

EXTENDED SERVICE RECONSTRUCTION

GUARDSMAN ERIC CARRICK



Date of birth: 16th July 1922

Regiment / Battalion: 1st Battalion Scots Guards

Role: Wireless Assembler

Campaign: Italy / Anzio

Date of capture: 30th January 1944

PoW camp: Stalag 344: Lamsdorf

Repatriation: January 1945

ARMY SERVICE NUMBER: 2701338

This case study explores the wartime service of Guardsman Eric Carrick of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards, focusing on his role during the Anzio landings of January 1944 and his subsequent capture and imprisonment as a prisoner of war.

It demonstrates a research methodology that combines individual service documents, contemporary operational accounts, war diaries, and prisoner-of-war records to reconstruct service history where official records are incomplete or delayed.

The study also illustrates how broader operational context can be used to explain individual experience, while clearly distinguishing between documented evidence and historical context.

HOW THIS REPORT IS STRUCTURED:

This report alternates between documented evidence about Eric Carrick and operational context explaining the conditions in which he served.

Where Eric is mentioned by name, this reflects direct documentary evidence.

Where wider operations are discussed, this context explains the circumstances surrounding his service when individual records do not survive.

This approach allows individual experience to be understood without speculation.

ERIC CHARLES CARRICK: SCOTS GUARDS

A timeline of Eric's service in the British Army during WWII based on archival research and available service records.



1942 - Enlists in the Army at Croydon

Eric enlisted in the British Army at Croydon in 1942. His trade on enlistment is recorded as Wireless Operator, indicating specialist training in battlefield communications.

1942



1943

Completes training (March 1943)

By March 1943, Eric had completed his Guards training and was serving with the Scots Guards. Training photographs place Eric within a Scots Guards training squad at this stage.

The precise sequence of postings between enlistment and completion of training is not yet confirmed and will be clarified once his full Ministry of Defence service record is received.

Operation Shingle: Anzio Landings

In January 1944, Eric was serving with the 1st Battalion Scots Guards, part of 24th Guards Brigade, during Operation Shingle, the Allied landings at Anzio, Italy. The battalion was heavily engaged north of Anzio during attempts to break out towards Campoleone and Aprilla.

On 30 January 1944, Eric was reported missing during operations and was subsequently taken prisoner of war.

1944



PoW in Lamsdorf and repatriation in February 1945

Eric was held as a prisoner of war at Stalag 344 (Lamsdorf) in German-occupied territory for one year. He was repatriated in January 1945, via Switzerland, following release from German captivity.



1945

Promotion to Lance Sergeant

Post-war photographs show Eric holding the rank of Lance Sergeant by 1947, indicating continued service after the end of hostilities.

Following his discharge, he returned to civilian life, later living with family on the Isle of Wight, working as a caretaker and and later becoming an award-winning gardener.

1947

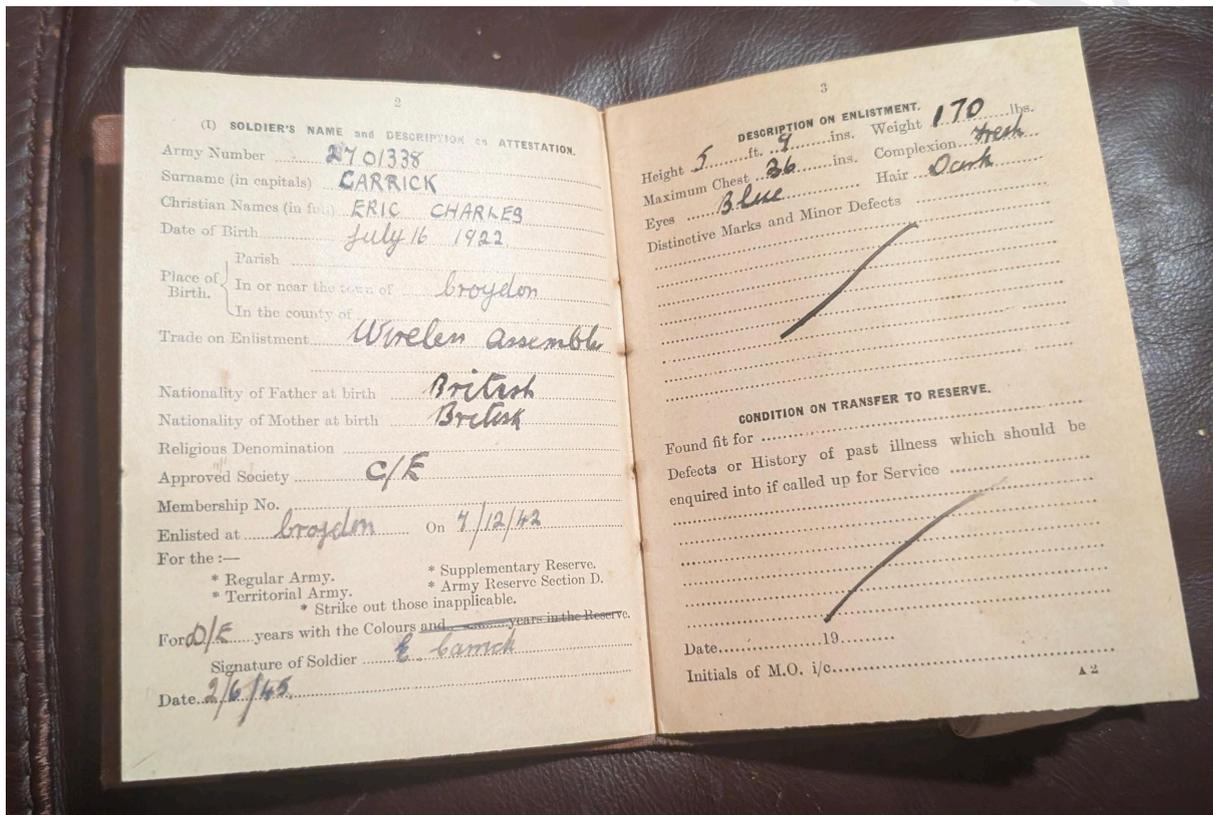


ERIC'S BACKGROUND:

Eric was born in Croydon in 1922.

He enlisted in the Scots Guards on the 7th December 1942, aged 20.

At the time of his enlistment, Eric was a young man from Croydon with no prior military experience, entering a regiment with long-established traditions and demanding standards.



ERIC'S TRAINING WITH THE SCOTS GUARDS:

A photograph dated March 1943 places Guardsman Eric within Cpl. J. Poulton's Squad at the Scots Guards Depot.

This indicates that by this date, he was undergoing structured training within a depot instructional unit, rather than serving with an operational battalion.

At this stage of service, Guardsmen typically received intensive infantry training, including weapons handling, physical conditioning, drill, fieldcraft, and preparation for

overseas deployment. Training at the Guards Depot was designed to bring recruits up to regimental standards before posting to a battalion.

While Eric's trade on enlistment is recorded as Wireless Operator, there is currently insufficient documentary evidence to confirm when specialist signals training took place or whether it had commenced by March 1943.

At present, there remains a gap in the service timeline between Eric's enlistment in 1942 and his confirmed presence at the Scots Guards Depot in March 1943.

Until his full Ministry of Defence service record is received, information for this period is limited to entries in his Soldier's Service and Pay Book, in addition to later Prisoner of War documentation.

These sources confirm his enlistment, trade on enlistment, and eventual capture, but do not provide a complete sequence of postings or training phases.

As a result, any reconstruction of his movements during this early period must remain provisional and grounded strictly in surviving documentary evidence.





Photos from the IWM show daily life for one Battalion of the Scots Guards, where Eric would have stayed during his training:



We know for certain that Eric was a member of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards who took part in Operation Shingle due to his name and battalion being listed in PoW records, and from this, we can confirm from these that he was present in Anzio on the 22nd January (Operation Shingle) to the 30th January, when he was captured by the German Army.

ERIC'S ROLE IN ANZIO:

Upon enlistment in 1942, Eric's trade was recorded as Wireless Operator. From available information, it is reasonable to state that he was trained in the operation of wireless equipment as part of his infantry role.

Battalion signallers in the Scots Guards were not members of the Royal Corps of Signals, but Guardsmen trained to operate wireless sets, lay and repair field telephone lines, and act as runners when communications failed.

At battalion level, signallers worked closely with rifle companies and battalion headquarters. Their role required them to move frequently between positions, particularly during night operations. Signallers and wireless operators were often tasked with maintaining communication under fire, repairing broken lines, and carrying wireless equipment across open ground.

During operations at Anzio, signallers were responsible for maintaining communication between forward units, headquarters, and supporting arms. This role carried a high degree of risk, as signallers operated in exposed conditions and could become isolated if forward positions were cut off.

As a Scots Guard, he was also a trained infantry soldier and fought alongside the units he supported. His specialist role placed him at the centre of battalion-level operations during combat.

THE 30th OF JANUARY 1944:

During the night of the 30th January 1944, Eric was captured by German forces. This was an intense night of fighting as the British and Americans tried to advance north towards Rome.

War Office casualty lists initially recorded him as missing, before later revising his status to believed prisoner of war. The National Archives show that in Casualty List No. 1403, he is listed as missing on 25th March 1944.

This progression reflects the normal administrative process by which information regarding captured personnel was received, verified, and circulated, often weeks after the event.

Red Cross documentation and War Office casualty returns show that he was eventually interned at Stalag 344, a major German prisoner of war camp which held large numbers of Allied personnel captured in Italy and elsewhere.

Prisoners captured during the Anzio operations were typically moved north through Italy and Germany before being processed into permanent camps.

This transfer process could take weeks or months and often contributed to delays in official confirmation reaching the War Office and families at home.

ATTESTATION
The Committee of the Red Cross has received the following information:

CARRICK Eric
16.07.1922
Croydon
Eric
Foster
Gdsm
Scots Guards
2701338
30.01.1944, around Roma
36125 Stalag 344

- Prisoner of war in German hands arrived at Stalag 344 on 13.02.1944, coming from Italy (according to a list dated 13.02.1944, a capture card dated 23.02.1944, a list dated 28.02.1944 and a telegram dated 10.03.1944).
- Repatriated in January 1945 (according to a list received on 02.03.1945).
- One list transmitted by the German authorities.
- One capture card.
- One list transmitted by the Camp Leader at Stalag 344.
- One telegram sent by the German authorities.
- One list transmitted by the Swiss authorities.

Kriegsgefangenenlager Stalag
Prisoner of War Camp
Name: CARRICK
Surname
Dienstgrad u. Truppenteil: Gdsm
Rank and Unit
Geburtsdatum: 16.7.22
Date of birth
Letzter Wohnort: Italy
Last dwelling
Adresse meiner Angehörigen: 2 B
Home Address: West Croydon
Unverwundet - leicht verwundet - in
Unwounded - slightly wounded - pri
'efinde mich wohl.
I am well
(Nichtzutreffendes ist zu streichen)
(Passages non apposite to the point to be cancelled)

LIFE AT STALAG 344:

The camp Eric was imprisoned at - located in Upper Silesia (then Germany, now Poland) - was one of the principal German prisoner of war camps holding Allied servicemen during the latter part of the Second World War.

Stalag 344 held prisoners from Allied nations and theatres, including men captured in Italy. Conditions within the camp were governed by German military administration and subject to the Geneva Convention, though in practice, living standards were harsh.

Accommodation typically consisted of overcrowded wooden barracks with limited toilet and washing facilities.

Daily life for prisoners was dominated by routine, scarcity, and uncertainty.

Rations were minimal and nutritionally inadequate, making prisoners heavily reliant on Red Cross food parcels when available.

These parcels often became central to survival, supplementing basic German-issued rations and fostering systems of sharing, barter, and communal support among prisoners.

Prisoners were frequently required to undertake labour, either within the camp or in external work detachments.

Tasks varied but often involved physically demanding or monotonous work, carried out under guard and in difficult weather conditions.

While treatment varied between guards and locations, fatigue, hunger, and illness were persistent features of captivity.

Psychological strain formed a significant part of the prisoner of war experience. Long periods of confinement, separation from home, and the absence of reliable information about the progress of the war placed considerable stress on prisoners.

To cope, many relied on routine, camaraderie, improvised education, and mental discipline. Maintaining morale was an ongoing challenge.

As the war drew to a close, the movement and administration of prisoners became increasingly unstable.

No personal diary or testimony from Eric survives to describe his individual experience of captivity. However, Eric did tell his family that after his experience as a Prisoner of War, he will never eat chicken or tomatoes again. The food in many camps was poor and unsanitary.

THE RETURN HOME:

Eric remained in captivity until the later stages of the war and was repatriated in January 1945 via Switzerland, in accordance with established arrangements for the exchange and return of Allied prisoners of war.

While surviving sources do not allow the precise circumstances of his capture to be reconstructed in detail, the available documentary evidence clearly establishes that he was captured during the Anzio fighting and captured in Lamsdorf until repatriation at the end of the war.

AFTER THE WAR:

Following the end of the war and his repatriation from captivity, Eric Carrick returned to civilian life in Britain.

Post-war photographs show him wearing the rank of Lance Sergeant in 1947, indicating that he continued to serve for a period after the conclusion of hostilities.

He then worked as a prison officer at HMP Wandsworth.

In later life, Eric settled on the Isle of Wight, where he lived with his family. He had one son and two daughters, and had four grandchildren. He was employed as a caretaker at Lake Middle School.

He was known to enjoy gardening and long walks, often accompanied by his dogs.

He remained closely connected to family life in the years following the war.

Eric Carrick passed away in 2013.

MEDAL ENTITLEMENT:

Until Eric's full Ministry of Defence service record is received, his complete medal entitlement cannot be confirmed with certainty.

While his known service in Italy, capture at Anzio, and subsequent imprisonment indicate eligibility for campaign medals associated with the Italian theatre, final confirmation depends on verified dates of embarkation, qualifying service periods, and formal award entries recorded in his service file.

As a result, any discussion of medals at this stage must remain provisional and based on established entitlement criteria rather than confirmed issue.

Based on his known service, he would have been eligible for the following:

1939–1945 Star: awarded for operational service during the Second World War, with qualifying service in the Italian theatre.

Italy Star: awarded specifically for operational service in Italy between 11 June 1943 and 8 May 1945, including participation in the Anzio landings.

Defence Medal: awarded to members of the armed forces who served in non-operational areas or, as in this case, were held as prisoners of war for six months or more.

War Medal 1939–1945: awarded to all full-time personnel who completed at least 28 days' service during the war.



The following section provides operational context for Eric's service at Anzio.

While individual actions cannot always be traced in surviving records, this context explains the conditions, risks, and decisions that shaped his experience and ultimately led to his capture as a Prisoner of War.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN:

The following section outlines the wider Italian Campaign in order to explain why Eric's battalion was deployed to Italy, the operational pressures faced by British infantry units, and the conditions that shaped his wartime service.

The Italian Campaign began with the Allied aim of hindering the German Army by tying down German divisions that might otherwise have been deployed to the Eastern Front or North-West Europe.

Under the command of General Montgomery, the British Eighth Army invaded mainland Italy from Sicily, with landings at Reggio Calabria and Taranto.

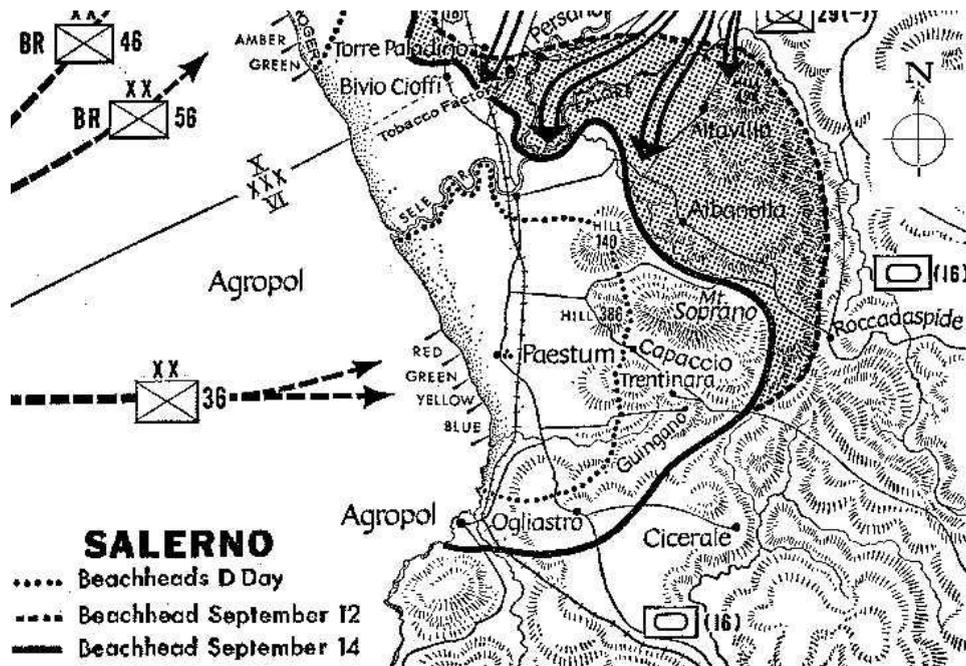
This operation, known as Operation Baytown, began on 3 September 1943.

Its purpose was to draw German forces away from Salerno, where the US Fifth Army under General Mark Clark planned a major amphibious landing, supported by British XIII Corps, including the 5th Infantry Division.

Field Marshal Kesselring, the German Commander-in-Chief in Italy, correctly assessed that the main Allied objectives lay further north.

He therefore withdrew his Panzer forces, leaving only limited German units and elements of the Italian Army to oppose the initial landings.

On 9 September 1943, the Salerno landings, known as Operation Avalanche, commenced, one day after an armistice was signed between Italy and the Allies. As a result, the Italian Army was required to surrender, and the Italian Navy sailed to Allied ports.



At the same time, the British 1st Airborne Division carried out Operation Slapstick, conducting amphibious landings at Taranto and Brindisi.

Supreme Allied Commander General Eisenhower authorised the landing of substantial forces in this area in an effort to distract German troops from Salerno.

While British commanders initially remained optimistic, American leadership expressed reservations.

Nevertheless, the collapse of Mussolini's regime created what appeared to be an opportunity for the Allies to attempt the capture of Rome.

Operation Avalanche involved approximately 165,000 troops, with the objective of seizing Naples and engaging German forces in southern Italy.

On 19 September, British and American units of the US Fifth Army began advancing on Naples. Important airfields at Foggia were brought under Allied control; however, what initially appeared to be a swift success developed into a prolonged and difficult campaign northwards.

The Germans exploited Italy's mountainous terrain to great effect. Allied progress stalled along the Gustav Line, a heavily fortified defensive position stretching across the peninsula.

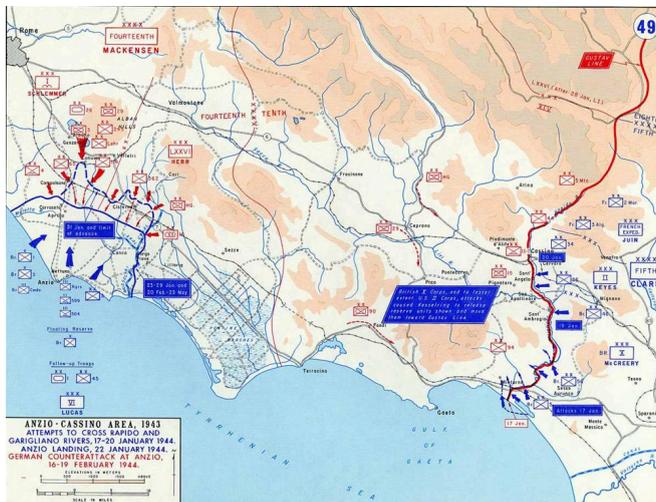
The town of Monte Cassino, located within the US Fifth Army's area of operations, became a focal point of the campaign.

Its capture was considered essential for access to the Liri Valley and Highway 6, the main route to Rome.

As winter set in, repeated Allied attempts to take the town failed, contributing to mounting casualties and operational strain.

OPERATION SHINGLE: JANUARY 1944 - WHEN ERIC ARRIVED IN ANZIO:

Eric arrived at Anzio as a Guardsman of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards, landing with the 24th Guards Brigade during Operation Shingle.



Allied command sought to break this stalemate and drew up plans for an amphibious landing at Anzio, approximately 30 miles from Rome. The intention was to land behind the Gustav Line, forcing the Germans to divert troops away from Cassino and thereby opening the road to Rome.

A successful landing at Anzio would allow the capture of the Alban Hills, which dominated Highways 6 and 7; these are the main German supply routes supporting Cassino.

General Mark Clark of the US Army requested that the original plan, which involved landing a single division, be expanded.

Reportedly, Churchill was highly enthusiastic about the operation; however, British commanders feared the potential for disaster, leading to delays and revisions to the plan in December 1943.

Major General John Lucas believed that the Alban Hills were too distant to be seized immediately and expressed concerns about the vulnerability of his force.

Despite these reservations, Operation Shingle commenced on 22 January 1944, four days after the US Army assault on the Rapido River near Cassino.

The British 1st Division, under Major General Penney, included the 24th Guards Brigade, which contained the 1st Battalion Scots Guards; Eric was one of the Scots Guards who landed at Anzio as part of the 24th Guards Brigade.

GOC 1st (Br) Infantry Division, Major General Sir Ronald Penny KBE. CB. DSO. MC., wrote in his diary on the eve of embarkation: "...the 24 Guards Brigade should be ashore by 1600hrs [on D Day] and the Division on assault scales by midday D+1. By that time I hope that 24 Guards Brigade will be on its way to Albano, with 3 Brigade on the night of D+1 following them up". (BBC, 2004)

Here we know that Eric and members of the British forces landed north of Anzio on Peter Beach, while the US 3rd Infantry Division landed further south.

Operation Shingle involved approximately 36,000 troops and 3,200 vehicles. (Commonwealth War Graves Commission 2024).

The landings were conducted as follows:

- Peter Beach, north of Anzio, by the British 1st Infantry Division, supported by Commandos, including the 1st Battalion Scots Guards
- The port of Anzio itself was attacked by US Rangers
- X-Ray Beach, east of Anzio, was assaulted by the US 3rd Infantry Division

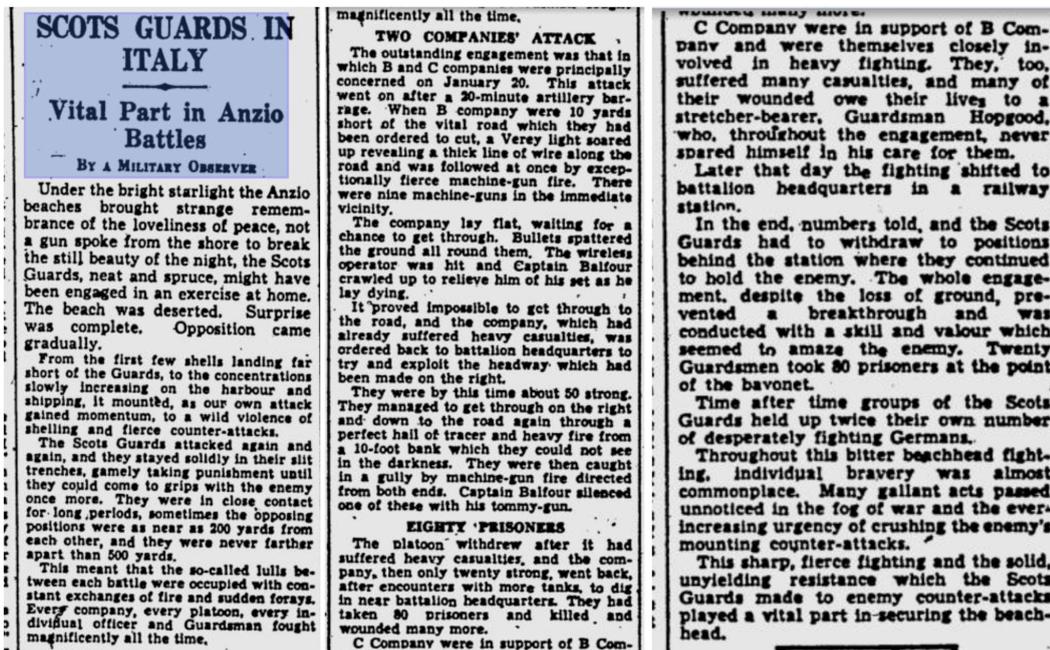
"The Guards Brigade, with 23 Field Company under command, were the floating divisional reserve and were brought ashore once the tactical picture could be seen. 23 Field Company passed us on the way to their concentration area and we exchanged cheery waves and the usual soldierly banter. They had just moved out of sight along the track when we were alarmed by the frightening roar of a German fighter in low level attack. We heard the machine gun fire: the worst happened to our cheery friends of not a moment ago. The column was raked from end to end. It was all over in but a few seconds but 23 Fd. Coy. had a rough reception to the Beachhead. There were some number of dead and wounded.

The next set-back was a storm on D+3 The wind blew up and the waves pounded our beaches destroying the pontoon roadway so no further shipping could be received for the British Sector except through the small port of Anzio itself. This further increased the shipping congestion and made easy pickings for attacking planes despite an array of many barrage balloons and anti-aircraft fire.

Air activity increased and was growing more intense each day, and continued at night time with high level bombing, the enemy airfields being only a few minutes flying-time away, as compared to our own air forces way back somewhere behind Cassino. Low level attack happens so quickly and there always seemed to be aircraft somewhere in the sky but not that many of ours although I did see two US Lightning aircraft doing their best for us shot down into the sea. The Luftwaffe main action appeared to be directed against shipping crowded into the small bay at Anzio although they were not averse to amusing themselves with anything which moved on the ground!". (BBC, 2004).

At the time of the landings, the port had largely been evacuated, as German forces and much of the civilian population had withdrawn. Most German units in the region had already been deployed further south to counter other Allied operations.

EXTRACT FROM THE GLASGOW HERALD (1944) - SCOTS GUARDS TAKING THE BEACH HEAD - ERIC WAS INCLUDED IN THIS GROUP:



The Anzio area consisted largely of former malarial marshland called the Pontine Marshes, previously reclaimed under Mussolini but poorly drained. The terrain offered little natural cover, leaving troops exposed.

During the Second World War, malaria returned to the region, and parts of the area were deliberately flooded by German forces, worsening already poor conditions. As

a result, both Allied and German troops operated in waterlogged terrain, heavily affected by mosquitoes.

FOLLOWING THE ANZIO LANDINGS WHICH ERIC TOOK PART IN:

At this stage, Eric was serving with his battalion on the exposed beachhead north of Anzio.

US aerial reconnaissance reported that the road to Rome was largely undefended, but Lucas chose to consolidate the beachhead and await German counter-moves - a decision that would later become highly controversial.

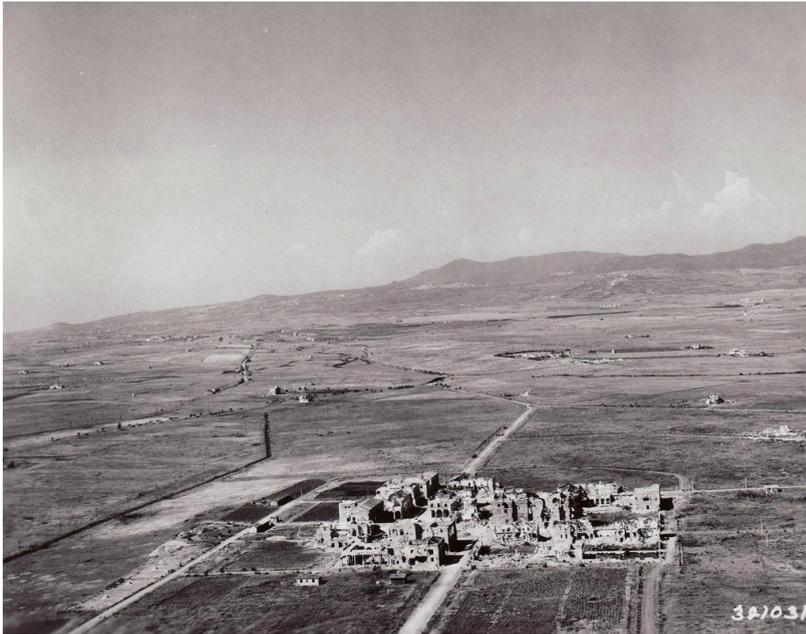
As above, shown in his diary extract, British General Alexander advocated an immediate advance to the Alban Hills, but Lucas resisted.

The Germans reacted swiftly and had contingency plans in place for such a landing. Approximately 40,000 troops were directed towards Anzio, gradually encircling the Allied forces along the coast. Lucas continued to build up his forces within the beachhead and, on 25 January, launched an offensive against German positions.

British forces, including Eric's battalion, were tasked with advancing towards Aprilia along the Albano road.

Aprilia, nicknamed "the Factory" because of its distinctive architecture, became the site of intense and sustained fighting over the following weeks.

"Carroceto and "The Factory" area were of critical importance. A disused railway bed crossed the Anzio-Campoleone road by a high level bridge with embankment approaches which provided a line of defence. Further back the road crossed open country for 2 miles with no stop line until a lateral road and another high level bridge known as "The Flyover". Were this to fall to the enemy it could not be long before the Beachhead was overcome and all lost. Hitler had ordered that "the abscess must be lanced" and indeed it would be." (BBC, 2004)



Despite reinforcements sent by Clark, the Germans recovered and concentrated their forces more rapidly than the Allies. Within a week of the landings, approximately 71,000 German troops faced around 61,000 Allied soldiers. (IWM, n.d.)

German artillery, including the 280mm railway gun nicknamed “Anzio Annie”, bombarded the beachhead. Luftwaffe air attacks were frequent, and Allied shipping suffered heavy losses.

As a result, the Royal Navy withdrew its larger vessels, limiting the naval support available to forces ashore.

THE 30th JANUARY - THE NIGHT OF ERIC’S CAPTURE:

For Eric, these operational pressures culminated on the night of 30 January 1944.

Under increasing pressure from Alexander and Clark, Lucas initiated a renewed offensive aimed at capturing Campoleone and Cisterna, areas offering improved cover for troops and control of key road networks.

During the advance, elements of the Guards Brigade moved forward into ground that was later shown to be in front of the main German defensive positions.

As a result, companies of both the 1st Battalion Irish Guards and the 1st Battalion Scots Guards (Eric’s battalion) became engaged in what proved to be a carefully prepared German ambush.

On the right of the Anzio–Albano road, companies of the Scots Guards encountered strong German positions protected by wire and well-sited machine-gun fire.

Recognising the danger of persisting with the original axis of advance, the commanding officer ordered a withdrawal and redeployment, concentrating forces on a narrower front where limited progress had been reported. This decision reduced casualties compared to those likely to have been suffered had the original plan been pursued.

Despite this adjustment, the battalion faced significant difficulties in bringing forward supporting weapons. German control of the Anzio–Albano road prevented the movement of transport and heavy weapons needed to consolidate the forward companies. Attempts to divert vehicles and anti-tank guns along alternative tracks met with mixed success and were disrupted by German artillery fire.

The situation became critical around Point 105, where one forward company was subjected to repeated German counter-attacks supported by tanks. Although an initial attack was repelled in the early hours of the morning, a further assault after first light proved decisive.

Exposed on forward ground and suffering heavy casualties, the company was eventually overrun, with survivors forced to surrender.

The fighting on this day resulted in exceptionally heavy losses for the 1st Battalion Scots Guards, including the death of several officers and dozens of other ranks.

It represented the battalion's highest single-day casualty toll of the war and marked a turning point in the Guards Brigade's experience at Anzio.

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- *WW2 People's War is an online archive of wartime memories contributed by members of the public and gathered by the BBC. The archive is available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/>*
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