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The Fighting Wessex Wyverns: From Normandy to Bremerhaven with the 43rd Wessex Division

Patrick Delaforce

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Commanded by the controversial Major-General Ivo Thomas, the 43rd (Wessex) Division was branded the 'Fighting Yellow Devils' out of respect by its Wehrmacht and Waffen SS opponents. The 43rd's distinctive divisional badge of a golden Wyvern - half-serpent, half-dragon - was to be seen in all the ferocious battles in Normandy, the Low Countries and Germany between June 1944 and May 1945. They suffered 12,500 casualties including 3,000 killed in action. The 43rd had its roots firmly in the West of England, drawing its infantry battalions from the county regiments of Cornwall, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Wiltshire and Worcester, with occasional reinforcements during the Normandy campaign by 'foreign' regiments from Berkshire, Essex and other counties. This book tells the story of the division's campaign in Northwest Europe, from Normandy to Bremerhaven, in the words of the soldiers who actually fought with it: privates, sergeants and young company commanders, all have their individual tales to tell. Here are firsthand accounts of the landings on the shores of Normandy; the battles for the River Odon, Hill 112, Maltot and Mont Pincon; the breakout to the River Seine and the forcing of the vital bridgehead at Vernon; the only infantry division to make a single-handed attempt to relieve Arnhem - a gallant and costly failure; the clearance of the Roer triangle (Operation Blackcock) and the Reichswald (Operation Veritable); the crossing of the River Rhine and the advance northwards to take the port of Bremen; and the final triumphant advance to the Cuxhaven peninsula northwest of Hamburg.

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