



Sheetlines

The journal of
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps

“Arnhem revisited”

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Sheetlines, 89 (December 2010), pp.38-39

Stable URL:

<http://www.charlescloseociety.org/files/Issue89page38.pdf>

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Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

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Arnhem revisited

Francis Herbert

A few comments on Rob Wheeler's article.¹ Here I merely add one or two auxiliary sources that might be of future use to Rob or to anyone else intending to focus on such material or WW2 activities in Europe or 'The East'.

1. *I.S.T.D. Special Report on main roads in the Belgian Ardennes, Luxembourg and eastern Netherlands (Supplementary to BR 876 K, Part III B.)* dated March 1944; the preliminary leaf of this reproduced typescript item states 'This issue is PROVISIONAL only, to be replaced later by a printed text' (for which see below). Folded in the back pocket, as a visual guide, is a January 1944-dated black and white map *The Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg* with a note that 'Numbers refer to routes described in the text'. Leaves 28-53 comprise a section *Roads in eastern Netherlands* consisting of roads 65 to 84 inclusive, and provide information, for example, on road 71 'Arnhem-Oldenzaal-German frontier' on leaves 36 and 37 and road 74 'Nijmegen-Zwolle' on leaves 40 and 41. Each road description is preceded by its itinerary, its class, the maps used and local road numbers. For road 71 the 'class' is given as 'A 40-70', and 'Maps used' as '(G.S.G.S. 4083, sheets 40,33,34,28,29)'; for road 74 the parallel data are typed as 'A 11-70' and 'G.S.G.S. 4083. Sheets 40,33,27,21'. As Rob referred, with illustrations, to one particular stretch of an uncompleted new road on road 74 south of Arnhem, this is what is written on leaf 40 of this Special Report, sub-section Deployment and Cover: 'Elden is by-passed to the east by a new road from 715737 to a new bridge over the lower Rhine at 748767 leading into Arnhem'. The last sub-section to each road is – when relevant – entitled 'Method of construction (For bridges see Annex)'.

The March 1944 report's second part or 'Annex' on leaves 54-115 is devoted specifically to 'bridge details', ordered by road number, with option of various types of data being entered in a maximum 14 columns. Each road number is ordered by a 'Serial no.' followed in the next column by 'Location and/or Name', and afterwards the 'Map Reference'. At the top of road 71 (leaves 91-93), Arnhem is given 'G.S.G.S. Map No. 4083, Sheet 40 [:] 750780'; only the 14th column (*Remarks*) is filled in here with 'No bridges on route'. The first entry in road 74 (leaves 96-99) – for serial No. 1 Nijmegen – also has same 'Map Reference' citation but giving grid ref. as 717632.

For road 74's Arnhem (serial Nos. 2, 2A, 3, 4, & 5) *five* bridges are documented (leaves 97 and 98) of which serial Nos. 2A-4 only are immediately relevant here (in that the locations/bridges were mentioned by Rob): at map refs 746768, 736767, & 738774. Bridge 2A's construction note reads: '1 no. fixed span approx 500ft, steel through elliptical arch. 1 no. north end and 8 no. south end equal, fixed approach spans, steel, plate girder. Cantilever footwalk each side. Raised approaches each end'. The 'Load Class' is of 'Probably 70', the 'Remarks' column has 'Over R. Rhine completed in 1939; destroyed in 1940; in course of

¹ Arnhem 1944: were the maps good enough?, *Sheetlines* 87 (2010) 11-18.

reconstruction in 1943. Ref. photograph Library No. 389477 pre-demolition'. The third bridge, relevant only in so far that it is on the Nijmegen-Elden-Arnhem road, has a remark: 'Similar in every respect to bridge No. 2 above' [sic]. Bridge no. 4's construction is noted as 'Floating, 18 No. pontoons. Central portion on 3 no. pontoons moveable to allow for navigation'; 'Load Class' is 24; 'Nature of banks' has 'North bank vertical, masonry; quays. South bank sloping, dressed at water edge'; and 'Remarks' column has 'Over R. Rhine. Reinstated in 1941. Ref. photograph Library No. 109075'. This fourth bridge is that labelled 'Pontoon' on GSGS 2541,1:100K, sheet 5,3rd edition,1943, print code '50,000/1/44. Wa'.

As March 1944 saw the issue of the 'PROVISIONAL' reproduced typescript, described above, the 'normal' quality printed version – of 170 text pages and 71 pages of photographic plates - became *I.S.I.S. Report on the Netherlands and Belgium, Part III (continued) Roads ; B.R. 876 K (3) (1) (Restricted)*, dated July 1944, with note on front cover: 'This fascicle supersedes pages 1-142 of B.R. 876 K (3), Part III, Communications. The photographs included in this fascicle are additional to those already published in B.R. 876 K (5)'. The main text descriptions section for roads 71 and 74 are now found on pp.68-70; the statement about the new by-pass road east of Elden remains unchanged. What is now sub-titled the section 'Bridge schedules' (pp.74-163, now of 13 columns, with running title 'Annex to Road [-]') appears on pp.149-152 inclusive. Apart from a more 'civilian' (versus armed forces) style of English the 'Remarks' column for road 74's bridge 2A now notes '(See photograph 514, pre-demolition)'. There is nothing new regarding bridge 3. A similar re-designation, for bridge 4, of its illustration is seen: '(see photograph 515)'. In the photograph section at the back road 74's 'Arnhem' bridges 2A and 4 are shown in photos nos. 514 and 515: these captioned 'Road 74, bridge 2A. Arnhem. Alternative bridge in town over river Rijn.' and 'Road 74, bridge 4. Arnhem. Pontoon bridge over river Rijn (re-instated 1941)' respectively.

2. *I.S.T.D./Tn/480 (Restricted)* [s.d.] includes two small-scale general thematic maps (print-coded for March and January 1944 respectively) whilst the remaining 80 or so items are town and/or port plans and photo-mosaics dating from 1940 to January 1945. Although containing nothing of Arnhem 'Plan 42' is 'Nijmegen [station and bridge. (Mosaic)]', where the approx 250m to 1inch scale photo-mosaic is annotated to indicate 'Single Track Span' for a section of the bridge.

3. Netherlands zone handbook No. 3 : *Gelderland, Overijssel, Drenthe, Groningen and Friesland : map section ('Confidential May, 1944')* has, of its ten items, 'Map 3 Arnhem town plan'. This is a reproduction of the Bartholomew *Arnhem* plan, at scale ca 1:17,000, 14 by 9 cm, job no. 1269;² the pontoon bridge (marking the seven pontoons) only is shown.

² Chris Fleet comments: The NLS Bartholomew Archive records that Job 1269 was an order from the War Office to Bartholomew, received on 23 March 1944, for 1000 copies of 18 town plans in Holland. The maps were printed on 7 April 1944.