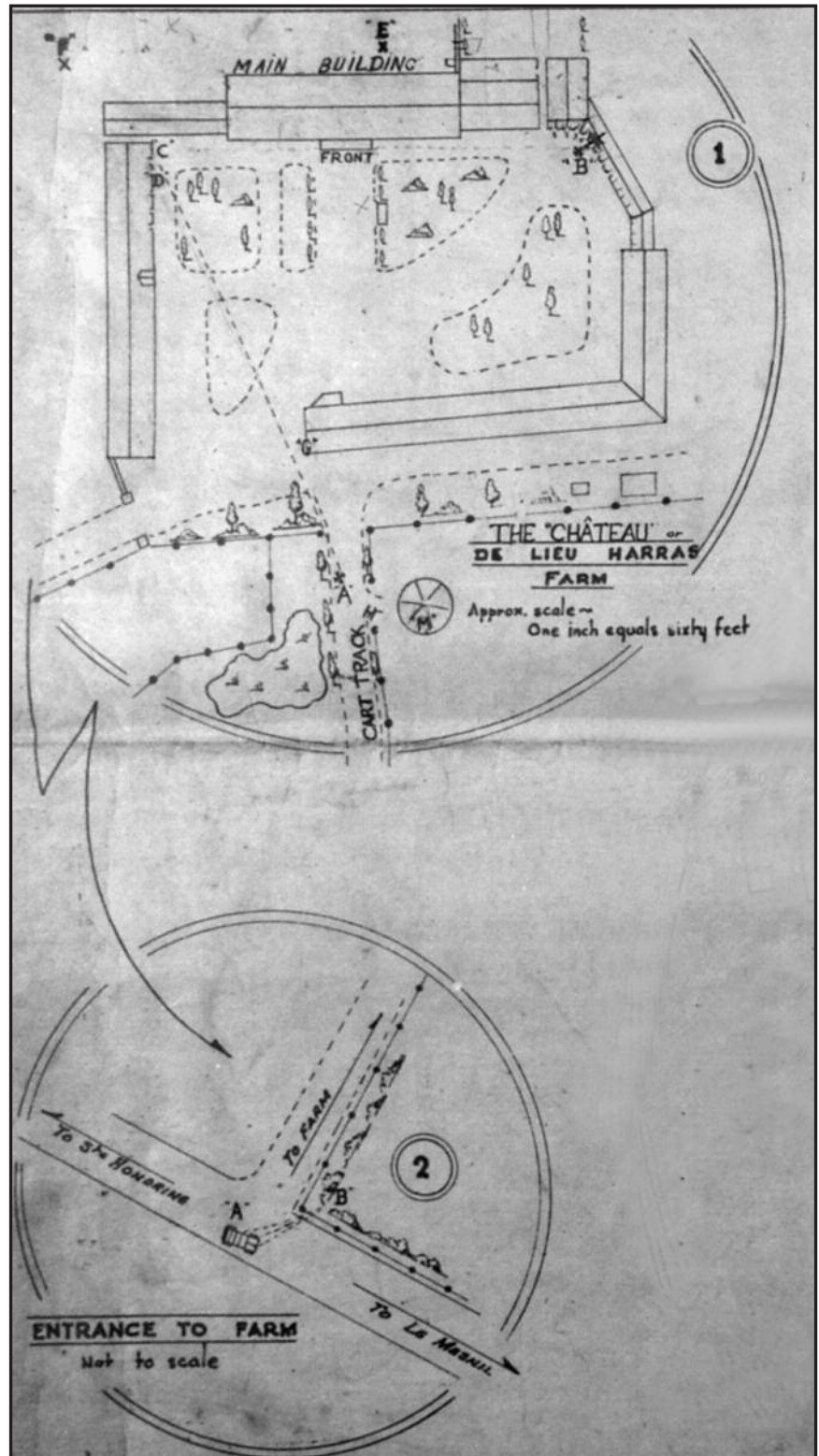
About 0330, Hauptmann Mölter, who was still walking about on his slippers and unarmed, ordered Eismar to go down to his billet in the village and collect his helmet, boots and machine pistol. Eismar jumped on a bicycle but, as he pedalled down the drive towards the main road, suddenly noticed movement up ahead. Stopping, he saw men moving on the road, pulling small trolleys. Eismar dismounted and ran back to warn his commander.

The men that Eismar saw most likely belonged to the party from the 8th Battalion gathered by Major Hewetson of C Company on Drop Zone N. Since landing, Hewetson had managed to assemble four officers and 51 other ranks. The trolleys Eismar saw must have been those of the battalion's Mortar or Administrative Platoons or those of the sappers of the 3rd Parachute Squadron who had joined up with Hewetson: a party of five under Lieutenant Bob Beaumont of No. 2 Troop and another of eight under Captain Freddy Fox of No. 1 Troop. The latter had a trolley with them. Probably also part of this group were two of the glider pilots of one the Horsas that had mis-landed. After they had unloaded their medical Jeep and trailer from their glider (this was the Jeep that had gone with Major Roseveare's party), Staff Sergeant Laurie Weeden and Sergeant Dan Griffiths of No. 14 Flight, F Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment, uncertain of their whereabouts, had latched on to a party of paratroopers and departed from the drop zone with them. Leading his group southwards, Hewetson's route took him straight through Hérouvillette.

On getting Eismar's report, Mölter ordered Feldwebel Lindert, Obergefreiter Alois Mahlberg, Hommelsheim, Eismar, Mostrum and maybe some others to take up a position as a standing patrol near the junction of the farm lane and the main road. As this group cautiously approached the junction, the road seemed empty again but, 20 metres from it, a machine gun opened up from the other side of the road. The Germans returned fire and started throwing hand-grenades.

In the skirmish that ensued the airborne NCO commanding the lead section was wounded and Lance-Corporal Ernest Ealham of C Company took over. Three other men of his platoon including the Bren gunner were wounded. Ealham pulled back the rest of his group, then returned to collect the wounded Bren gunner.

Marching in the back of the column, Staff Sergeant Weeden saw it being broken in two by the enfiling enemy fire. The lead half turned left towards Escoville and disappeared from view. All officers had been in front and so a paratrooper sergeant told Weeden he was now senior NCO. Weeden protested, saying this was an infantry, not a flying situation, but the sergeant declined on



the grounds that he did not know the men, so Weeden took charge. After withdrawing all men from the village, he ordered them to leave the road and proceed cross-country to their objective in the Bois de Bavent. Thus, he managed to get his group out of Hérouvillette without losing a man.

Hewetson's group too had escaped by climbing several walls, although Captain Fox's party had been forced to leave their trolley behind. C Company had suffered six casualties in the nightly action. One of them was Private Charles Cooper who was left behind with wounds to the eye. No more was heard of him.

After the enemy paratroopers had cleared

the area, the Germans came out of cover and cautiously approached the road, starting an immediate search of the area. They found Obergefreiter Rappo, Lüke and one other soldier still holding the farm across the road. Hartwig found a Bren gun in the washhouse next to the farm (very likely the one left behind in the action of Lance-Corporal Ealham). Suddenly shouts rang out: 'Enemy in the farm!' Cautiously Mahlberg and Mostrum searched the building. After about 30 minutes they heard a weak voice: 'Comrade!' and found an airborne soldier who was wounded in the shoulder. With fixed bayonets Mostrum and Rauchstädt escorted him to the Lieu Haras farm.

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The first skirmish was with troops of C Company of the 8th Parachute Battalion passing through Hérouvillette on their way to their objective in the Bois de Bavent. The party was led by the C Company commander, Major George Hewetson (right). In the aftermath of the nightly exchange of fire, the Germans found and captured two wounded airborne soldiers. The second incident involved a couple of British airborne motorcyclists, one of whom was shot off his bike and captured by the Germans. The third incident comprised a firefight with the occupants of an airborne Jeep that came driving into the village from the direction of Ranville. One of those killed in this encounter was Company Quartermaster-Sergeant John Isaacs of Hewetson's C Company (left).

In the farmhouse, Marie Voloszin was by now awake and had decided to get up. It was about 0530 when she arrived in the kitchen to light the fire and make breakfast for the children. A few minutes later, she saw two German soldiers going towards the main gate. They returned with a prisoner, a stocky figure with thin black hair and a small moustache, who was bleeding from a wound in the left shoulder. (His wound identifies this prisoner as the man found in the farm across the road). The captured soldier was handed over to Mölter in the courtyard, who searched him, then handed him over to Finkenrath. Obergefreiter Stark, still on guard at the

courtyard entrance, could see that Mölter said something to Finkenrath but he could not hear what was being said. (At his post-war trial Finkenrath would later claim that Mölter had said: 'Umlegen' — Kill him.)

Finkenrath pushed the paratrooper in the back and led him across the yard and into a lane that led behind the stables. Stark followed Finkenrath and the prisoner from a little distance. It was still dark and he could barely see the two men but he heard the tread of both. Suddenly there was a flash. Stark asked Finkenrath what had happened and he said: 'Der ist umgelegt!' (That one has been disposed of!)

Stark was not the only one who had seen Finkenrath shoot the prisoner. Marie Voloszin had just gone to the dairy to get some milk and, through the window, saw the two Germans with the paratrooper walking down the lane and saw Finkenrath shooting him. (After the war Finkenrath claimed that the prisoner had tried to run away but neither Stark nor Voloszin had seen the POW attempting to bolt.)

Meanwhile, British paratrooper units of the 5th Parachute Brigade had taken up positions on the south side of Ranville, close to Hérouvillette, their task being to protect the landing zones for the glider lifts, the first one expected at 0320 hours and the second, larger, one at 2100.

Probably one of the closest British positions was that taken up by Lieutenant Ellis ('Dixie') Dean, commander of the 13th Battalion's Medium Machine Gun Platoon. Dean had left one of his Vickers guns under command of Sergeant George Kelly with A Company of the 12th Battalion near Le Bas de Ranville, then moved east into his own battalion's sector. About 0330, he put up his second gun under Sergeant Stan Osborne to guard a junction of two tracks, one running from Le Mariquet towards Sainte-Honorine, the other going off to Le Lieu Haras. Thus he was now about 200 metres east of the farm occupied by Mölter's men.

The position was unsuitable with high corn in front but Dean had no authority to change position from the Brigade Machine Gun Officer, Lieutenant John Bowler, so he ordered his section to dig in. Setting to work with picks and shovels and a few explosives to create a good firing position, Dean's men alarmed the Germans in the farm and a few wild shots were fired at them. Red, yellow and orange lights of supply containers could be seen in the corn in front so Dean and an NCO ventured out to see if they contained any ammo for his Vickers but to no avail.

Another platoon leader from the 13th Battalion, Lieutenant William ('Joe') Hodgson of No. 2 Platoon of A Company, had been ordered to establish a battle outpost in Hérouvillette. Hodgson led a patrol into the village but found that it was in enemy hands. After reporting the situation at 0600 hours,



Left: One of the prime witnesses to the murders committed by Finkenrath was Marie Voloszin, a 24-year-old Polish girl employed as cook and dairy maid at the farm. This is the area from where she witnessed the sequence of events. The second door from the left marked with an 'X' is the dairy from where she saw Finkenrath shoot the first prisoner. The door to the



right of that leads to the kitchen from where, about half an hour later, she witnessed Finkenrath killing the second prisoner. The door on the far right is another entrance to the kitchen. Right: The shell damage to the roof has been repaired but otherwise time has virtually stood still at the Lieu Haras farm since 1944.



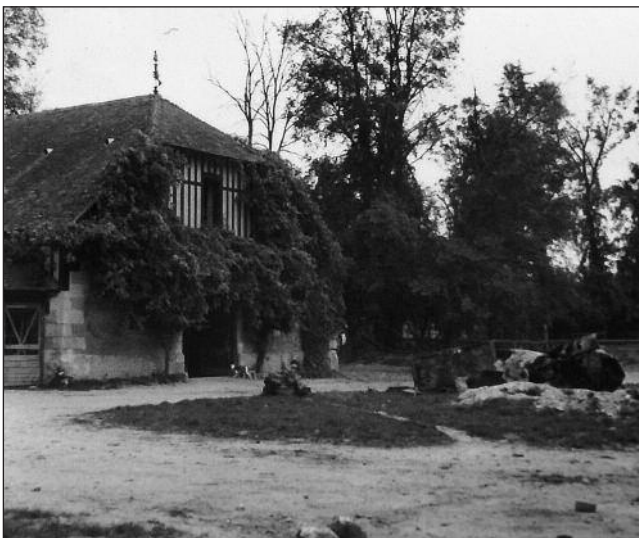
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*Left:* The view from the kitchen door showing a member of the war crime investigation team standing at the spot where Voloszin saw the first captured paratrooper being interrogated



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by Hauptmann Leo Mölter and then being handed over to Finkenrath. *Right:* Our author Carl Rymen standing in for the British serviceman.



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*Left:* Voloszin then saw the prisoner being marched by Finkenrath past the main entrance to the stables and around the corner. A moment later, a report rang out and she saw the pris-



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oner fall to the ground dead, shot from behind by Finkenrath. *Right:* With less foliage on the trees, the houses of Hérouvillette come into view.



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The opposite view, looking back from where the paratrooper was shot to the dairy door across the yard. The investigators



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wanted to prove that it was possible for Marie Voloszin to see the killing from where she was standing.



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The scene of the clashes on the main road was photographed by the British war crime investigation team a few weeks after D-Day. The view is looking out of the village, south-west towards Sainte-Honorine. The entrance to the farm lies on the right. French witnesses stated that the bodies of the airborne

soldiers killed in the Jeep battle were afterwards laid on the verge on either side of the road, this side of the farm entrance, although they disagreed between them on the number of dead on each side, leaving doubts as to whether the total was four or five.

he therefore took up a position along the Ranville to Hérouvillette road in a field next to the one where Lieutenant Gordon ('Crasher') O'Brien-Hitching and his men of No. 1 Platoon had dug their slit trenches. During the day they would hold off several German attacks launched at them from the direction of the Lieu Haras.

At first light, Mölter sent Mostrum and Rauchstädt to his billet in the village to at last get his boots, which he had still not

received due to the skirmish on the road. That done, the two men rejoined the group guarding the farm exit.

Around 0600, the men there saw two motorcycles approaching (three according to Mahlberg) from the direction of Sainte-Honorine. The Germans called out: 'Parole!' One (two according to Mahlberg) of the riders immediately turned right, into the road to Escoville, and made good his escape, but the other accelerated and continued straight on

towards the Germans. They opened fire and the rider fell off his bike, wounded in the thigh. Mahlberg immediately searched him while Mostrum inspected the bike. The captured soldier was about 40 years old, wore glasses and spoke German.

Around that time (maybe earlier) Hommelsheim spotted another paratrooper behind a fruit tree in the field next to the farm across the road. Some 30 years old and slightly wounded in the legs, he too was taken prisoner. Mahlberg sent the two POWs to the company office.

**From 1944 to 2009 — the same view today, pictured by Carl Rymen.**



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**One of the French witnesses, Henri Musset, standing at the upstairs window of his house from where he saw the ambush of the Jeep.**



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**The Musset house stands right opposite the farm entrance. Unchanged since the war, the bloody skirmish that occurred on its doorstep is now an echo from the past.**

Shortly after this, sometime between 0630 and 0730, the guard near the road ambushed and shot up an airborne Jeep. Exactly what happened is not clear. Just after first light, a Jeep and trailer carrying four or five British soldiers cautiously appeared around the corner of a house from the direction of Ranville and slowly came towards the Germans near the drive to the farm. When it was about 20 metres away, Eismar and Mahlberg and the others opened up and a short fire-fight ensued. Two of the men in the Jeep jumped or fell out and returned fire with a machine gun from a ditch. The driver had been hit straightaway, the remaining two fired back from behind the car. The fight ended with all of the occupants of the Jeep either dead or severely wounded. According to several witnesses, some of the wounded were finished off with rifle butts. Königs, for one, saw Mostrom striking the soldier in the Jeep with his rifle. Two French witnesses, Henri Musset, who lived in the farmhouse at the junction and saw the fight from his upstairs window, and André Morel, who witnessed it from his house next to the farm entrance, said the Germans finished off the survivors by shooting and clubbing them to death with rifle butts. Another Frenchman, Pierre Cordier, saw one German use his rifle butt and bayonet on the one soldier still in the car and another German first finish off the two wounded soldiers on the road and then the two wounded men kneeling at the rear of the car, even though the latter two had their hands up in surrender.

The post-war British Military Court would later rule that these killings were not acts of cold-blooded murder but merely actions taken in the heat of battle. The question, however, remains whether none of the British soldiers survived the incident or whether perhaps one did, albeit with serious injuries, and was brought into the farm as captive. When later questioned, the various French witnesses remembered seeing a number of bodies dumped beside the road — some on the left, some on the right — but they disagreed on the exact number seen at each spot. Henri Musset said three on the left and two on the right; Pierre Chiltz said two or three left and two right; Pierre Cordier and Marguerite Chiltz two left and three right. This leaves open the possibility that only four were killed and that one was taken captive.

**Right: The farm's ornate gate posts have gone and the fence moved back but otherwise the junction remains the same.**



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**Looking back towards Hérouvillette, with the farm entrance now on the left. Henri Musset is standing on the spot which the Jeep had reached when he saw it being fired on and brought to a halt.**



CARL RYMEN



BA 298/1789/19



BA 298/1790/2

Although no pictures were taken at the Lieu Haras farm on D-Day, these images by German Propaganda-Kompanie photographer Speck can serve to illustrate the scenes that unrolled in the farm courtyard during those fateful hours: individual prisoners of war, some of them wounded, being brought in to be searched and questioned and then being led away under guard. Normally this was to a POW cage but in the case of those captured at the Lieu Haras farm they were killed on the spot.

Numerous soldiers of the 6th Airborne were captured in the first hours of the landings, providing German PK photographers with a field day. (The wounded prisoner in the picture (right) is Sergeant John Potts, of B Squadron of the Glider Pilot Regiment, who was taken prisoner after his Horsa glider, carrying a Jeep and a Forward Observation Officer of the 5th Parachute Brigade, landed prematurely due to its tow-rope breaking. Unlike the unfortunate soldiers at Hérouvillette, he survived his captivity.)

When Mahlberg reported the Jeep incident to Mölter, the latter ordered to put the dead next to the road, specifically instructing 'that no one lays a hand upon the bodies or takes anything from them'. Mostrum thereupon dumped the bodies in the ditch beside the road. Eismar then drove the Jeep and trailer into the lane, where he and Mahlberg inspected its load. They found two carrier pigeons in the vehicle and ammunition, mine detectors, a motorcycle and a wireless set in the trailer. Half an hour later, the Jeep was driven into the farm courtyard.

In the meantime much had happened there as well. Unfortunately, post-war witness accounts disagree on many details. After Finkenrath had murdered the first prisoner, more prisoners were sent down from the main road to the farm. Throughout this time Finkenrath and Obergefreiter Willi Weidemann were around to search them. Other German soldiers were present as well, notably Obergefreiter Stark, on sentry duty in the courtyard, and Unteroffizier Huisgen, in the company office, who treated the wounded POWs. Some of the French people living at or near the farm also witnessed some of the events.

According to Stark, around 0400 or 0500 three more prisoners, their hands high in the air and without guards, arrived from the road. Stark claims Obergefreiter Weidemann searched them in the company office, then told Finkenrath and Stark to lock them up in the stables. They took the captured soldiers

to two of the loose boxes. Stark returned to the office, leaving the POWs with Finkenrath, but he had just entered the room when he heard three shots. Looking out of the window he saw Finkenrath close the stable doors. Going down to have a look later, Stark saw three dead bodies in the boxes.

Some time later, between 0600 and 0630, Obergefreiter Kron brought in yet another captured soldier. Weidemann and Finkenrath also searched this prisoner, finding maps and photographs on him. Stark saw Finkenrath taking the man's watch off him. He then saw Finkenrath accompanying the man to another of the stables and, when he was just inside, shoot him as well. Stark claims he actually saw the victim falling face forward to the ground. (Huisgen only saw Finkenrath putting his pistol back in his holster as he came out of the stables.)

If Stark's account is correct, then Finkenrath had by now murdered a total of five captured British airborne soldiers. In order of probable arrival, these must have included the soldier (wounded in the shoulder) found in the farm opposite the lane; the soldier (wounded in the legs) found behind the fruit tree; the one soldier (wounded in the thigh) shot off his motorbike; and, possibly, one surviving occupant of the Jeep (although none of the witnesses say that any of them survived that firefight).

The statements by French locals who witnessed the events at the farm confirm that at least two captured soldiers were shot in the

grounds but there is no one confirming Stark's allegation that Finkenrath shot an additional trio in one of the stables.

Marie Voloszin, having already witnessed the murder of the first paratrooper, saw about a half an hour later how two Germans came in with another POW followed by Albert Desrues, a Frenchman who had been wounded in the leg. She was standing in the kitchen door and had a good view of the whole courtyard. 'They led the paratrooper in front of the mansion, questioned and searched him. The prisoner gave the Germans cigarettes. The Germans told the civilian to go away, which he did. Then the paratrooper had to put his jacket on. Finkenrath ordered the prisoner to go to a certain place. Then I heard a shot and I saw the POW fall to the ground.' Albert Desrues was not in a position to see the actual shooting but he heard the shot.

According to Desrues, about one hour later, so around 0730, Finkenrath executed yet another prisoner. This one had been brought in in an ambulance, was questioned by Finkenrath and another NCO, then taken to the rear of the mansion by Finkenrath and shot there. Desrues testified that he actually witnessed this incident. Another French witness, 82-year-old Paul Leverrier, corroborated this murder: 'I saw one prisoner of war killed behind the mansion by one German . . . the other German, an NCO, waited at the front entrance of the mansion'.



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Half an hour after she saw the first killing, Marie Voloszín witnessed Finkenrath kill a second captured airborne trooper. This is the view from the kitchen door showing a member of the



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investigation team (circled) standing in front of one of the stable doors across the yard, on the spot where she said the second paratrooper was standing when he was shot.

At mid-morning, Mölter's beleaguered engineers at last received reinforcements. About 1000 hours, a major, lieutenant and two NCOs of the 21. Panzer-Division arrived in Hérouvillette. The two officers were most likely Major Hans von Luck, commander of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 125, and Leutnant Gerhardt Bandomir, commander of that regiment's 3. Kompanie.

Before dawn, Major von Luck, waiting at his command post at Vimont, east of Caen, and utterly frustrated at not yet having received any attack orders from his divisional commander, Generalleutnant Edgar Feuchtinger, had decided to act under his own responsibility. Calling Bandomir to his command post, he had instructed him to take his company and relieve the regiment's 5. Kompanie, which was heavily engaged by enemy airborne troops around Troarn, and then to attack towards Hérouvillette and Ranville in order to relieve the regiment's 7. Kompanie in that area.

Bandomir's company consisted of 180 men in lorries, equipped with four heavy machine guns, three 3.7cm guns and a platoon of three 7.5cm guns. As armoured support, he was

given six to ten assault guns under command of an Oberleutnant. (These were more likely the Somua 7.5cm half-track-mounted anti-tank guns of the 8. (schwere) Kompanie of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 125 under Oberleutnant Günter Laber rather than the Hotchkiss 10.5cm self-propelled howitzers of Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 200 as this latter unit only arrived in von Luck's area on the evening of June 7.) Bandomir then led his force from Escoville, where he relieved the 7. Kompanie, and then on to Hérouvillette.

Mölter was surprised and relieved to see the arrival of the self-propelled guns and infantry. He hastily explained the situation to the panzer officers, then took the lieutenant on a reconnaissance of the racecourse. Halfway they came under heavy enemy fire. Leutnant Bandomir quickly mounted a counter-attack, with his own 3. Kompanie on the left, the relieved 7. Kompanie on the right and the self-propelled guns in support.

The attack, launched at 1020, was easily staved off by A Company of the 13th Battalion. Bandomir's men had to cross a field surrounded with fences (probably the racecourse), then enter into a cornfield. Hardly

had the SP guns and the leading panzergrenadier platoon entered the field, or four of the SP guns were knocked out and started to burn, disabled without having fired a shot. The infantry platoon lost some 15 to 20 men, including the platoon leader killed and several men being taken prisoner.

Their nose bloodied, the panzergrenadiers withdrew and prepared for defence in the hedges. Bandomir thought that the SP guns had been knocked out by PIATs but in actual fact they had been hit by the 6-pounder anti-tank guns of Sergeant Bert Clement and Lance-Sergeant Charles Portman of the 4th Airlanding Battery, RA, which had come in by glider at 0330 hours.

As this battle unfolded, Lieutenant Dean was just underway to Sergeant Osborne's machine-gun position, the one positioned close to the Lieu Haras farm, as he wanted to relocate this gun. As he got near, he could hear engines and a bit later could see three enemy SPs burning. Leaving his men under Lance-Sergeant Tom Donnelly with the ammo carriers, he continued on with Private Alf Williams. When they reached the position where the SP guns had gone through the



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Left: The entrance to the main farmhouse. This photo was taken to document a suspected third killing by Finkenrath, as reported by witness Albert Desrues. According to him, a captured soldier was taken into the building through the front door



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and taken out the back, where Desrues saw him being shot outside the corresponding back window of the window to the right of the entrance. Right: Its grand appearance explains why the mansion is often referred to as a 'château' in the case records.

hedge, Williams cautioned Dean: 'Jerry's up there!' Suddenly a few Germans appeared. Throwing a hand-grenade, immediately followed by bursts of Sten-gun fire, Dean and Williams drove the Germans away in panic. One of them had dropped down wounded and called after his mates, who returned to fetch him. (Dean now believes that this enemy party was the reconnaissance patrol of Mölter and his panzergrenadier lieutenant but, based on the timings, it is more likely that it was part of the attacking force.)

Dean and Williams then tried to find Osborne but all they came across was the Vickers machine gun, abandoned in a hedge. They retrieved it and returned to the other men, then retreated to a new section area in Ranville. Here they found Osborne who told them what had happened. When the enemy SPs had arrived they had shot up his position and wounded both Lance-Corporal Charlie King and Lance-Corporal Don Jones, so, leaving the gun hidden in the hedge, Osborne had brought them to the Regimental Aid Post.

As the Germans pulled out of the attack, the major from the 21. Panzer-Division arrived again for news. Mölter explained the situation to him and the major left to summon reinforcements.

Throughout the rest of the day, the battle between the British airborne troops and the Germans in Hérouvillette ebbed back and forth. More and more German wounded were brought in at the farm. Huisgen treated them as best he could, from 1000 hours assisting Leutnant Dr Hans Maedge, Medical Officer of Pionier-Bataillon 716, who had arrived from Sainte-Honorine.

During the morning, the 13th Battalion at Ranville had had put down more mines in front of its positions. Sappers of Nos. 1 and 3 Troops of the 591st Parachute Squadron, RE, further expanded these minefields later on. These mines made the German counter-attacks even more difficult. At noon an artillery concentration was put on the Hérouvillette racecourse to assist 13th Battalion's A Company. The company reported one more enemy SP gun knocked out.

In the late afternoon Hauptmann Mölter received orders to wait for troops to relieve him and then to fall back on Escoville. It had been a long day and he had lost some of his men but there was still no reinforcement. Later, a despatch rider arrived with new



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**The German counter-attacks at Hérouvillette on D-Day were initiated by Leutnant Gerhardt Bandomir, commanding the 3. Kompanie of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 125 (left). Here he confers with his regimental commander, Major Hans von Luck (centre). Looking on is Major Willi Kurz, commander of the regiment's II. Bataillon.**

orders for the engineers: they were now to evacuate to Sainte-Honorine.

By that time there were still a few prisoners at the farm, each one locked up in a separate loose box. Obergefreiter Lüke of the company transport section later testified that, looking for a place to temporarily park his two horses before departure, he opened some of the boxes and saw single prisoners in two of them, both apparently wounded. Both men asked for water, which he gave them, then locked the doors again. This was about 1900 hours. Apparently, these two prisoners were left behind when the Germans evacuated Hérouvillette an hour later.

The men of Mölter's company headquarters pulled out in two parties, one going to Escoville, the other to Sainte-Honorine. Those who arrived in Sainte-Honorine were absorbed into Panzer-Pionier-Bataillon 220, the engineer unit of the 21. Panzer-Division, and stayed with that unit for the rest of the war. One of those was Finkenrath who must have performed well with his new unit as he was later awarded the Iron

Cross First Class for his role in three counter-attacks near Sainte-Honorine. He already held the Iron Cross Second Class for action in Russia.

The following day, June 7, the 2nd Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, part of the 6th Airlanding Brigade, advanced southwards from Ranville with orders to occupy Escoville. Moving off at 0430, they found Hérouvillette clear of the enemy but, as they advanced through the village, the road junctions leading to Escoville and Sainte-Honorine were shelled. Nonetheless, the battalion pushed on and by 1100 had reached and occupied its objective, Escoville. However, as the day wore on, the forward companies suffered increasing casualties from heavy artillery and mortar fire and from 1500 enemy infantry and armour attacks. Under this pressure, and with no anti-tank guns to counter the armour, a decision was taken to abandon Escoville and pull back to Hérouvillette, where Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Roberts had set up his battalion command post.



IWM B5585

**Left: On June 7, one day after the murders, the 2nd Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry seized Hérouvillette without a fight, the Germans having abandoned the village the previous evening. A week later, on the 15th, Sergeant Jimmy**



MARCO BOERSMA

**Mapham of the Army Film and Photo Unit pictured men of the glider battalion enjoying the company of a local beauty. Right: The same house, now no longer a liquor shop, on what is today Rue de la Libération in the centre of the village.**



IWM B7765

**Left: A month later, on July 20, with Second Army's ill-fated 'Goodwood' armoured offensive just coming to a close, AFPU Sergeant Jimmy Christie photographed a Sherman tank at the turn-off to Escoville. This is in fact the same side road down**



MARCO BOERSMA

**which one of the airborne soldiers on motorbike quick-wittedly escaped when fired on by the Germans at the entrance to the Lieu Haras farm on the morning of D-Day. Right: The same junction today.**

That same day, a British Army padre — most likely Captain Reverend David Nimmo of the 2nd Ox & Bucks — collected the various bodies of dead British soldiers found in the village, including those at the Lieu Haras farm, and buried them in the communal cemetery next to the village church.

The 2nd Ox & Bucks stayed in Hérouvillette for another six days, fortifying the village and staving off German counter-attacks from Escoville, a particular strong one being launched in the evening of the 9th. On June 13, they were relieved by the 7th Battalion. Its C Company occupied the Lieu Haras, 'a most imposing-looking mansion with stables, empty, and ample grounds including a training gallop. It had been used by German engineers who had left much of their gear behind. C Company, however, was more interested in the beer which was discovered in the cellars.'

#### THE TRIAL OF KARL FINKENRATH

It appears likely that the investigation into the Hérouvillette war crime murders was started by the French locals approaching the British soldiers in their village about what they had witnessed on the morning of D-Day. Their assertions led to Field Security taking sworn statements from them and this was developed into a file that was forwarded to the British Second Army War Crimes Section for further investigation. However, it was not until the summer of 1947 that the War Crimes Section of the Judge Advocate General's Branch of the British Army of the Rhine issued instructions for the case to be further examined and explored.

Much of the preliminary enquiry into the case was done by Major Eric ('Bill') Barkworth, commander of the Special Air Service (SAS) War Crimes Investigation Team. In the late summer of 1947 Barkworth traced, interrogated and took statements from several former members of the 1. Kompanie of Pionier-Bataillon 716 who had been at the Ferme du Lieu Haras in June 1944. Karl Finkenrath was found living in Wuppertal and gave a first statement on June 17. Karl Stark, who would become the prime witness for the prosecution at the trial, was questioned on September 6. Following this, Finkenrath was again interrogated on September 11. Two weeks later, on September 25, he was arrested by British Military Police.

Right from the beginning he admitted that he had shot one disabled prisoner but he claimed that this had been done on orders of his commander, Hauptmann Mölter. He

declared that Mölter had also ordered him to shoot a second prisoner but claimed he had faked carrying out this order, stating he had led this man to a stable, fired a bullet through the ceiling and then locked the door behind him. He said he still possessed the soldier's watch, which contained what appeared to be an Army serial number, and said the man should be able to be identified from it.

The trial of Karl Finkenrath took place in Hamburg in March-April 1948, being held in No. 5 Court of the Curiohaus. He appeared before a British Military Court presided by Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Van der Kiste, with Major Richard Hilliard as judge advocate, C.E.P. Roberts as prosecuting counsel and a German lawyer, Dr J. Hubbe, as counsel for the defendant.

Based on the evidence of Stark, Finkenrath was charged with the murder of five unknown Allied prisoners of war at Hérou-

villette on June 6. Finkenrath admitted that he had shot two prisoners, the second one brought in and the one whose watch he had taken, but he denied having shot the three prisoners in the stables or any other prisoners. In his defence, Dr Hubbe argued that Finkenrath had acted on orders of his superior, Hauptmann Mölter; that the POWs had tried to run away; and that before D-Day the company had received secret orders to take no prisoners of war.

When it became clear that Finkenrath's main defence was that he had acted under orders of his commanding officer, Mölter was called as a witness. He denied ever giving any orders to Finkenrath to kill the prisoners and also refuted that he had ever previously given orders that no prisoners of war were to be taken, as was suggested by Finkenrath and one of his witnesses, but denied by the witnesses for the prosecution.

The secret order brought up by the defence referred to the so-called Kommando-Befehl, the notorious Führerbefehl issued by Hitler on October 18, 1942 in the wake of the British commando raid on Sark (see *The War in the Channel Islands Then and Now*), that all enemy soldiers captured in commando-type operations were to be shot right away. Two or three months before the invasion Mölter had read out the Kommando-Befehl to his men, something that was confirmed by Mölter himself and several of the other German witnesses in their statements, but — as Major Wilhelm Wiegmann of the 716. Infanterie-Division intelligence staff testified — the order had been met with general disapproval. Most witnesses for the prosecution testified that they had understood the order as not being applicable to soldiers captured during large-scale airborne landings.

Most of the witnesses at the trial, both German and French, testified very negatively about Finkenrath: he was not liked in the village, had been seen shooting POWs and later been heard boasting about it.

In its verdict, the court did not accept Finkenrath's claim that Mölter had given him an order to kill the prisoners, either directly or as a result of a general order earlier. An important point here, agreed on by all sides, was that at least one prisoner had been taken and sent on to Divisional Headquarters. The court was not prepared to accept the uncorroborated evidence of Stark that Finkenrath had murdered the three prisoners together in one of the stables. As he had admitted to shooting two POWs, the court did not further investigate the other



TNA

**Born on April 19, 1909 in Wuppertal-Barmen, Karl Finkenrath was 35 years old when he committed his war crime in 1944. After the war he returned to his home town, making it relatively easy for British investigators to find him. This mug shot was taken on the day he was arrested, September 25, 1947.**



TNA

When the war crime investigators visited Hérouvillette's communal cemetery in 1944, there were only eight graves of British soldiers who had been killed on June 6. They contained the remains of Company Quartermaster-Sergeant John Isaacs, Corporal Raymond Langdon, Private Charles Cooper, Private Munro Meiklejohn, Private Dennis Russon and Private Sydney Walton of the 8th Parachute Battalion; Corporal Edward Burgess of the 12th Parachute Battalion; and Driver Douglas Coates of the 716th Airborne Light Composite Company, RASC. By necessity, the men killed at the Lieu Haras farm had to be included among them.

possible killings and convicted him for these two murders to death by hanging.

Strangely enough, although the court had no doubt that the murders had occurred, the victims remained unidentified. The investigative team had been unable to discover enough evidence to find out their names. They had tried to identify one soldier by the number on the watch recovered from Finkenrath but without result.

Finkenrath appealed for his sentence to be reconsidered. On April 19, 1948, while awaiting the outcome, he celebrated his 39th birthday in his cell. His appeal was turned down on April 28.

At 1010 on the morning of June 9, Finkenrath was executed at Hameln Prison near Hannover in Germany. The hanging was carried out by British executioner Albert Pierrepoint (who had been especially flown in from the UK), assisted by Regimental Sergeant-Major O'Neil, and was witnessed by Major Richard Flower and 2nd Lieutenant David Munn. He was one of the 64 men and women hanged for war crimes at Hameln Prison under British jurisdiction.

**Right:** As part of their investigation, the war crime investigation team drew up a sketch showing the exact location of the graves.

#### THE VICTIMS

So who were the airborne soldiers killed in Hérouvillette, either murdered by Finkenrath or killed in the various combat incidents around the farm? It is pretty certain that all were interred in the Hérouvillette communal cemetery. Today 27 British soldiers are buried there, 12 of them airborne troopers killed on June 6, 1944.

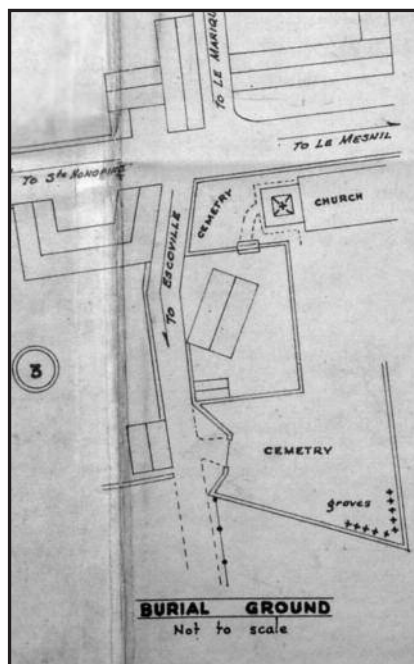
As to the men murdered by Finkenrath or killed in the ambush of the Jeep, the investigators in 1947 had already narrowed the possible candidates down to seven men: CQMS John Isaacs, Corporal Raymond Langdon and Privates Munro Meiklejohn, Dennis Russon and Sydney Walton, all of the

8th Battalion; Corporal Edward Burgess of the 12th Battalion; and Driver Douglas Coates of the 716th Light Composite Company, RASC. For some reason they did not include Private Charles Cooper, also buried in the cemetery and also of the 8th Battalion.

The first prisoner murdered by Finkenrath was the wounded soldier found in the farm across the road shortly after the skirmish with the paratroopers from the 8th Battalion under Major Hewetson. Therefore he most likely belonged to the 8th Battalion, more particular to C Company. Of the six D-Day casualties of this battalion now buried at Hérouvillette, only four qualify: Privates Cooper, Meiklejohn, Russon and Walton. The other two — CQMS Isaacs and Corporal Langdon — are known to have been killed in the later gunfight with the Jeep. Of these four, only one — Cooper — belonged to C Company. Meiklejohn and Russon belonged to Battalion HQ and Walton was from A Company. Cooper is also the one whom we know was left behind, with serious wounds to the eye, by Hewetson's group.

A further soldier was found behind the fruit tree in a nearby field. If he was from the 8th Battalion as well, then again Cooper, Meiklejohn, Russon and Walton are the only candidates. However, it is of course also possible that he was a paratrooper wounded during the drop who had tried to hide. In that case, he could have been Corporal Burgess of the 12th Battalion. Whoever he was, he cannot have been from Sergeant Weeden's group as the latter is sure that nobody was wounded or captured during his passing of Hérouvillette.

As to the two soldiers on motorbike that were ambushed near the entrance to the farm, it is possible that the one who was shot off his bike was glider pilot Staff Sergeant Bill England, but if so, he was not one of Finkenrath's victims, because he survived his captivity. England (who died in 1985) says that he decided to go back to Drop Zone N to get the Jeep (which they had left stuck





MARCO BOERSMA

Today there are 27 British soldiers buried in H erouvillette, 12 of them being airborne soldiers killed on June 6, which means that an additional four were interred there at a later date. The wooden crosses have been replaced with CWGC headstones.

inside the glider) and borrowed a motorcycle to do so. He says he was ambushed at H erouvillette, shot through the knee, taken prisoner, escorted to the farm and locked in. Nothing happened to him but he remembers at one point hearing a dreadful scream. He was liberated the next day when the 2nd Ox & Bucks occupied H erouvillette.

It is possible that the driver of the stuck Jeep accompanied him. If that was Driver Coates of the 716th Light RASC Company, then he was either killed after making good his escape towards Escoville, or he was a third motorcyclist also taken prisoner and then later murdered by Finkenrath.

However, some doubt remains as to whether England was really the man captured by Mahlberg and the others. Laurie Weeden, who was in the same glider pilot squadron as England, stated in a letter that England 'told me that he accelerated when challenged on his motorcycle. I do not think that the man to whom Mahlberg referred was England as the description does not fit and in any case England would presumably be travelling from the direction of Escoville, not from Sainte-Honorine'.

As to the men in the Jeep that got ambushed at the farm entrance, it seems likely that they were from C Company of the 8th Battalion. Clem Keeble, in 1944 the sergeant in No. 9. Platoon, was a very good friend of the Knappett twin brothers and one of them, Driver Knappett of the 716th Light RASC Company, told him after the war that he was the driver of the Jeep that got ambushed and that there were only three men in it. CQMS John Isaacs, Corporal Raymond Langdon of No. 9 Platoon and Knappett himself. The Germans had stopped them and wanted them to surrender but Langdon had opened fire with his Sten gun and consequently Isaacs and Langdon were killed and Knappett was taken prisoner. (There is a chance that Douglas Coates was also in that Jeep because the witnesses mention it carried four to five people.)

These accounts, if true, make it possible

that there were indeed two wounded POWs left locked up in the stables at the end of the day, as stated by Obergefreiter L uke: Bill England and Driver Knappett.

As regards the soldier found dead in his parachute harness, it appears probable that he was Private William Huish of the 7th Battalion, another of the D-Day casualties today buried at H erouvillette. Already at the time, it was rumoured among the 7th Battalion that Huish had landed in a tree and was shot before he could disentangle himself from his parachute.

As to the officer who was captured and later collected by the Feldgendarmarie, it is possible to narrow his name down to a few candidates. Quite a number of officers of the 6th Airborne Division went missing during the early hours of D-Day but there are only a dozen or so of which it is not known where they landed or how they were captured: Captain Reverend Joseph McVeigh, Brigade Chaplain, and Captain William Church, Medical Officer, of the 3rd Parachute

Brigade; Lieutenant Stanley Gyton, commander of the 3rd Parachute Brigade Provost Section; Captain J. M. Girvan, adjutant of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion; Major John Marshall, second in command, Captain Reidar Holtan, Medical Officer, and Lieutenant Rauol Casares, Intelligence Officer, all of the 8th Battalion; Major David Mayfield, commander of Headquarters Company, and Lieutenant Ambrose Austin, commander of the Anti-Tank Platoon, of the 12th Battalion.

As most of the men killed on June 6 and buried at H erouvillette belong to the 8th and 12th Battalions, it seems reasonable to assume that the officer captured there belonged to either of these units as well. Of the 8th Battalion captives, Major Marshall and Lieutenant Casares are ruled out because they were both captured wounded. This leaves as the most-likely option that the captured officer was either Captain Holtan from the 8th Battalion or Major Mayfield or Lieutenant Austin from the 12th Battalion.



MARCO BOERSMA

The memorial plaque for the 2nd Ox & Bucks at the cemetery entrance.