

= Battle of Yongju =

The Battle of Yongju ( 21 ? 22 October 1950 ) , also known as the Battle of the Apple Orchard , took place as part of the United Nations ( UN ) offensive towards the Yalu River , against the North Korean forces which had invaded South Korea during the Korean War . The battle was fought between the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade and the North Korean 239th Regiment which was encircled east of Yongju , where it was attacking the US 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team ( US 187 RCT ) . On 20 October US 187 RCT had parachuted ahead of the advancing UN spearheads into drop zones in Sukchon and Sunchon , 40 kilometres ( 25 mi ) north of the capital Pyongyang , with the objectives of cutting off the retreating North Korean forces that were withdrawing up the west coast of the Korean Peninsula and releasing American and South Korean prisoners of war . Although the airborne drop itself was a success , the operation came too late to intercept any significant North Korean elements and the American landings initially met little resistance . However , on 21 October as US 187 RCT began to advance south to clear the Sukchon to Yongju road towards Pyongyang the Americans came under heavy attack from the North Korean 239th Regiment , and requested assistance .

The 27th British Commonwealth Brigade , which was leading the US Eighth Army general advance , was subsequently ordered forward to assist the American paratroopers . The British and Australians crossed the Taedong River at Pyongyang at noon on 21 October , and moved north on the main highway to Sukchon with the task of reaching the Chongchon River . The 1st Battalion , Argyll and Sutherland Highland Regiment ( 1 ASHR ) , subsequently pushed up the road until fired upon by North Korean forces in the hills to the south of Yongju . By nightfall the hills were cleared by the Argylls , while the 3rd Battalion , US 187 RCT occupied Yongju . Cut @-@ off , about midnight the North Korean 239th Regiment attempted to break out , resulting in heavy fighting between the Americans and North Koreans . The North Korean attacks drove the American paratroopers from Yongju , forcing them back onto the battalion 's main defensive position to the north . 3rd Battalion , Royal Australian Regiment ( 3 RAR ) was ordered to take the lead the following morning . By dawn the Americans again requested assistance . At first light on 22 October , two companies of Argylls advanced into Yongju , before the Australians passed through them riding on US M4 Sherman tanks . Now leading the brigade , at 09 : 00 the Australians came under fire from a North Korean rearguard position in an apple orchard on their right flank .

An encounter battle developed as 3 RAR carried out an aggressive quick attack off the line of march from the road , with American tanks in support . With fire support from mortars and artillery unavailable due to the location of US 3 / 187 RCT being unknown , the Australian attack succeeded nonetheless , and the North Koreans were forced to withdraw from the high ground having suffered heavy casualties . Meanwhile , 3 RAR 's tactical headquarters came under attack and was forced to fight off a group of North Koreans . Having been forced off the high ground , the North Koreans were now caught between the advancing Australians and the American paratroopers to the north . Attacking the North Koreans from the rear , 3 RAR subsequently relieved the American paratroopers , with the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade linked up with them by 11 : 00 . Following three hours of fighting the battle was largely over by midday ; however , many of the North Koreans that had been unable to escape continued to refuse to surrender , hiding or feigning death until individually flushed out . The Australians then proceeded to sweep the area , kicking over stacks of straw and shooting the North Korean soldiers they found hiding in them as they attempted to flee . Caught between the American paratroopers and the British and Australians , the North Korean 239th Regiment was practically destroyed . In their first major battle in Korea the Australians had distinguished themselves , and the battalion was later praised for its performance .

= = Background = =

= = Military situation = =

The Korean War began early in the morning of 25 June 1950 , following the surprise invasion of the Republic of Korea ( ROK ) by its northern neighbour , the communist Democratic People 's Republic of Korea ( DPRK ) . Numerically superior and better @-@ equipped , the Korean People 's Army ( KPA ) crossed the 38th Parallel and rapidly advanced south , easily overcoming the South Koreans . In response , the United Nations ( UN ) decided to intervene on behalf of South Korea , inviting member states to send forces to restore the situation . As a consequence , American ground forces were hastily deployed in an attempt to prevent the South Koreans from collapsing , however they too were understrength and poorly equipped , and by early August had been forced back by the North Koreans to an enclave around Pusan , known as the Pusan Perimeter . Key US allies ? Britain , Canada and Australia ? also committed forces , although these were initially limited to naval contingents and were largely viewed as token efforts in the US . Under diplomatic pressure the British agreed to deploy an infantry brigade in July , and would later dispatch a second brigade as the crisis worsened . The Canadians also agreed to provide an infantry brigade , although the first battalion would not arrive until December 1950 . A total of 21 UN member states eventually contributed forces .

Australia was one of the first nations to commit units to the fighting , playing a small but sometimes significant part in the United Nations Command , which was initially led by General Douglas MacArthur . Forces deployed in Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force formed the basis of the Australian response , with P @-@ 51 Mustang fighter @-@ bombers from No. 77 Squadron RAAF flying their first missions on 2 July , while the frigate HMAS Shoalhaven and the destroyer HMAS Bataan were also committed to naval operations . During this time the 3rd Battalion , Royal Australian Regiment ( 3 RAR ) , which had been preparing to return to Australia prior to the outbreak of the war , remained in Japan , however on 26 July the Australian government announced that it would also commit the under @-@ strength and poorly equipped infantry battalion to the fighting , following a period of preparation . Training and re @-@ equipment began immediately , while hundreds of reinforcements were hastily recruited in Australia as part of K Force ; they soon began arriving to fill out the battalion . The battalion 's commanding officer , Lieutenant Colonel Floyd Walsh , was subsequently replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Green . An officer with extensive operational experience fighting the Japanese in New Guinea during the Second World War , Green took over from Walsh due to the latter 's perceived inexperience .

On 23 September 1950 , 3 RAR embarked for Korea , concentrating at Pusan on 28 September . There it joined the British 27th Infantry Brigade , a garrison formation hurriedly committed from Hong Kong by the British government as the situation deteriorated around the Pusan Perimeter in late August to bolster the US Eighth Army under Lieutenant General Walton Walker . Commanded by Brigadier Basil Coad , the brigade was renamed the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade and consisted of the 1st Battalion , Argyll and Sutherland Highland Regiment ( 1 ASHR ) , the 1st Battalion , Middlesex Regiment ( 1 MR ) and 3 RAR . Understrength , the two British battalions had each mustered just 600 men of all ranks , while the brigade was also short on transport and heavy equipment , and had no integral artillery support , for which it would rely entirely on the Americans until the 16th Field Regiment , Royal New Zealand Artillery arrived in January 1951 . As such , with a strength of nearly 1 @, @ 000 men , the addition of 3 RAR gave the brigade increased tactical weight as well as expediently allowing the Australians to work within a familiar organisational environment , rather than being attached to a US formation . Also under the command of the brigade were a number of US Army units , including 155 mm howitzers from the US 90th Field Artillery Battalion , M4 Sherman tanks from US 89th Tank Battalion and a company from the US 72nd Combat Engineer Battalion .

= = Prelude = =

= = = Opposing forces = = =

By the time 3 RAR arrived in the theatre , the North Koreans had been broken and were in rapid

retreat , with MacArthur 's forces conducting a successful amphibious assault at Inchon and breaking out along the Naktong perimeter on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula . A steady advance began , driving the North Koreans northwards towards the 38th Parallel . The 27th British Commonwealth Brigade was airlifted from Taegu to Kimpo Airfield north of Seoul on 5 October , however its vehicles had to move by road , driving 420 kilometres ( 260 mi ) , and did not arrive until 9 October . It was subsequently attached to the US 1st Cavalry Division , under the command of Major General Hobart R. Gay . On 16 October the brigade took over from the US 7th Cavalry Regiment as the vanguard of the UN advance up the west coast , its axis intended to take it through Kaesong , Kumchon and Hungsu @-@ ri to Sariwon , then through Hwangju to the North Korean capital of Pyongyang . Although the North Koreans had suffered heavily in the preceding weeks , they continued to resist strongly , while a lack of accurate maps and the narrowness of the roads made rapid movement difficult for the advancing UN forces . During this time 3 RAR had a platoon of American M4 Sherman tanks attached and a battery of field guns in direct support .

The 27th British Commonwealth Brigade subsequently moved 70 kilometres ( 43 mi ) from Kumchon , with the Argylls capturing Sariwon , an industrial town 54 kilometres ( 34 mi ) south of Pyongyang , on 17 October . Supported by 3 RAR and American tanks , the Highlanders killed 215 North Koreans and took several thousand prisoners for the loss of one man killed and three wounded in a one @-@ sided action . Prior to the attack the Australians had moved through the town to establish a blocking position 8 kilometres ( 5 @. @ 0 mi ) to the north . During the evening 3 RAR encountered a North Korean force withdrawing north . Using the same road and moving in the same direction , the North Koreans mistook the Australians and Argylls for Russians in the poor light and were bluffed into surrendering , with the Australians capturing thousands of North Koreans and their weapons and equipment following a brief exchange . Mounted on a tank , the 3 RAR second @-@ in @-@ command , Major Ian Ferguson , captured over 1 @, @ 600 North Korean soldiers with just an interpreter . Australian involvement had been limited , however , and they regarded their first exposure to the fighting in Korea as a relatively minor incident . The North Korean capital fell to US troops on 19 October . The 27th British Commonwealth Brigade then passed to the command of the US 24th Infantry Division on 21 October , under the overall command of Major General John H. Church , while the US 1st Cavalry Division remained in Pyongyang to complete its capture . Coad had hoped to rest his men at Pyongyang ; however , the advance continued north with little respite and the brigade moved through the village of Sangapo . The British and Australians were subsequently ordered to seize Chongju .

The previous day the US 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team ( US 187 RCT ) had parachuted ahead of the advancing UN spearheads into drop zones around Sukchon and Sunchon , 40 kilometres ( 25 mi ) north of the capital . Commanded by Colonel Frank S. Bowen , the paratroopers were tasked with the objectives of cutting off the retreating North Korean forces that were withdrawing up the west coast of the Korean Peninsula and releasing American and South Korean prisoners of war . The plan envisioned the 1st and 3rd Battalions , US 187 RCT dropping southeast of Sukchon to seize the town , before establishing blocking positions on the two main highways and the railway to Pyongyang . The 2nd Battalion , US 187 RCT would then be dropped near Sunchon , 24 kilometres ( 15 mi ) to the east to block another highway and railway line . The American paratroopers would then hold their positions while the US Eighth Army pushed northwards to link up them , a task which was expected to be complete within two days . US intelligence indicated that a trainload of American prisoners of war was moving north by night from Pyongyang , and Bowen hoped to intercept their train and release the men . As the US Eighth Army crossed the 38th Parallel MacArthur had held US 187 RCT at Kimpo Airfield near Seoul as the theatre reserve , with the intent of using them as a blocking force to prevent the anticipated North Korean withdrawal . Yet anxious not to expose the lightly equipped paratroopers by projecting them too far forward of the advance , MacArthur kept them back , and after changing the date twice , they were not dropped until 20 October . By this time the bulk of the North Korean Army had succeeded in withdrawing safely behind the Chongchon River . Only the North Korean 239th Regiment remained , having been ordered to delay the UN forces as they attempted to follow up . With a strength of 2 @, @ 500 men the regiment subsequently occupied positions on the high ground astride the road and rail lines

east of Yongju , 12 kilometres ( 7 @. @ 5 mi ) south of the American drop zones at Sukchon .

= = Battle = =

= = = US 187 RCT airdrop at Sukchon and Suncheon , 20 ? 21 October 1950 = = =

Beginning at 14 : 00 on 20 October , 1 @, @ 470 men from Lieutenant Colonel Harry Wilson 's US 1 / 187 RCT , Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Company , as well as supporting engineer , medical , and logistic elements , were flown by C @- @ 119 Flying Boxcar and C @- @ 47 Skytrain transport aircraft from Kimpo Airfield . After forming up over the Han River , the force was parachuted into a drop zone southeast of Sukchon ? designated Drop Zone William ? supported by US fighter aircraft which rocketed and strafed the ground in preparation for the landing . The Americans subsequently met occasional sniper fire , experiencing only limited resistance . American casualties included 25 men injured in the jump , while one group which landed 2 @. @ 4 kilometres ( 1 @. @ 5 mi ) east of the drop zone lost a man killed in his parachute after being attacked by the North Koreans . The heavy equipment subsequently followed the initial airdrop , including seven 105 mm M2A1 howitzers and their ammunition from A and C Battery , US 674th Field Artillery Battalion . One of the guns was damaged in the drop , however , and was unable to be used . US 1 / 187 RCT subsequently moved west , capturing Hill 97 east of Sukchon and Hill 104 to the north , before clearing the town itself and setting up a roadblock .

Wilson dispatched patrols to the river in the vicinity of Naeman @- @ ni , and prepared to move south towards Pyongyang . A platoon of engineers reached Songnani @- @ ni at 15 : 30 but was delayed for 45 minutes by North Korean fire . Capturing 15 prisoners , the platoon then moved to Namil @- @ ni where it was further engaged , killing five North Koreans and capturing another 16 . Meanwhile , Bowen established his command post at Chany @- @ ni on Hill 97 , along the dykes of the Choeyong River , and was dug @- @ in by 16 : 00 . US 3 / 187 RCT ? under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Delbert Munson ? jumped into Drop Zone William shortly afterwards , before turning south and adopting a defensive position on the low hills 3 kilometres ( 1 @. @ 9 mi ) south of Sukchon , where they established roadblocks across the highway and railway . Seizing their objectives by 17 : 00 , the American paratroopers killed five North Koreans and captured 42 others without loss . Preparing to attack south along the railway and highway , Munson subsequently dispersed his battalion along the high ground south of Sukchon , with Company I on the left and Company K on the right , where they set up a blocking position on the Sukchon ? Pyongyang Road . US 2 / 187 RCT ? under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William J. Boyle ? jumped into Drop Zone Easy , 3 kilometres ( 1 @. @ 9 mi ) southwest of Suncheon at 14 : 20 and although the battalion suffered 20 men injured in the drop , it secured its objectives by nightfall almost unopposed . B Battery , US 674th Field Artillery Battalion was also dropped in support . Two companies then established roadblocks to the south and west of the town , while a third company married up with elements of the ROK 6th Division at Suncheon , which was pushing towards the Chongchon River .

MacArthur had flown from Japan to watch the drop from the air , and after observing the landing aboard an American bomber accompanied by a number of war correspondents , he subsequently flew to Pyongyang where he announced to the press that the operation had achieved complete surprise . Estimating that 30 @, @ 000 North Korean troops ? perhaps half of those remaining in North Korea ? had been caught between the US 187 RCT in the north and the US 1st Cavalry Division and ROK 1st Division to the south at Pyongyang , he predicted that they would soon be destroyed or captured by the UN advance . Yet , while the air drop itself had been a success , despite MacArthur ? s optimistic predictions the operation came too late to intercept any significant North Korean elements and the American landings initially met little resistance . Indeed , most of the North Korean Army had succeeded in withdrawing north , and had crossed the Chongchon River , or were in the process of doing so , while the government and most important officials had moved to Kanggye in the mountains 32 kilometres ( 20 mi ) southeast of Manpojin on the Yalu River . Most of the American and South Korean prisoners had also been moved to more remote parts of North

Korea , and were unable to be rescued .

In total , during the operation approximately 4 @, @ 000 men and more than 600 tons of equipment and supplies were dropped by the Americans at Sukchon and Sunchon on 20 October and the days that followed , including twelve 105 mm howitzers , 39 jeeps , 38 1 / 4 @-@ ton trailers , four 90 mm anti-aircraft guns , four 3 / 4 @-@ ton trucks , as well as ammunition , fuel , water , rations , and other supplies . Although sound in concept , the operation may have had more chance of success had a complete airborne division been employed . The following morning US 1 / 187 RCT captured the high ground north of Sukchon and established a blocking position on the main highway running north . However , strong North Korean rearguard forces held the next line of hills to the north . While at Sunchon , American troops from US 2 / 187 RCT had heard reports that a number of American prisoners had been murdered nearby by their North Korean captors as the KPA retreated . It became apparent that the train carrying the prisoners north from Pyongyang had halted in a railway tunnel on the 20th to conceal itself as US 187 RCT jumped into the area , and that while there , many of the men aboard had been shot by the North Korean soldiers guarding them as they waited for their evening meal . Sixty @-@ six bodies were later recovered , as well as those of seven more who were found to have died of disease or malnutrition . Twenty @-@ three starving and emaciated American survivors were found nearby ; however , many were badly wounded and two later died . The American paratroopers were subsequently ordered to return to Pyongyang .

= = = North Korean 239th Regiment is encircled , 21 October 1950 = = =

At 09 : 00 on 21 October , US 3 / 187 RCT began to advance south to clear the Sukchon to Yongju road towards Pyongyang . The American paratroopers advanced on two fronts , with I Company moving along the railway line and K Company along the highway . At 13 : 00 I Company reached Opa @-@ ri , where it encountered a strong North Korean force estimated as a battalion , equipped with 120 mm mortars and 40 mm guns . I Company was caught in an ambush . The North Koreans subsequently attacked the paratroopers and after a battle lasting two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half hours , they overran two American platoons . I Company was forced to withdraw west of the railway to Hill 281 having suffered 90 men missing . Despite their success , the North Koreans subsequently withdrew to their own defensive positions in the high ground around Opa @-@ ri . Amid the fighting , an American medic attached to I Company , Private First Class Richard G. Wilson , was killed while attempting to reach a wounded man who had been left behind , and he was later posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions . Wilson had repeatedly exposed himself to North Korean fire to render aid to the wounded , and later helped many to safety following the order to withdraw . On hearing that one of the Americans previously thought to be dead had been seen attempting to crawl to safety , he went back to the battlefield to search for him and had disappeared . Two days later a patrol found Wilson lying dead beside the man he had returned to rescue , having been shot while trying to shield him from further injury .

Meanwhile , during its advance along the highway , K Company encountered a battalion @-@ sized North Korean force , 1 @. @ 6 kilometres ( 0 @. @ 99 mi ) north of Yongju . Following a sharp fight the Americans forced the North Koreans to withdraw to defensive positions on the high ground to the south and east of the town , as K Company continued into Yongju , where they established a position on Hill 163 , immediately to the north , digging @-@ in . The distance separating the highway and the railway which ran north either side of Yongju was larger at that point than anywhere else between Pyongyang and Sukchon . The American companies now occupied positions roughly opposite each other ? at Yongju on the highway and Opa @-@ ri on the railway ? yet these positions were now almost 5 kilometres ( 3 @. @ 1 mi ) apart and they were unable to mutually support each other . Elsewhere , elements of the 1st and 2nd Battalions , US 187 RCT successfully linked up at Sunchon that afternoon .

The North Korean 239th Regiment had subsequently established defensive positions on a line of hills extending southwest to northeast across the highway at Yongju and the railway at Opa @-@ ri , on ground which offered the best defensive terrain between capital and the Chongchon River . The last North Korean unit to leave Pyongyang , the Regiment had been tasked with fighting a delaying

action against UN troops as they advanced north . Yet as a result of the unexpected American airborne assault , the North Korean 239th Regiment was subsequently encircled and found itself unexpectedly attacked from the rear . Already under threat from the UN advance north from Pyongyang , the North Koreans subsequently reacted vigorously to the Americans as US 3 / 187 RCT began to move south , and heavy fighting ensued 3 kilometres ( 1 @. @ 9 mi ) north of Yongju . The American paratroopers subsequently requested assistance from the US 24th Infantry Division , to which it was temporarily attached . Meanwhile , as the fighting at Yongju continued , US 2 / 187 RCT had remained out of contact at its drop zone at Sunchon as the ROK 6th Division completed the clearance of the town and its surrounds of North Korean stragglers .

= = = British and Australians advance to Yongju , 21 ? 22 October 1950 = = =

In the days prior , US I Corps had continued its movement northward as part of the general advance of the US Eighth Army . Following the capture of Pyongyang , the corps commander , Major General Frank W. Milburn , ordered the advance to continue to the MacArthur Line , running approximately 35 kilometres ( 22 mi ) south of the Yalu River . The US 24th Division , to which the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade was then attached , was ordered to lead this attack . On the division 's right flank three South Korean divisions ? the ROK 1st Division , under US I Corps , and the ROK 6th and 8th Divisions under the control of ROK II Corps ? were deployed to the east and would also be committed to the attack northwards . The British and Australians had covered 122 kilometres ( 76 mi ) in the previous two days , advancing rapidly until slowed by rain . A Company , 3 RAR was subsequently engaged by snipers from a nearby village without suffering casualties . The Sherman tanks proceeded to heavily engage the North Korean positions in the village , which was then cleared by the Australian infantry who killed five North Koreans and took three prisoners . As the rain ceased a North Korean T @-@ 34 tank , which had remained concealed during the earlier fighting , engaged D Company , 3 RAR and was subsequently knocked out by the American tanks . An unmanned SU @-@ 76 self @-@ propelled gun was also located nearby , and neither it or the tank were found to have any petrol . Meanwhile , US 187 RCT 's request for reinforcement had been received by the headquarters of the US 24th Infantry Division in Pyongyang . Yet , with the American division still well to the rear , the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade was the closest formation , and it was subsequently ordered forward to assist the American paratroopers .

Now the vanguard of the US Eighth Army , the British and Australians crossed the Taedong River using a sand @-@ bag bridge at Pyongyang at noon on 21 October , moving north on the main highway to Sukchon with the task of reaching the Chongchon River . Meanwhile , elements of US 3 / 187 RCT occupied Yongju . Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Nielson , 1 ASHR subsequently pushed up the road until fired upon by North Korean forces in the hills to the south of the town , with snipers engaging the column as it turned west out of the river valley around 16 : 00 . Encountering only light resistance from a small North Korean force of approximately 75 men which was then scattered by tank fire , the Argylls successfully cleared the foothills by last light on 21 October . Approaching Yongju , Coad decided to halt for the night . The Argylls subsequently sent a patrol into the town , establishing initial contact with US 3 / 187 RCT , marrying up with K Company which was established in a number of houses on the northern edge of Yongju and on Hill 163 immediately above their position . A strong North Korean force was believed to be nearby , however , with at least 300 men thought to remain in the town .

= = = North Koreans attempt to break @-@ out , 21 / 22 October 1950 = = =

Cut @-@ off , about midnight the North Korean 239th Regiment attempted to break out to the north , launching a number of attacks against the Americans . During the first attack a small group of North Koreans succeeded in infiltrating the K Company command post at Yongju . In the close @-@ quarter fighting that ensued Captain Claude K. Josey , the American company commander , tackled a North Korean machine @-@ gunner , and despite being wounded twice he succeeded in disarming him before collapsing from his injuries . Josey was later awarded the Distinguished

Service Cross for his actions . As the fighting continued the K Company executive officer was also wounded , yet the Americans eventually drove off the North Koreans , many of whom were subsequently killed . Nearby , the British and Australians could hear the sounds of heavy fighting between the Americans and North Koreans 1 to 2 miles ( 1 @. @ 6 to 3 @. @ 2 km ) to the north . Half an hour later a small group of North Koreans attacked A Company , 1 ASHR with grenades , killing two men and wounding two more before being repulsed having suffered one killed and one wounded . A large concentration of around 300 North Koreans were subsequently observed assembling in Yongju by the K Company forward observer , however the American artillery had relocated during the fighting and was unable to engage the target . Two guns from C Battery , US 674th Artillery Battalion were ordered to reposition south Sukchon to support US 3 / 187 RCT . Following two more North Korean attacks the Americans near Hill 163 were forced to abandon the roadblock after running out of ammunition . Detecting the withdrawal , the North Koreans attacked again at 04 : 00 . Meanwhile , after forcing their way through heavy North Korean machine @-@ gun and rifle fire the two American howitzers were successfully redeployed , coming into action at 04 : 15 . To the south , the British and Australians could hear the sounds of renewed fighting , and they began to fear that the Americans had been overrun .

The North Korean attacks drove K Company from Yongju that night , forcing them back towards the battalion 's main defensive position 3 @. @ 2 kilometres ( 2 @. @ 0 mi ) to the north . Yet the paratroopers managed to reform into a tight perimeter on the northern edge of Yongju . Renewing their attack at 05 : 45 , the North Koreans then assaulted the command post of US 3 / 187 RCT and the L Company perimeter , but suffered heavy casualties from American enfilade and direct fire . During this action a column of North Koreans had moved towards L Company just before daybreak , singing as they approached . Dug @-@ in on the forward slopes facing the road , the 3 Platoon position gave the Americans a good field of fire overlooking the rice paddies and they began to engage the North Koreans with machine @-@ guns . Meanwhile , 1 Platoon and Company Headquarters also began to fire in support . Yet in the darkness the attackers claimed to be South Koreans and the Americans subsequently held their fire until the light became sufficient to confirm their identity . An American 57 mm recoilless rifle subsequently destroyed a North Korean truck at the head of another column as it moved up the road . The North Koreans then attempted to move a machine @-@ gun forward , but were thwarted as the Americans killed a number of men as took over the weapon . Under heavy fire the North Korean attack was broken up , with many of the survivors attempting to take cover behind the raised road . Meanwhile , the howitzers had continued to support the paratroopers , and by 05 : 50 the two guns had fired 145 rounds . During a single fire mission 54 North Koreans were killed , while by the time US 3 / 187 RCT was finally relieved later that day C Battery , 674th Artillery Battalion had accounted for more than 200 North Koreans .

In spite of these losses the North Koreans assaulted the American positions again , with a force of 300 men falling on L Company and a further 450 men assaulting Headquarters Company . At the bottom of the slope the North Koreans knocked out an American machine @-@ gun , hitting three of the crew in quick succession . The Americans responded with .50 calibre heavy machine @-@ guns , while a 3 @. @ 5 @-@ inch bazooka engaged the North Koreans in a culvert as they attempted to overrun the L Company position . Master Sergeant Willard W. Ryals subsequently moved forward down the hill under heavy fire to man the now silenced machine @-@ gun , and proceeded to engage the attackers . For his actions he was later awarded the US Silver Star . Hard @-@ pressed , the beleaguered Americans again requested assistance . Overnight Coad had ordered 3 RAR to take the lead the following morning and Green subsequently decided to send a company through Yongju to advance north as rapidly as possible , intending to push through the Argylls which were tasked with clearing the town . By dawn , the North Koreans and Americans had fought each other to a standstill after heavy fighting overnight and the previous day ; the North Korean 239th Regiment was almost exhausted , yet , in danger of being destroyed , it prepared for a final attempt to break out .

At first light on 22 October , A and C Company , 1 ASHR advanced into Yongju , before the Australians passed through them . Elsewhere , the Middlesex took up defensive positions to the north of Yongju . The Argylls then moved through the town , using high explosive and white

phosphorus grenades to winkle out the remaining North Korean snipers , setting fire to many of the buildings . As planned , at 07 : 00 , 3 RAR was ordered to move through Yongju towards Sukchon to link up with US 187 RCT and close the gap between the two forces . C Company , 3 RAR under Captain Archer Denness subsequently passed through the burning town mounted on M4 Sherman tanks from D Company , US 89th Tank Battalion . Now leading the brigade , at 09 : 00 the Australians came under small arms and light mortar fire from a North Korean rearguard position in an apple orchard on their right flank , having moved just 1 @. @ 5 kilometres ( 0 @. @ 93 mi ) . The Australians had driven into the rear of the North Korean 239th Regiment as it was forming up for a final assault on US 3 / 187 RCT . The strong North Korean force of approximately 1 @, @ 000 men subsequently allowed C Company , 3 RAR and the battalion 's tactical headquarters group to pass before engaging them . The North Korean @-@ held features lay between the advancing Australians and the American paratroopers , blocking any relief attempt . Yet rather than preparing a deliberate attack and potentially allowing the North Koreans time to organise their defences , Green chose to force his leading company through at once in order to seize the initiative and continue the pursuit . An encounter battle developed as 3 RAR carried out an aggressive quick attack from the road , with American tanks in support .

= = = Fighting in the apple orchard , 22 October 1950 = = =

Preparing for the assault , Green informed brigade headquarters of his plans and was advised that US 187 RCT was believed to be about 1 @, @ 500 metres ( 1 @, @ 600 yd ) further north ; however , as the exact location of the Americans was unclear the indirect fire available to support the attack would be limited . The American tanks were also initially under orders not to fire for fear of hitting their own men . With mortars and artillery unavailable the Australians proceeded to attack regardless , with the tanks carrying C Company turning east towards the North Korean positions in the apple orchard . 7 and 8 Platoons were subsequently committed to the attack , while 9 Platoon ? commanded by Lieutenant David Butler ? was left near the road to protect the Australian flank . Supported by 18 Sherman tanks , the Australians dismounted close to their objective , charging the position with bayonets , Bren light machine @-@ guns , Owen guns , rifles and grenades as the tanks opened up with their main armament and machine @-@ guns . In the face of this determined attack many of the North Koreans left their pits in an attempt to move to safety , only to suffer heavy casualties after exposing themselves to the fire of the two assaulting platoons and the American tanks and flanking platoon in support . The speed and ferocity of the attack surprised the defenders , and the Australians quickly overcame the North Korean outposts despite the lack of indirect fires . The North Koreans , many of whom were recently trained conscripts , were then forced to withdraw for the loss of only four Australians wounded . For his leadership in co @-@ ordinating the assault Denness was later awarded the Military Cross , while Private Charles McMurray received the Military Medal for bravery .

More than 70 North Koreans were killed in the initial attack , while a further eight or nine were killed as the Australians cleared the position , setting fire to the North Korean dug @-@ outs and forcing the remaining defenders to flee . As the North Koreans broke , Green pushed A and B Company onto the higher ground to the right of C Company with the intention of clearing the ridge overlooking the highway , while D Company moved forward on the left of the road towards 9 Platoon . Meanwhile , the battalion tactical headquarters , which had followed closely behind C Company as they assaulted , came under attack in the apple orchard east of the road and was forced to fight off a group of North Koreans , with the regimental police and the battalion signallers fighting back @-@ to @-@ back to defend themselves . Withstanding the attack , the Australians eventually killed 34 North Koreans for the loss of three men wounded . Yet despite becoming personally involved in the heavy fighting , Green continued to skilfully control the battle throughout . D Company was subsequently ordered to clear the North Koreans threatening battalion headquarters , as well as sending a platoon forward to re @-@ establish contact with the Americans . Running low on ammunition , US 3 / 187 RCT had been in contact throughout the morning and continued to suffer casualties . However , having been forced off the high ground , the North Koreans were now caught



between the advancing Australians and the American paratroopers to the north .

Unable to move north , the North Koreans attempted to breakout across the open rice fields to the west , through the gap between the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade and US 187 RCT . The North Koreans again suffered heavy casualties , with many cut down by tank and rifle fire from C Company , 3 RAR . Some of the survivors took refuge among a number of haystacks and rice stooks in front of 9 Platoon , from where they engaged the Australians with sniper fire . Others fled east , escaping to the higher ground where they dispersed . D Company , 3 RAR was subsequently ordered to clear pockets of resistance remaining within the battalion position . Meanwhile , the Middlesex battalion passed through the Australians and , with the tanks , linked up with US 187 RCT at 11 : 00 . Following three hours of fighting the battle was largely over by midday ; however , many of the North Koreans that had been unable to escape continued to refuse to surrender , hiding or feigning death until individually flushed out . After clearing their objectives 7 and 8 Platoon had moved forward towards 9 Platoon , which then clashed with a number of North Korean stragglers in the paddy fields . C Company , 3 RAR subsequently deployed in an extended line and a substantial action soon developed . In a scene Coad later likened to driving snipe , the Australians subsequently proceeded to sweep the area , kicking over stacks of straw and shooting the North Korean soldiers they found hiding in them as they attempted to flee . For his leadership Butler was subsequently awarded the US Silver Star , while Private John Cousins received the US Bronze Star for his role in the action .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Casualties = = =

Despite the uncertain situation and the lack of indirect support , Green 's tactical handling of the Australian battalion had been bold , and his decision to move quickly through Yongju and to attack off the line of march proved decisive . Preoccupied with fighting the Americans to their north , the North Koreans were unprepared for the Australians to attack from the rear . Caught between the American paratroopers and the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade , the North Korean 239th Regiment was practically destroyed . North Korean casualties in the apple orchard were 150 killed , 239 wounded and 200 captured , while Australian casualties numbered just seven men wounded . Including those engaged by the Argylls , total North Korean losses during the fighting with the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade exceeded 200 killed and 500 captured . The survivors subsequently fled westwards . In their first major battle in Korea the Australians had distinguished themselves , and the battalion was later praised for its performance . The action became known as the " Battle of the Apple Orchard " , while the Royal Australian Regiment was later granted the battle honour " Yongju " . Boosting their confidence , the success prepared the Australians for the battles which they were to face in the months that followed . Meanwhile , US 3 / 187 RCT reported killing 805 North Koreans and capturing 681 in the fighting around Yongju . Altogether , American casualties during the Sukchon @-@ Sunchon operation were 48 killed in action and 80 wounded , and a further one killed and 56 injured in the jump . US 3 / 187 RCT and the 2nd Section , Antitank Gun Platoon , Support Company were both awarded the US Distinguished Unit Citation .

That afternoon US 3 / 187 RCT returned to Sukchon . The Middlesex battalion was subsequently ordered to push on to Sukchon , and after successfully relieving the Americans in place by nightfall , the battalion occupied a defensive position 1 @.@ 6 kilometres ( 0 @.@ 99 mi ) north . US 187 RCT returned to Pyongyang by road on 23 October , moving through Sunchon . Shortly after they went back into theatre reserve . Meanwhile , the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade and US 24th Division continued their advance up the highway . Intending to defeat the North Koreans and bring the war to a close , the UN forces pushed towards the Yalu River , on the Chinese border . However , resistance continued to be met as the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade crossed the Chongchon River , and they now moved towards Pakchon . On 24 October , MacArthur had removed all restrictions on the movement of his forces south of the Yalu River and prepared for the final phase

of the UN advance , defying a directive of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and risking Chinese intervention on behalf of North Korea . An intense period of fighting followed and the Australians were involved in a number of major battles over the coming days .

= = = Subsequent operations = = =

On the afternoon of 25 October a platoon from 3 RAR was fired on by two companies of North Koreans as they crossed the Taeryong River to conduct a reconnaissance of the west bank , and although they were subsequently forced to withdraw , the Australians took 10 prisoners with them . Acting as the forward elements of the brigade , that evening Green sent two companies across the river to establish defensive positions , and they subsequently broke up a frontal assault on their positions with mortars while the North Koreans were in the process of forming up . Sixty North Koreans supported by a T @-@ 34 tank then attacked the forward Australian companies at Kujin early the following morning , resulting in Australian losses of eight killed and 22 wounded . However , the North Koreans suffered heavy casualties including over 100 killed and 350 captured , and the Australians subsequently succeeded in defending the bridgehead after the North Koreans withdrew . Intelligence indicated that the British and Australians were facing the North Korean 17th Tank Brigade , which was preparing a last line of defence at Chongju , 70 kilometres ( 43 mi ) away . With the war considered all but over the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade continued to pursue the North Koreans towards Chongju ; however , the advance increasingly encountered strong resistance as they approached the Manchurian border .

3 RAR took over as lead battalion of the brigade on 29 October , 6 kilometres ( 3 @.@ 7 mi ) from Chongju . That morning a spotter aircraft reported a large North Korean formation consisting of a battalion @-@ sized force of 500 ? 600 infantry supported by several tanks and at least two self @-@ propelled guns , positioned on a thickly wooded ridgeline around Chongju . The Battle of Chongju ensued as the Australians dislodged the strong North Korean armoured force and then defended their positions against North Korean counter @-@ attacks during the evening . The following day the Australians advanced to the high ground overlooking Chongju , killing and capturing a number of North Koreans in skirmishes . That afternoon the town itself was cleared by the remaining elements of the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade without opposition . The fighting around Chongju was the heaviest undertaken by the Australians since entering the war . North Korean casualties included 162 killed and 10 captured , while Australian losses were nine killed and 30 wounded , including Green , who was wounded in the stomach by artillery fire after the battle , dying two days later on 1 November after succumbing to his wounds .

Following the capture of Chongju the US 21st Infantry Regiment had set off rapidly along the road to Sonchon to the west . Encountering only one strong North Korean position which they quickly turned , by noon on 1 November the lead battalion had reached Chonggodong , just 30 kilometres ( 19 mi ) from the Yalu River where the Americans clashed with another North Korean armoured force . To the north meanwhile , the US 5th and 9th Infantry Regiments of the US 24th Infantry Division secured Taechon and Kusong , before advancing to within 40 kilometres ( 25 mi ) of the Manchurian border . However , during the last weeks of October the Chinese had moved 18 divisions of the People 's Volunteer Army across the Yalu River under the overall command of Marshal Peng Dehuai in order to reinforce the remnants of the KPA . Undetected by US and South Korean intelligence , the 13th Army Group crossed the border on 16 October and penetrated up to 100 kilometres ( 62 mi ) into North Korea , and were reinforced in early November by 12 divisions from the 9th Army Group ; in total 30 divisions composed of 380 @,@ 000 men . The Chinese subsequently ambushed MacArthur 's forces which were now widely dispersed , decimating ROK II Corps at Onjong and encircling and overrunning the US 8th Cavalry Regiment at Unsan . With the US 24th Infantry Division ordered back to the Chongchon River as a result , the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade also began moving south as part of the UN general withdrawal in the face of the Chinese First Phase Offensive .