

WW2 GROUP TO A SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS MAJOR, WHO WAS TWICE MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES FOR HIS GALLANTRY IN BURMA, AND DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF IN THE ACTION AT PEPPER-POT RIDGE IN JULY 1944



1939-45 STAR; BURMA STAR; DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS 1939-45, WITH M.I.D. OAK LEAF, IN CARD BOX OF ISSUE ADDRESSED TO 'MAJOR D. A. HUGHES, "YOMAH", 230 UPTON ROAD, BEXLEY, KENT'; EFFICIENCY MEDAL, G.V.I.R., 2ND ISSUE, TERRITORIAL 'LT. D. A. HUGHES. SEAFORTH.'

David Anthony Hughes was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Seaforth Highlanders from 163 OCTU, at St. Mary's Bay in Kent, on 17 December 1939. Promoted War Substantive Lieutenant on 17 June 1941, he joined the 1st Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders in India, proceeding with them to the Imphal Front in Burma in February 1942, and remained on active operations with the 23rd Indian (Fighting Cock) Division until the battalion was withdrawn for rest in August 1944.

23rd Indian Division went into action in the Imphal region early in 1942, and from June onwards active patrolling took place. The division formed defensive positions and covered the retreat of British/Indian forces from Burma. The Battalion War Diary records that on 15 May 1942: 'Lieutenant D. A. Hughes was despatched with one A/T Company R.I.A.S.C., 9 tons of rations and 10 British Other Ranks, to try to connect up with some 10,000 refugees, military stragglers, etc., who were known to be coming back from Burma via the upper reaches of the river Chindwin.'

Soon after this he was in hospital, rejoining on 11 August 1942. On 16 August 1942 the War Diary records that he led a party to Waithou for a watermanship course. He went on leave on 10 October 1942 but is recorded present with the unit in January 1943. From February 1943 onwards the battalion was engaged in patrolling across the Chindwin, and on 3 March 1943: "'D" Company under the command of Captain D. A. Hughes crossed the river Chindwin at approx. 1000 hours en route to lay ambush for the enemy in Wetkauk area.'

The Company sent out patrols and was relieved on 9 April 1943. Hughes is mentioned several times in the Diary during this period, commanding "D" Company.



Towards the end of the year the Seaforths came out of action for a training period and in January 1944 Hughes is mentioned in connection with training exercises, including use of carriers to remove wire obstacles. On 9 February 1944 he proceeded on a course at the Tactical School at Poona, and rejoined about 9 April 1944. In mid-April 1944 the battalion was heavily involved in the capture of Kasom, when all companies were in action, inflicting and taking many casualties. On 17 April 1944: 'Two patrols were sent out by "D" and HQ Companies... The HQ Company patrol under Captain D. A. Hughes proceeded to investigate the nullah north of Kasom... [it was] fired on from a prepared position... Also reported the location of the enemy mortar that had been worrying us...' On 28 April 1944, "A" Company, under Hughes, was sent on a patrol to 'Ring Contour 660943', with the task of cutting off the Japanese flight North of the Divisional Commander and his staff.

Pepper-Pot Ridge, July 1944

In a note of battalion organisation on 7 May 1944 Hughes remains listed commanding "A" Company. He was in hospital from 9-13 June 1944 then back commanding "A" Company in the major battalion operations around the 'Scraggy' feature and attack on Pepper-Pot Ridge on 27 July 1944, when "A" Company formed a stop between Nippon Hill and Morgan's Peak.

From 1 August 1944 to early September Hughes was on leave, then assumed duties of Adjutant on 11 September 1944. At this time the battalion was withdrawn for rest and training, and on 31 October 1944 'Repatriation order in respect of Captains B. M. Manson and D. A. Hughes was received at 1600 hours.' He remained with the battalion until December 1944, although for a period in October he was at 53 Rest Camp as Divisional Liaison Officer.

Promoted Temporary Captain and Temporary Major before the end of the war in Burma, for his services in Burma Hughes was twice Mentioned in Despatches (London Gazettes 16 December 1943 and 19 July 1945). Promoted Major on 3 February 1946, he was released to the Unemployed List by the end of 1946.

The action at Pepper-Pot Ridge in July 1944 clearly remained long in Major Hughes' mind, for in April 1998 the Edinburgh Evening News carried an appeal for information about a Mr. McClelland, formerly of 1/Seaforth as, "During an incident in July 1944, Mr. McClelland helped Major David Anthony Hughes to clear Pepper Pot Ridge of Japanese forces. Major Hughes believes they owed their lives to each other."



Hughes is mentioned several times in the private war diary of another Seaforth officer, P. M. Torrance. Torrance wrote that 'David Hughes and myself were commissioned into The Seaforth Highlanders from 163 OCTU at St. Mary's Bay, December 1939', then on 3 July 1942, 'I had a Corporal and 10 men with me carrying extra rations for "A" Company at Myothit, where Company Commander Captain Battle was down with malaria and his second in command, Lieutenant David Hughes had gone off with a party to get a boat which would have to be carried through the jungle between rivers.' On 3 April 1943 he writes: 'Left Kya-in for Pengaket to track where Hughes was lying in ambush, and stayed in ambush position that night.' The following day he states that 'Hughes went reccying near Wetkauk area.'



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