WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

JULY 1940

Blenheim Palace Grounds

1 Jul 40

1330

Capt. Clennett and Sjt. Cole, our I. Sjt., went to GUILDFORD for a recce of Z Gp position in the area to which we are going to move.

1345

The whole of Z Gp embussed in the Park and went on a practice M. T. move of about seven miles. The object of this move was to experiment with the new R.C.A.S.C. trucks for carrying troops. The move was carried out smoothly, except for one incident when the convoy split on a corner, and part of the convoy went five miles before being caught and returned to the right road.

2000

The Sig. amd [sic.] I. officers went to recce the route for tomorrow’s move as far as the S. P. at EYERSHAM.

1930

A D.R. from Bde rushed into Z Gp H.Q. and said that the Brig. wanted fifty armed men at Bde at once to search for parachutists. All ranks were preparing for a move, but Lt. Johnston and fifty O.Rs. were assembled, equipped and embussed in 12 minutes. While this was being done, the C.O. reported to Bde for further information. All he could get was a map with a ring around a village ten miles away and an order to “Send the men there.”

The party started out blind to that extent, found the village — a normal, small, sleepy English village — and nobody knew anything about the scare. They reported to the police station and were told that a Canadian officer had called a few minutes before, had picked up two of the local police and had gone to HARDWICK FARM forther [sic.] on. The party thereupon dashed into the drive of the farm at 50 m.p.h. There they found Capt. Chamberlain and heard the story.

Gapt. [sic.] Chamberlain, Security Officer, 1 Cdn. Div., on an adv. party going South the day before, had, with his party, captured a parachutist who stated that he had a mate who had instructions to report at HARDWICK FARM as soon as reaching ground.

Sentries were posted around the farm area with the hope of taking the second parachutist should he appear. The farm was raided and four German youths and an Austrian wonem [sic.] were taken and handed over to the police. At another house on the farm, two Dutch youths were taken and also handed over the police. Sentries watched both houses till 0200 hrs. 2 Jul., when Brig Price ordered the party back to camp to enable it to move with the Group. Local troops were found to take over the watch.

In the Field,

South of EAST HORSHAM

2 Jul 40

0400

Reveille.

1010

Between Reveille and 1010 hrs. we made final preparations for our move to this camp. We cleaned the camp grounds in Blenheim Palace park, but left all canvas and barracks stores in place, by Bde orders.

1055

We got started in plenty of time, but ran into the tail of the 9 Fd. Amb., thus delaying our passing the Bde S.P. by 11 minutes. More stopping by the convoys ahead delayed us till the first 20-minute halt at 1140 hrs. After that we saw no more of the M.T. ahead of us until we reached the road turning into this camping area. There we ran into some R.C.E. vehicles who had lost their way.

At many places along the route, people came out and gave us tea. Coming through GUILDFORD we met a party of soldiers leading pack horses. These pack horses were a curious sight in this age of motor transport, and they attracted the attention of the people on the sidewalks away from us.

The most interesting incident in this trip was the experience of L/Cpl. Cedric Ernst, of the Prov. Sec. of our Bn. He was assigned to the I.O. as a D.R., and he rode directly behind the leading car, along with Sjt. Quinlan, of the Sigs. At a rd junc about two miles from our camp in the Palace Grounds, the I.O. directed Ernst to act as a guide at that rd junc.

He guided our convoy past that rd junc., then started for the head of our column. On the way forward, he met a R.C.M.P. who waved him off to the right towards READING, towards which a convoy was moving. Thinking this was our convoy, Ernst hurried to reach the head, and did not discover the mistake till about four miles from READING. He then turned and went back along this English convoy to where the R.C.M.P. was. This man then directed Ernst to follow the arrows to catch up to our convoy. He soon came to a village just as school had let out for noon. There the arrow pointed left. Ernst turned left and finally came to an English camp, where he learned that no Canadian convoy had passed there that day. When he got back to the school, the kids told him that they had moved the arrow, and that the Canadians had gone on straight. At the next corner, a Red Cap told him that a Canadian convoy had gone through there. Ernst once more took up the trail of our convoy, but his M.C. ran out of gas just after passing three Canadian vehicles. A Canadian officer gave him a can of gas, and he resumed his hunt. At another corner six roads met. Three R.C.M.P. gave him three different directions in which they alleged the convoy had gone. He tried one road and learned that no convoy had passed there. When he returned to the corner of the six roads, he found Sjt. Quinlan, who was also out of gas. So they went looking for gas and found some at a Canadian camp, but no information about the direction of our convoy. While at this camp where they got the gas, about fifteen R.C.A.S.C. vehicles of another Canadian convoy passed, and the two of our men followed them. Soon, however, these trucks stopped, and our two pilgrims found that the drivers of these vehicles were also lost. Quinlan and Ernst then left the R.C.A.S.C. vehicles and soon came to another R.C.M.P., who didn’t know anything useful; but he had a movement table from which Sjt. Quinlan learned that Z Groop was heading for MERROW. So they headed for LEATHERHEAD, thus coming to MERROW, and there started following some Canadian trucks. Soon they were hailed by a teacher, who gave them some cigarettes. Finally, they saw a man from Bde H.Q. whom they knew but he didn’t know where Z Gp was to camp. At long last they found a man from the Carlt. & York. R. who directed them to the West N.S.R. area. They brought their wanterings to a close about 2100 hrs, when they reached H.Q. Coy of our Bn with both stomachs and gas tanks very empty.

In the meantime, the rest of Z Groop had reached this camp area, and had been distributed into the various Company and Sub-Group areas. The spot picked out for Bn H.Q. looked very cool and shady on that hot afternoon. By nightfall, all hands had settled down in their new camp after having enjoyed a hot supper, and making a start on slit trenches.

3 Jul 40

0800

Z Groop is in bivouacs concealed under the trees. The day was spent in completing slit trenches, and other odd jobs connected with settling down to a live in the “Wilds” of Surrey.

0700

2 Tp, Can Recce Sqn, came to the Bn today. They are now attached to us for rations. They made a “home” for themselves between “H.Q.” and “B” Coys.

In Camp,

South of EAST HORSLEY

4 Jul 40

This was a memorable day in our lives. First of all, the Mobile Bath Unit arrived and starter operations at the crossroads just South of our camp. The Bn was marched to the bath by coys. This bath unit can handle men at the rate of 125 per hour.

1800

The second big event was the letter from Bde announcing the resumption of the 7-days leave. Ten per cent of our strength are to be allowed on leave at once. All leave had been cancelled when we were expected to go to France. The resumption of leave has brightened our outlook immensely.

5 Jul 40

0700

A party of 40, men plus details for the butt party went to Short siberia Range this morning for rifle practice.

1300

Another party of 40 went to the same range in order to keep the range employed all day.

6 Jul 40

0845

The C.O., I.O. and Sig. 0. Went on an adv. recce. of the WADHURST STATION area. This area has been selected at a “position of readiness” for the West N.S.R. and attached tps. After a lunch in the local pub, we looked over the area and picked out places for the coys and sub-groups of Z Groop. Early in the afternoon we came to a hospital for underprivileged children. The matron took us in and gave us tea and cookies. From her we learned that Brig. price and the B.M. had been in this area already, and that their actions and appearance were so suspicious that the matron had reported them to the local police. The C.O. considered this a great joke.

1630

The first leave party to take a 7-days leave under the new scheme left this afternoon. This party consisted of 94 all ranks, and included Capt. Miller and Lt. Beck.

Posted Strength : - Officers — 22

O.R.s — 710 Surplus: one S/Sjt. Reinforcements required: 41

In Camp,

South of EAST HORSLEY

7 Jul 40

0845

Church parades in the field across the road from Bn. H.Q.

1045

“Doc” Ogulnik went on leave today, and his relief, Capt. Laturno, arrived at supper time

8 Jul 40

0900

A recce party consisting of representatives of Bn. H.Q. and the Coys. and Sub-groups of Z Groop went to the WADHURST STATION area to make final decisions for the locations of men and vehicles.

1030

The rest of the Bn were entertained by a demonstration of the performance of A.F.Vs.

9 Jul 40

Recce groops [sic.] went out to look over the area of tomorrow’s tactical exercise in the PRIORY grounds South of LEATHERHEAD. Another party went on a route recce on the amended route to WADHURST STATION.

10 Jul 40

This afternoon, the Bn less the Q.M. and his staff, the cooks and a skeleton guard, went by M.T. to THE PRIORY grounds to carry out a tactical scheme. The scheme supposed that about 200 parachute troops had landed and occupied two small woods. Our Bn was ordered by Bde to mop them up. Our new Recce Sqn was used to locate the enemy and pin him down in the two woods. “D”, “C” and “B” Coys acted as “Clamps” to deny the parachutists any avenue of escape from the woods. “A” Coy was ordered to attack the enemy in the woods. After everyone was in position, “A” Coy attacked the first wood with two pls forward and one in reserve at 1640 hrs. Then the res pl attacked the second wood, which was a much smaller position. By 1715 both objectives were taken. After the bugle had sounded “Cease Firing” the Brig. held a conference to discuss the exercise. On the whole, he was well pleased, but he thought that “C” and “D” Coys had closed in too close to the enemy’s positions before the attack was concluded. We all returned to camp in a very wet rain storm.

10 Jul 40

0730

Sixteen men from each Coy went to Long Siberia Range to fire Bren guns. Lts. Smith and Annand were in charge of this party.

1330

The R.C.E. attached to Z Groop gave us a demonstration of the use of A. Tk. mines.

Today the men of the Bn were introduced to a new bathing place — the LIDO, the Municipal Bath of GUILDFORD. Parties of men were taken to the LIDO during the day.

We had another rainy afternoon today.

11 Jul 40

This was an interesting day for us, in spite of the mud and dampness. In the first place a message arrived from Bde stating that the censoring of mail by our own officers will be discontinued effective 12 Jul 40. Still more satisfactory was the Div order permitting free postage of letters and postcards from members of the C.A.S.F. in England to people in Canada. Both of these announcements gave rise to an unprecedented wave of letter writing during the evening.

Then in the evening papers we got the sequel to our parachute-chasing adventure of the night 1 / 2 Jul 40. The first martial exploit of our Bn has been reviewed by both General Ironsides and Minister of War, Antony Eden! It appears, according to the news story, that Mr J. E. Florey, of HARDWICK FARM, whose family and self were detained on suspicion of being FifthColumnists, had visited the War Office to lodge a complaint. General Ironsides had already apologized to him, and assured him that the alleged damage caused by the soldiers was being investigated. The news item stated further that the “German Parachutist” whose confession led to the raid on the farm had turned out to be a deserter from the British army.

Just who caused the damage the farmer complained of, and who drank up his liquor, is not known to the writer. It is certain, however, that the detail from “C” Coy are not the guilty men, as nothing was damaged while our men were there.

12 Jul 40

0815

The Coys carried on a program of bayonet fighting and route marching this morning.

1530

Lt. Day gave the officers a lecture on communication between group troops and air craft.

1930

The C.O. attended a dinner and conference at Bde H.Q.

Posted Strength: Officers 22 Reinforcements in officers required to replace

O. Rs. 707 Surplus one S/Sjt. P.S.Ms — 3. Reinforcements required O.Rs 42

13 Jul 40

Major Berringer, our Q.M., with four N.C.Os. and 16mmen [sic.] from the West N.S.R. and one N.C.O. and 15 O.Rs. each from the R22eR and the Carlt. & York R., proceeded by M.T. to BLENHEIM PALACE grounds to strike canvas, fill in slit trenches, clean up the grounds, and return all stores to Ordnance

Another leave party left camp today, including the 2 i/c, Major Bryson and the I.O.

14 Jul 40

0815

Church parades.

1015

Capt. “Doc” Ogulnik came back from leave this morning, and reports that he got engaged while on leave.

Lt. Day went on a route recce to WADHURST STATION.

15 Jul 40

Pay parades all day.

Rain fell throughout the day. The mud under the trees and in the dirt roads increased in stickyness [sic.] and depth in the positions occupied by Bn H.Q., “A” and “D” Coys, and the Arty and A. Tk.

16 Jul 40

0915

Sjt. James Johnson, our Technical Sjt., went today to MERCHAM where he appeared before the Court Martial which was trying his case. Sjt. George Curphy went as escort for the prisoner. The Court opened at 1030 and adjourned at 1115 hrs. The court consisted of Major Reynolds, of the S.L.I., a Capt of the Tor. Scottish and a Capt. of the 8 R.C.A. One Judge Advocate was present. Capt. P.H. Stehelin, our Adj., prosecuted and Major Allen Embree, S.L.I., defended. The offence [sic.] was worded : - “An act of indecent or unnatural kind with another male person”. The sentence, later promulgated through 1 Cdn Div Orders, was six months without hard labour.

17 Jul 40

0400

Reveille.

0430

Breakfast.

0600

Z Group embussed to go on a Bde tactical exercise in the vicinity of WYCH CROSS.

The Carlt. & York R., with attached troops, and the R22R, with its attached troops, “attacked” the enemy and drove them back with air co-operation. Then the West N.S.R. was called upon at 1500 hrs and “attacked” at 1700 hrs in co/operation with a Coy of tanks. Owing to a delay in the transmission of messages, our Bn did not have time to really get into action before the tanks completed their job. The Arty followed to engage targets as they appeared. The A.Tk. tp supported “D” Coy, our left forward coy. The recce tp was held in reserve at Bde.

18 Jul 40

0230

The Bn returned to camp from yesterday’s tactical exercise.

1630

The C.O. attended a conference at Bde were the exercise was discussed.

During the day parties of men were taken for a swim in the LIDO.

19 Jul 40

This morning some of our men had their first chance to throw live bombs. The bombing area is at an old quarry near the Carlt. & York R. x-rds. Before the bombing started, the local police were notified, so that they could allay any fears of a raid among civilians.

Posted Strength : Officers — 25.

1500

This afternoon, Bn H.Q. and “A” and “D” Coys were moved along the road to new locations on drier ground. Everybody concerned were very glad to escape from the mud in their old positions.

The whole of Z Groop tried to get dried out doday [sic.]. Blankets, great coats, etc., were spread out on fences and bushes to take advantage of the first sunshine in two weeks.

20 Jul 40

More rain today. Little activity except digging the new latrines and slit trenches made necessary by the moves of locations yesterday.

1500

The Mob Bath Unit left our Bde area today.

1800

A new Officers’ Mess was organized today. This mess is located at the new Bn H.Q. and will serve officers of Bn H.Q. and “A” Coy. The officers of “C” and “D” Coys prefer to continue eating in their own lines.

21 Jul 40

0230

Lt. Day reports having seen flares dropped from airplanes in the vicinity of EAST HORSELY.

0830

1030

Church parades.

1730

The C.O. went to Bde to attend a conference on the coming exercise with 20 Armd Bde.

22 Jul 40

0945

Officers from each coy went on a route recce to WADHURST STATION.

1000

Lt. Beck, our T. C., went to Bde H.Q. for instructions on tomorrow’s “B Eschelon” scheme.

1315

More bombing practice in our bombing area.

Capt. Ogulnik returned to 9 Fd Amb, of which he will be Adj. Capt. Laturno, of the same unit is to be our M.O.

1930

The men of Z Group had a sing song tonight. It was organized by the 2 i/c, Capt. Clennett and the Y.M.C.A. representative.

23 Jul 40

0830

P.T. for the whole Bn under coy arrangements. The coys carried on a program of training during the rest of the day.

0900

The C.O. and representatives from each of the coys and Bn H.Q. went out on a recce of the areas, routes and positions for a large-scale tactical exercise to be carried out next Saturday. On that day, we are to shift sides in the war: we are to act at part of an invading German army and will be fighting a rear guard action against 20, Armd Bde.

Today the order came from Bde taking away our attached Arty and R.C.E. troops.

Our “B Eschelon [sic.]”, under Lt. Beck, went on an exercise under Bde arrangements.

24 Jul 40

0900

Representatives from all coys and Bn H.Q. and attached troops went to the area of our Saturday’s battle with the tanks. We went to CRAWLEY, and dispersed to the various coy lines of retreat.

25 Jul 40

0400

Reveille.

0700

The whole Bn less necessary guards embussed and moved off down the hill en route to a debussing area and concealed position in the vicinity of FELBRIDGE.

1115

All the troops are debussed and all M.T. under cover. The 2 i/c, with only three guides, came out and picked out hiding places for men and vehicles and guided the Bn from the D.P. at FELBRIDGE.

1300

An airplane flew over the area in which the whole Bde was hidden and took photographs as a method of testing our concealment. When the photographs were sent to us, the West N.S.R. was the only unit in the Bde that did not reveal its position to the camera.

1530

Major Gen. Pearkes visited our Bn in the hide-out area and expressed his satisfaction with our efforts at concealment.

The C.O. spent the day with 20 Armd Bde officers and the umpires for Saturday’s battle. They went over the whole area of the coming battle, and saw every position to be fought over.

26 Jul 40

0915

Representatives of all Coys and sub-groups went to CRAWLEY, where they met the C.O. and the umpires for tomorrow’s battle with the tanks. The C.O. explained to each group their duties on this scheme. Then the various groups dispersed to their separate areas, where they completed their recces for the battle.

The remainder of the Bn in camp carried out a program of P. T., rifle drill, and inspection by the 2 i/c in the morning, with sports in the afternoon.

1645

The C.O. held a conference of all concerned to go over plans for tomorrow’s battle with the 20 Armd Bde.

Posted Strength: Officers – 25

O.Rs. – 735 Surplus – one S/Sjt. Reinforcements required – 7.

27 Jul 40

0430

Reveille.

After early-morning hustle and preparation, the Bn moved by M. T. to the dispersal point at CRAWLEY. There the coys, with their attached A. Tk. personnel proceeded to their various positions on the “Brown Line” — our first line of holding positions. The C.O. and Acting Adj. Lt. Millard, set up a temporary Bn H.Q. at a point on the road HANDCROSS to UCKFIELD. The I. Sec. opened a Report Center at UCKFIELD, in a R. E. barracks, at 1010 hrs.

The coy’s “battle” opened with the 20 Armd Bde making contact with our coys at their four positions on the Brown Line at about ;030[sic.] hrs. The “fighting” continued furiously throughout the day; and far into the night patrols from our coys were out annoying the “enemy”. The coys held their first positions till about 1200 hrs, and then withdrew to their second [illegible]

UCHFIELD

1430

Major Gen [Illegible] Report Center.

The retirement to the final positions on the Red Line was attended by considerable difficulty. “C” Coy reached the Red Line was attended by considerable difficulty. “C” Coy reached the Red Line first, at 1432 hrs. “D” Coy was surrounded, and had to hold their position on the Black Line till 1615 hrs.

Lt. Millard went on a recce at 1545 hrs to [illegible] to find “A” Coy, which had not yet reported its positions or fortunes. Lt. Millard was captured, along with the O.C. of the A. Tk. Tp and P.S.M. Bullock. They were freed by the umpires and after one and one half hours [sic.] captivity. [Illegible]

“A” Coy reached its final position at 1635 hrs, but “D” Coy did not reach its position on the Red Line till 1740 hrs.

While bringing the rations to the Bn, Lt. Beck was misdirected by some “Fifth Columnists”, and thus didn’t arrive with the rations till 2000 hrs.

These “Fifth Columnists”, however, were working for us during the day. They helped to cause confusion among the enemy by wrong traffic direction. They also captured the operation order of the enemy Bde and turned it over to us.

During the night “B” and “C” Coys sent out patrols. “A” Coy was declared to be “wiped out” by the umpires. But Capt. Miller and C.S.M. Garber captured a carrier. However, the loud talk of some of the umpires attracted the attention of an enemy Bren crew who turned the tables and rescued the carriers.

2308

R.S.M. Maxtsad[?] captured a carrier on the main street of USHFIELD and paraded the captured crew into the Report Center for confirmation of their capture.

2300

“B” Coy sent out a fighting patrol which was captured. And 65 of the whole coy had already been “wiped out” in battle between 1830 and 1900 hrs. However, “B” Coy held their position on the Red Line all night.

“D” Coy organized a counter attack on the bridges seized by the enemy. But as the attacking platoons reached the bridges they found the enemy gone. However, they captured some enemy carriers which attempted to cross the bridges just at the platoons were attacking.

The chief lessons learned by this day’s exercise were, first, the necessity of having infantry along with A.F.Vs. in an attack on prepared positions. The infantry are needed to destroy the crews of the A.Tk guns which held up the A.F.Vs. Secondly, more attention should be paid by the coys to getting messages back to Bn H.Q.

In Camp

South of

EAST HORSLEY

28 Jul 40

0930

The Bn returned from its battle weary but happy. There were no church paraded today and most of the Bn were glad to spend the day resting.

The C.O. went on his 7-days leave, leaving the 2 i/c, Major Ernst, in command of the Bn.

1900

The 2 i/c went to Bde H.Q. en route to a conference of C.O.s at Div. H.Q.

Capt. Miller, the I.O. and an I. private — our Bn artist, Pte. J.H. Smith — went to TENTERDEN to carry out a recce of new positions of readiness.

29 Jul 40

Bath parades today to the Saint Teresa Convent.

1930

The 2 i/c held a conference with the coy and pl comdrs to prepare them for tomorrow’s field firing exercises.

30 Jul 40

0430

Reveille. Today the coys went to STONY CASTLE RANGE for a day of Field Firing practice. They returned to camp at 1730 hrs.

The 2 i/c and the Adj went to COLDHARBOUR to meet other C.os. and the Bde staff and make a recce and plans for a tactical exercise to be carried out later in the week.

1800

Major Berringer and his party arrived back from BLENHEIM PALACE. They have conpleted [sic.] their job there: but they were delayed by rainy weather. They were able to strike canvas only on three afternoons. The rest of the time, rain or shine, they worked at filling in slit trenches and cleaning up the grounds.

While there, Major Berringer was asked by various local citizens to account for missing dogs, cats, hydrant wrenches, etc., which had been missing since the departure of 3 Cdn Inf Bde. During the evenings, the party resumed their liaison with the citizens of WOODSTOCK in pubs, on the streets and at dances. Major Berringer was shown over the Palace, where he saw the tapestries in which are woven pictures of the battles of the Duke of Marlborough. He also saw the largest oak tree in England. This is the tree in which Charles I is alleged to have hidden before he was captured and beheaded by Cromwell.

0900

The 2 i/c and coy comdrs went on a recce of the area for tomorrow’s tactical exercise.

Major Courtney, Capt. Miller and the I.O. went with other officers of 3 Cdn Inf Bde of COLDHARBOUR, where Capt. Fordyce, our Bde I.O., gave us instructions in the art of umpiring tactical exercises.

The remainder of the Bn spent the day making a careful check of anti-gas equipment.