

the platoon suffered heavy casualties and the platoon commander was killed.

Sergeant Cosens at once assumed command of the only other four survivors of his platoon, whom he placed in a position to give him covering fire, while he himself ran across open ground under heavy mortar and shell fire to the one remaining tank, where, regardless of danger, he took up an exposed place in front of the turret and directed its fire.

After a further enemy counter-attack had been repulsed, Sergeant Cosens ordered the tank to attack the farm buildings, while the four survivors of his platoon followed in close support. After the tank had rammed the first building he entered it alone, killing several of the defenders and taking the rest prisoner.

Single-handed he then entered the second and third buildings and personally killed or captured all the occupants, although under intense machine gun and small arms fire.

Just after the successful reduction of these important enemy strongpoints, Sergeant Cosens was shot through the head by an enemy sniper and died almost instantly.

The outstanding gallantry, initiative and determined leadership of this brave N.C.O., who himself killed at least twenty of the enemy and took an equal number of prisoners, resulted in the capture of a position which was vital to the success of the future operations of the Brigade.

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Department of National Defence, Ottawa.
22nd May, 1945.

THE CANADIAN ARMY.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:—

Major (acting) Frederick Albert TILSTON, The Essex Scottish Regiment, Canadian Infantry Corps.

The 2nd Canadian Division had been given the task of breaking through the strongly fortified Hochwald Forest defence line which covered Xanten the last German bastion West of the Rhine protecting the vital Wesel Bridge escape route.

The Essex Scottish Regiment was ordered to breach the defence line North-east of Udem and to clear the Northern half of the forest, through which the balance of the Brigade would pass.

At 0715 hours on 1st March, 1945, the attack was launched but due to the softness of the ground it was found impossible to support the attack by tanks as had been planned.

Across approximately 500 yards of flat open country, in face of intense enemy fire, Major Tilston personally led his Company in the attack, keeping dangerously close to our own bursting shells in order to get the maximum cover from the barrage. Though wounded in the head he continued to lead his men forward, through a belt of wire ten feet in depth to the enemy trenches shouting orders and encouragement and using his Sten gun with great effect. When the platoon on the left came under heavy fire from an

enemy machine gun post he dashed forward personally and silenced it with a grenade; he was first to reach the enemy position and took the first prisoner.

Determined to maintain the momentum of the attack he ordered the reserve platoon to mop up these positions and with outstanding gallantry, pressed on with his main force to the second line of enemy defences which were on the edge of the woods.

As he approached the woods he was severely wounded in the hip and fell to the ground. Shouting to his men to carry on without him and urging them to get into the wood, he struggled to his feet and rejoined them as they reached the trenches on their objective. Here an elaborate system of underground dugouts and trenches was manned in considerable strength and vicious hand-to-hand fighting followed. Despite his wounds, Major Tilston's unyielding will to close with the enemy was a magnificent inspiration to his men as he led them in, systematically clearing the trenches of the fiercely resisting enemy. In this fighting two German Company Headquarters were overrun and many casualties were inflicted on the fanatical defenders.

Such had been the grimness of the fighting and so savage the enemy resistance that the Company was now reduced to only 26 men, one quarter of its original strength. Before consolidation could be completed the enemy counter-attacked repeatedly, supported by a hail of mortar and machine gun fire from the open flank. Major Tilston moved in the open from platoon to platoon quickly organising their defence and directing fire against the advancing enemy. The enemy attacks penetrated so close to the positions that grenades were thrown into the trenches held by his troops, but this officer by personal contact, unshakeable confidence and unquenchable enthusiasm so inspired his men that they held firm against great odds.

When the supply of ammunition became a serious problem he repeatedly crossed the bullet swept ground to the Company on his right flank to carry grenades, rifle and Bren ammunition to his troops and replace a damaged wireless set to re-establish communications with Battalion Headquarters. He made at least six of these hazardous trips, each time crossing a road which was dominated by intense fire from numerous, well-sited enemy machine gun posts.

On his last trip he was wounded for the third time, this time in the leg. He was found in a shell crater beside the road. Although very seriously wounded and barely conscious, he would not submit to medical attention until he had given complete instructions as to the defence plan, had emphasised the absolute necessity of holding the position, and had ordered his one remaining officer to take over.

By his calm courage, gallant conduct and total disregard for his own safety, he fired his men with grim determination and their firm stand enabled the Regiment to accomplish its object of furnishing the Brigade with a solid base through which to launch further successful attacks to clear the forest, thus enabling the Division to accomplish its task.