

The Brittany Campaign 1944 (2)

Fighting for Hill 103 - 29 August to 3 September 1944

By David Bickley

Background

The 29th Infantry Division, best known for the assault on Omaha Beach, entered the fighting for Brest on 24 August 1944. To defend the lines of the Americans' exposed flank, on 25 August Task Force Sugar was formed, with elements of the 29th Division deployed to the task. These units comprised 115th, 116th and 175th Infantry. In hard fighting the first two units advanced slowly while the latter unit guarded their exposed flank and acted as a reserve. By the end of the first day's fighting the 115th had advanced as far as Tremelaouen and the 116th Kerionoc. The latter were held up for ten days by a strongpoint at Keriolet. Meanwhile, the 175th had swung around the right flank on 26 August to move against the higher ground designated as Hill 103.

The Situation

Hill 103 afforded an excellent point for observation of the area to the west of Brest. While it remained in German hands any American moves against Brest were compromised and open to artillery fire from positions on the summit. The Germans were well dug in on the hill with large areas of barbed wire entanglements, well positioned emplacements and fox holes, in addition to the stone quarry on the summit which provided excellent cover for the defenders. An initial aggressive assault by 175th Infantry was repulsed by German anti-aircraft guns operating in an artillery mode.

The Americans

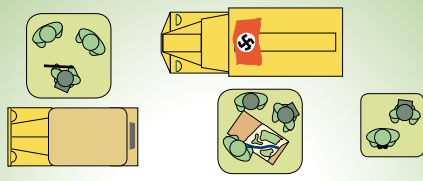
On the morning of 27 August the 2/175th Infantry captured the town of Plouzane west of Hill 103 with support from 709th Tank Battalion. Even so, further progress to capture the hill was slow. The close terrain meant that Bocage style fighting had to be the order of the day, as the Americans advanced slowly, field by field. By the night of 29 August the 175th had almost surrounded Hill 103 and during the night a hole was forced in the barbed wire entanglements surrounding the hill, allowing the Americans to access the hill proper the next morning.

The Germans

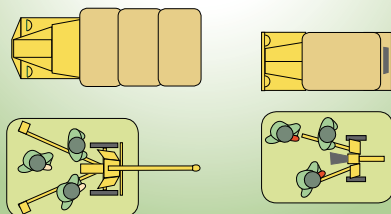
Despite the American advances, the German position was a strong one. On 30 August they merely withdrew to positions on the hill's eastern half, even counter attacking the 175th with elements of the 16th Company, 2nd Fallschirmjäger Regiment. The resulting situation, with German and American units dug in amongst each other meant that the Americans were unable to utilize their artillery support effectively. Indeed the 175th often found itself outnumbered by the German defenders.

2ND FALLSCHIRMJÄGER REGIMENT (ELITE)

Regimental HQ
6 figures, 2 figure OP team, light car, radio truck




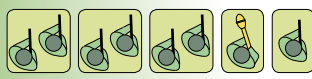
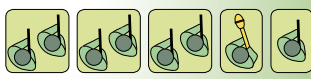

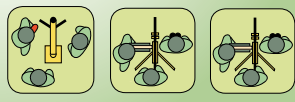
Support Company
6 figures, PaK 40 anti-tank gun, 105mm recoilless rifle, 2 x primemover



FALLSCHIRMJÄGER BATTALION (39 Figures)


HQ
CO + 5 figures, Panzerschreck

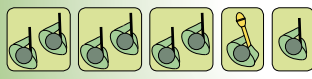
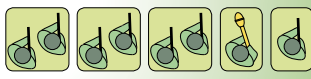

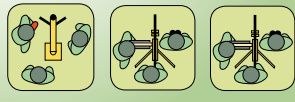


<p>1st Company 8 figures, Panzerfaust</p> 	<p>2nd Company 8 figures, Panzerfaust</p> 
<p>3rd Company 8 figures, Panzerfaust</p> 	<p>4th (Heavy) Company 9 figures, 2 x MMG, 81mm mortar</p> 

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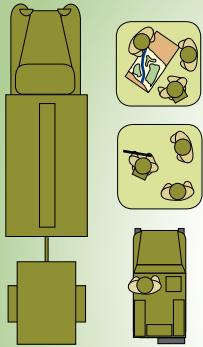


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REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM HQ (REGULAR)

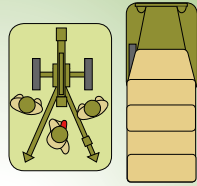
HQ

6 figures, Jeep, 2½ ton radio truck



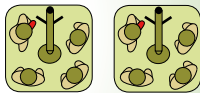
Cannon Company

3 figures, 105mm 'short' howitzer, 1½ ton truck



86th Chemical Mortar Company

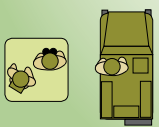
8 figures, 2 x 4.2" Mortar



Allowed to fire under General Support Fire rules, p 89 or Fire Plans rules, p 93. (Place them on the table edge - it also means the players are less likely to 'forget' they are there.)

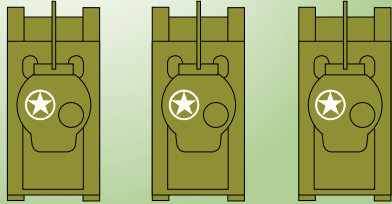
Artillery Observer

2 figure OP team, Jeep



Company / 709th Tank Regiment

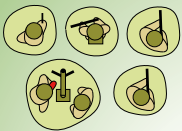
3 x Sherman (75mm)



3RD BATTALION / 115TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

HQ

CO + 5 figures, 60mm mortar



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



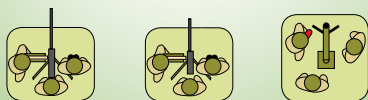
Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Heavy Weapons Company (reinforced for the assault)

9 figures, 50cal HMG, 30cal MMG, 81mm mortar

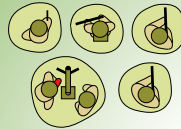


115th Infantry may equip one Rifle Company with 1 x manpack flamethrower and 2 x Demolition charges, in addition to their Bazooka.

1ST BATTALION / 175TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

HQ

CO + 5 figures, 60mm mortar



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Heavy Weapons Company

9 figures, 50cal HMG, 30cal MMG, 81mm mortar



2ND BATTALION / 175TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

HQ

CO + 5 figures, 60mm mortar



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



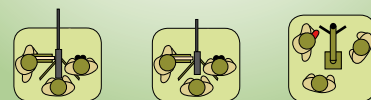
Rifle Company

10 figures, Bazooka



Heavy Weapons Company (reinforced for the assault)

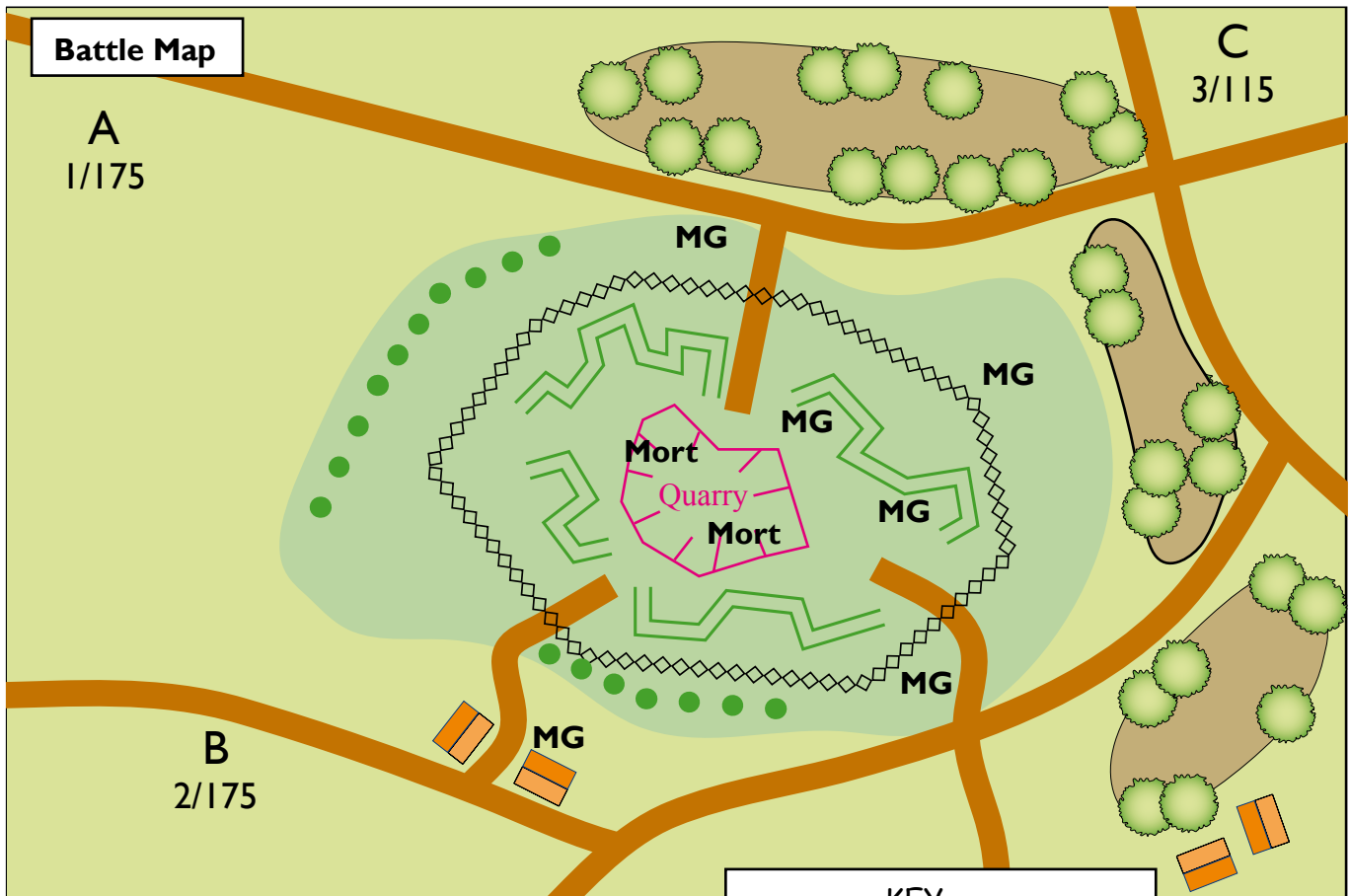
9 figures, 50cal HMG, 30cal MMG, 81mm mortar



attack was made by 3/115th Infantry on 3 September, following a period of intensive training in assault techniques. The unit began by moving up the eastern slopes of Hill 103 under cover of a heavy barrage from the 4.2" mortars of 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion. This attack was infact made against what had become the rear of the German position on Hill 103 and marked the first time that the Americans on the hill actually outnumbered the German defenders. Outnumbered and attacked from three sides the Germans could not cling on to Hill 103 and withdrew, despite a last counter attack by 12th Company/ 2nd Fallschirmjäger Regiment. After several days hard fighting at close quarters the Americans could look down from Hill 103 into the city of Brest.

The Action

For the three days from 30 August to 2nd September the positions of the two sides remained fairly static, with the Americans unable to make progress against the strong defensive positions taken up by the Germans on the eastern half of the hill. The decisive



Playing the game

With comparatively little armour and artillery in action on the tabletop this is a battle for the infantry, the 'Queen of the Battlefield!' Players have the choice of refighting the whole action or merely the final assault by 115th Infantry. If choosing the former, then only 1/175 and 2/175 may be deployed for the Americans until they have secured a lodgement on the hill itself. After that time, and not before half the game's turns have been completed, 3/115 may join the attack. The three units enter the table at the points marked A, B, and C on the map. In the full replaying of the actions the game should last a minimum of 12 turns and no more than 16. If only replaying the final assault then the game should last no more than 8 turns.

The American player(s) moves first and must always try to play aggressively - very 'Gung Ho!' is the order of the day. The tabletop should be at least 5' x 4', with the Hill 103 taking up the central area of the table, at least 2' x 1.5' in overall dimensions. All German figures are considered to be 'dug in' and derive the cover advantage as per the rules; they are never classed as in the open. American infantry may only claim the cover advantage if they are in the designated trenches, shelters or the quarry itself. The tank company may support the attack but may not cross the lines of the wire entanglements before the Americans have at least half their force on the hill itself.

KEY	
	Barbed wire
	Trench
	Foxholes
	Road
	Wood
	House
	Fields with hedgerows
MG	Tripod MG 42
Mort	81mm mortar

The German machineguns and mortars must begin the game in the six marked positions on the map. The guns may be deployed at the German player's discretion. Their infantry may deploy up to a third of their force in the outer fox holes, the remainder must be deployed within the wire entanglements.

Winning the Game

In the full replay, if the German player(s) are still holding some, or even all, portions of Hill 103 at the end of turn 12 then they may claim three Victory points; if they are still holding them after 16 turns then their total is doubled. The American player(s) can claim one Victory point for each battalion, or element thereof, still fighting on Hill 103 after turn 12. After turn 16 they may count two victory points for each similar element or battalion. If the Germans have no units still fighting on Hill 103 itself at the end of Turn 16 then they have lost and, however battered the Americans may be, they have won!

In the shorter version of the game, the Germans win if they are not driven from the hill by the end of the game. If they are driven off the hill before the 8 game turns are completed, then they must try to counter attack. Obviously, the Americans must be in complete possession of Hill 103 at the end of turn 8 to claim a win. There is no draw envisaged in this shorter scenario, either one side will win or the other at the end of turn 8.

Well, there it is; an assault by battle-hardened American Infantry against elite German paratroopers, well dug in and determined to hold their ground at all costs. Can you emulate the men of 29th Infantry Division and seize Hill 103? Or will you lead the men of 2nd Fallschirmjäger Regiment to a notable victory over the Americans?