No 74.

Capt. L.M. Stevens RHA
11 (HAC) RHA
Aug. 23.

My dear Dad.

You asked for a few lines on what happened in Sicily to us, well here goes. I was as you may have imagined being Tact Adjutant was not in the first or second waves, but in the fifth. we embarked in special landing ships (made in America) from Seattle every vehicle was specially prepared so that if need be it could drive through 5ft of water a big job I assure you being responsible for all that for every single vehicle in the Regiment. The journey took us 3 days. we did not know where we were going until we had been out at Sea for two days we had a completely unmolested journey no planes and no submarines. But what a marvellous sight ships as far as the eye could see a tremendous naval escort and a continual air escort. We expected a bloody landing we thought we would be continually bombed shelled and strafed, and find lots of of ships sinking, but when we arrived at dawn, it was just as though I was in the Seagull coming into the Bay at Seaview returning from the Needles. We landed on rocks (always best as there is less chance of

mines) the bow opened and came down in the water there was a gap of about 6ft, I was first off, the water was over the floor boards we made it over the rocks, through a gap in barbed wire, and then we suddenly realized that we were on Italian soil at last. Just as I said that we had our first and last attack from Italian bombers, however I got well away from the shore but they did not damage anything and our fighters brought down half of them. Dusk came, and I put my valise out under an orange tree. Continued in our next

Tdusk

T51-9200

BY AIR MAIL

AIR LETTER

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT BY ORDINARY MAIL.

Aug 23 /43



FIELD POST OFFICE 708

Capt. A.H. Stevens, M.C.
146 Victoria St.
S.W.1.
London.

Millerin

Army Form W.3077.

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No 75.

Capt C M. Stevens
11 HAC RHA
Aug. 24. CMF

Dear Pop

Now I will try and finish off this quick relation of my part in Sicily. We landed at NOTO then to PACHINO here we met all Italian soldiers all giving themselves up however there were cases of Italian women sniping in villages at our jocks, we were attached this will please Mum to the Highland Division, a brave lot at Vizzini we started to meet Germans fighting got harder, and got extremely bitter, Monty said nothing will stop us, if we ever were he sent over more bombers or sent up more guns. Bombers over in waves of 36 every 20 minutes a Barrage every night, we fired the first air-burst barrage tremendous killing effect because it kills you in [illegible] trenches They retreated to Sferro CATANIA line more fierce fighting, strong night attack, tanks and infantry, fighters more bombers a left hook and they broke, then just a chase. I was responsible throughout all the battle for keeping all the Regimental vehicles going, petrol, tyres spare parts, getting vehicles out of holes, working all night with recovering vehicles, if my side.

broke down, the Regiment would
become Static and would be
unable to support the Infantry
I assure you to deal with
the wants of many vehicles
spread over maybe 60 miles
area, when they are advancing
30 40 miles is a job, you have
to keep your hand and eye
very close to your supplies
in rear, so as not to get them too
far behind your fighting vehicles
Roads in Sicily were bad, however
I took risks, and different to other
Units I kept all my supplies
well forward only 2 miles behind
the Guns, it worked our Regiment
got everything, I was congratulated
by the Colonel, thus I keep my
job. love Bubbles X.

BRONTË WAS OUR LIST PLACE

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T51-9200

BY AIR MAIL

AIR LETTER

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL.

Aug 24/43



FIELD POST OFFICE
POSTAGE REVENUE

Capt A H Stevens M.C.
146 Victoria St.
S.W.1
London.

J M Stevens

Army Form W.3077

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HOW YOU CONQUERED SICILY

This may where you I am glad I can find the first part love Louis

Below we give the second and last instalment of the story of the Sicilian Campaign supplied by Eighth Army Intelligenge

JULY 27.

During the night 26/27 July, our troops put in a heavy attack against Agira from the West, in conjunction with another thrust from the South to cut the Agira-Regalbuto road. The latter is successful but owing to the stiff resistance by 2 Bn PGR ENS to the West of the town, our troops withdraw once again South of the road. West of Agira, Aosta Division is identified for the first time. Hermann Goering Division issues an order for the reconnoitring of the Bridgehead Position running East and West just South of Adrano. West of Nicosia, part of PGR Fullriede launches a counter-attack against the Americans supported by tanks of 215 Tank Battalion.

JULY 28.

Fierce fighting continues around Agira which is eventually captured in the evening; heavy casualties are inflicted on 1 and 2 Bns PGR ENS and 1 Bn. 15 PGR. The Americans capture Nicosia, and PGR Fullriede and 215 Tk Bn withdraw East to Troina and Cesaro respectively.

JULY 29.

Our troops advancing East from Agira reach a point 6 kms short of Regalbuto. Lt. Col. Von Karnap on the extreme right flank of Herman Goering Div is busy organising the defences of the Regalbuto-Centuripe area. Further North the Americans mop up isolated pockets of resistance around Nicosia. On the coast they are still held up to the West of San Stefano, where the other Regt of 29 Mot Div — 71 PGR — is identified.

JULY 30.

During the night 29-30 we attack Catenanuova and succeed in establishing a bridgehead there. PWs are taken from 923 Fortress Bn. The evacuation of all « surplus » MT to the mainland begins; and in the coastal sector the enemy blows up many of his dumps. The Americans are half-way between Nicosia and Troina, but are still held up on the coast at San Stefano.

San Stefano falls

JULY 31.

Our troops make further very successful attacks NE from Catenanuova, where the over-running of the HQ of 4 Bty HG Arty Regt provides a good haul of documents and maps. We also advanced upon Regalbuto from the South and from the West. The remaining two bns of 3 Para Regt have been hurried over to this sector from the Catania area, where the identification of Italian coastal units and the withdrawal of the Paulus Battlegroup to Fiumefreddo (D 01) exhibit the importance of our threat to the Western portion of the bridgehead position.

The Americans capture San Stefano.

AUG 1.

During the night 31 July-1 Aug we start an attack in the Sferro area, capturing Pt 224 (H 6881). During the day the enemy launches an unsuccessful counter-attack supported by tanks from 1 Bn HG Tank Regt. Further North there is street fighting in Regalbuto, and our troops advance to within 1,000 yds of Centuripe.

AUG 2.

Regalbuto is finally cleared of the enemy and the HG Engineers who, together with 1 and 3 Bns of 3 Para Regt have resisted there so long, are withdrawn to the Adrano-Bronte road. Fierce fighting continues around Centuripe and though von Karnap, the commander of the Battle Group here, is killed, we fail to capture the town. A small attack by our troops against Gerbini is unsuccessful, but there is evidence of further thinning out in the Catania sector. In the North the Americans are counter-attacked West of Troina.

AUG 3.

After two enemy counter-attacks during the night by the remnants of 2 Bn 3 Para Regt and 923 Fortress Bn. Centuripe is captured by our troops. We advance on the coastal sector and also East of Regalbuto. The general withdrawal of enemy MT Northwards and Eastwards provides our air force with excellent targets. The Americans are still held by 15 Panzer Grenadier Division West of Troina on the coast, but they are nearing San Fratello.

Stubborn defence

AUG 4.

Our troops advancing along the coast reach Misterbianco and are just short of the outskirts of Catania, where they are in contact with 1 Bn of 4 Para Regt supported by scratch Italian and German troops. We advance to within five miles West of Adrano, whilst further North a further Division of Eighth Army with the task of cutting the Adrano-Bronte road, crosses the Salso River. On the American front, fierce fighting continues around Troina where PGR Fullriede is defending stubbornly.

AUG 5.

Our troops enter Catania and Paterno. Further North the ring round Adrano is closing, although apart from the resistance of 2 Bn 382 PGR at Monte Revisotto (C 6400), it is mines and demolitions rather than the enemy which is holding up our troops. No change at Troina nor on the Northern coast.

Through enemy eyes

«Our soldiers are tortured by lack of water. Day and night Allied artillery, dive-bombers screech low over our heads. If we are near the coast, heavy Allied Naval guns enter into this dance of death. Often British paratroopers suddenly descend into this pandemonium and attack us from rear. Right from beginning we could not compete with Allied field batteries of all calibres, tanks of all sizes and an air fleet that is far superior to ours.»

German war Reporter

AUG 6.

Although German troops on the coast still hold Aci Costello, further West we capture Belpasso and swing North-East. Our troops are within a few thousand yards of Adrano where the remnants of 1 and 2 Bns of 3 Para Regt are still holding out. The Americans capture Troina; on the coast they near S. Agata.

AUG 7.

During the night the enemy evacuates Adrano. On the coastal sector Trecastagni (H 99) falls and this hastens the enemy withdrawal along the coastal road. The Americans are half-way between Troina and Cesaro, though little progress is made on the Northern coast.

AUG 8.

On the coast we capture Acireale and Viagrande. In the centre our troops are on the outskirts of Bronte. Good progress is made by the Americans who capture Cesaro and land a force on the Northern coast to the East of S. Agata. Here many prisoners from 71 PGR are captured.

AUG 9.

We capture Bronte where further progress is delayed by those troops of Hermann Goering Division who have withdrawn West of Mount Etna. On the coast the three battalions of 115 PGR are preparing defensive position 'D' just North of Riposto and Giarre. On the American front PGR Fullriede (re-named PGR 129) withdraws to new positions well to the East of the Cesaro-Fratello road, while PGR ENS (now PGR 104) is covering the enemy's withdrawal along the Cesaro-Randazzo road.

AUG 10.

Little to report apart from slow steady progress on all fronts.

AUG 11.

The Americans land East of Capo d'Orlando and repulse German counter-attacks. On Eighth Army front there is stiff fighting NE of Bronte, while on the coast Riposto and Giarre are captured.

Close on Randazzo

AUG 12.

Both armies are closing on Randazzo, where enemy rearguards are still offering stern resistance. On the East coast progress is still slow, but on the North the Americans, after making another successful landing, near Brolo (C 75), push on as far East as Patti.

AUG 13.

The Americans capture Randazzo, but contact with the enemy has been lost in this area. The tempo of the enemy's evacuation to the mainland increases. Fiumefreddo (D 01) is occupied by our troops.

AUG 14.

The enemy has broken contact on all sectors. The Americans advancing along the coast cut the secondary road running North from Francavilla just too late to intercept the retreating enemy. Our troops reach the outskirts of Taormina.

AUG 15.

The ring round Etna is now complete and the enemy's withdrawal is confined to the two coast roads. Part of 213 Sicilian Coastal Division is ordered to hold the road running North-West from Roccalumera (D 23). The Americans capture Spadafora (D 25).

AUG 16.

During the night 15/16 August the enemy launches a small counterattack South-West of Roccalumera. A few hours later we land a force near Scaletta (D 24), but although a few prisoners are taken from the Eng Bns of Hermann Goering Division and 1 Parachute Division, most of the remaining forces escape to the North-East and leave the island during night 16/17 August. At 2300 hrs the Americans reach the outskirts of Messina.

AUG 17.

Forward troops of Eighth Army link up with Seventh Army in Messina and the last groups of enemy are rounded up.

Up to the 17 August the following enemy losses are claimed:

(a) **P W Seventh Army Front** 98,600 of which 4,000 are Germans.
Eighth Army Front 32,300 of which 3,000 are Germans.
TOTAL 130,900 of which 7,000 are Germans.

(b) **Equipment**
Seventh Army Front 188 tanks and 267 guns.
Eighth Army Front 46 tanks and 238 guns.
TOTAL 234 tanks and 505 guns.

ABBREVIATIONS

P. G. stands for Panzer Grenadier;
H.G. stands for Hermann Goering.