WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

NOV - 43

CAMPOBASSO

1

D Coy move to the factory area, K of C now occupy their former H Q.

1300

An Ensa party showing in town today, the usual quota of tps being granted a pass and tpt to attend. Also an officers[‘] shop was opened in Campobasso today.

2

Brig Gibson requested that a Bde sports program be drawn up to include trg.

1400

[?] of the R T R gave a concert this area.

3

0800

Lieut R E Campbell and the Bn I Sec attend a three day I course at H Q 3 Cdn Inf Bde. This is to stress the importance of and to lay down a system of reporting.

All Brens zeroed at range (563302). Snipers practise same area in the afternoon.

4

E F I stores drawn and issued today. Victory bonds value of $27,600 have now subscribed for within the unit. Cdn tps in Italy have now topped the million dollar mark set for the Div and attached.

1330

Lt Col M P Bogert attended an O Gp at Bde H Q.

5

1115

Bn parade at which Brig Gibson expressed his pleasure at being given comd 3 Cdn Inf Bde. [H]e also pointed out the importance of maintaining good military discipline while in this rest area. Following this all unit officers and brig Gibson had tea at the C Os quarters.

6

Orders received West N S R be prepared to move to Carovilli 2445.

1300

Bn 0 Gp at which warning order is passed on. Also a program of patrol trg as laid down by Brig Gibson is discussed.

100 personnel to attend Ensa concert at Savoy in town.

CAMPOBASSO

7

0845

Lt Col M.P. Bogert and Capt H M Eisenhauer proceed by jeep to area S Angelo 3129, and from a near by [sic.] high feature studied the area of the town of Sessano to which West N S R may move shortly in order to cover the deployment of arty in the area of Pescalanciano [sic. Pescolanciano]

0900

Part of Sask L I Sup Gp and H Q 3 Cdn Inf Bde attended Prot church parade in this unit H Q area.

Later today orders were received that one Coy (C Coy) would be moved fwd to cover R C E s repairing the demolished roadway between more prevalent. Preventative instructions were issued.

1800

The Commanding Officer, Lt col. M.P. Bogert attended a dinner at Hq, Carleton and York Regt.

8

0830

Lt col. M.P. Bogert and Capt. H.M. Eisenhauer go forward to Carpinone near where the Germans have blown the road [illegible…cliff…illegible] tunnelling Company to make a new road.

1030

Lt General Dempsey, commander 13 Corps, visited Carpinone and discussed the situation with Lt col Bogert and Major Pritchard, R.C.E.

“C” Coy left the Campobasso area in Transport and in the early afternoon were in CArpinone, where they slept in a Railway tunnel.

The wet rainy weather continues. It should be noted that climatic conditions are now such that continual exposure will probably affect the health of the troops, unlike the warm dry weather of Sicily during the summer months.

Three L.A.D. personnel on this date inspected the vehicles of West N.S.R. and found them to be in a satisfactory condition.

9

1200

“C” Coy moved from Carpinone to Sessano. Five mules were under command to assist in transporting rations and blankets, etc., as the road is still impassible [sic.] for transport. The Northern route via Civitanouva [sic. Civitanova] and Torella is also blocked by demolitions.

During the afternoon Sp Coy, West N.S.R., provided a large working party to clean out a school in Campobasso, under urders [sic] from A & Q 1 Cdn Div.

10

Lt. J.H. Jones, Sigs Offr., WEST N.S.R, succeeded in establishing wireless communication with “C” Coy at Sessano. Duento the distance a relay set was placed at Castelpetroso,

CAMPOBASSO

10

A series of War Artists’ exhibition paintings are on display at the Beaver Club, Campobasso.

11

1000

“C” Coy at Seasano sent a patrol to Carovilli, and found the town to be unoccupied by the enemy.

Capt J.H. Cameron and Capt. A. ? Rogers of “D” Coy.

1100

R.C. Personnel of West N.S.R., with Lt Blanchard in charge of party attended an R.C. Memorial service in Campobasso.

12

1000

Lt col M.P. Bogert visited Hq 3 C.I.B.

During the day Capt. Campbell, Unit Paymaster, and Mr. Losie, [illegible]. This soldier was reported missing at Civitanova, Sicily on the 13th July 43 and if [illegible] First known [illegible] from [illegible] to have been taken by the Germans since the landing in Sicily.

Engineer road repairs near Carpinone are not proceeding speedily and two or three days are required before the road Carpinone-[illegible] are opened to traffic.

13

1000

Lt col M P Bogert proceeded to Naples on leave. Major [illegible]aterman is acting O[illegible] During Lt Col Bogert’s absence.

Capt C R [illegible]y has been informed that he will leave shortly for England for a period of instructional duty.

14

1200

[illegible] order received for [illegible] to Caroville area at 1200 hrs 15 Nov 43. Major [illegible] attended the Bde Order Gp at 1530 hrs where he received orders for [illegible]. West NSR will be positioned in and about Caroville and will must send patrols to Vasto Girardi 2152 and RoccaSicura 1943 on arrival, with a recce patrol operating from Vasto[illegible] Girardi to Cerrato two miles to the south.

1900

Bn? “O” Gp at which Major [illegible]terman issued orders for the move. The route will be by way of Torella and Civit?ouva i.e. the North route rather than by way of Carpinone and Sessano.

CAMPOBASSO

14

Capt D Dodge and Lt [illegible] Lynch along with two sjts of the Camer[illegible] of Canada became members of this Unit providing replacements for a similar number of Officers and NCOs returning to England on instructional duties.

15

0700

Recce party under comd Major [illegible]erman, Capt Eisenhauer and Taylor, [illegible] crossing the Biferno near Castro [illegible] It was noted that the rising waters were rapidly making the passing of the [illegible] impossible and in fact [illegible] did not move on 15 Nov 43. The recce arty arrived at road junction 285399 near [illegible]ciano at 0935 hrs, where areas were selected by Brigadier Gibson. Recce party then proceeded to [illegible]. No transport could enter the town because of blown bridge on outskirts. Coy areas were selected and [illegible]. …bordering town square, [illegible] Coy west entrance to the town at 2?0453, [illegible] Coy Vaglio[?] 2343, “C” Coy west end of town at 242457, “D” Coy in village of Castiglionne 2547. The recce party remained at Caroville.

16

0330

Guides to Bde [illegible] to meet the remainder of the Bn. However, [illegible] did not move from Campobasso until later, arriving at 1330 hrs, having come by way of the south route. “D” Coy was deployed in area 2549 to cover 1 Cdn Fd Regt in that area. It rained incessantly throughout the day. At 1730 hrs “H” Coy sent a patrol of one Pl under comd Lt G K Romney, to Vasto Girardi by way of Carreto. This town was found to be unoccupied by the enemy. One Pl of “A” Coy proceeded to Recce Sicura. AFter an all night attempt by Lt J H Jones to establish 18 set communication with the patrol at [illegible] Girardi it was found that the link would only function to Cerreto with a link at “B” Coy HQ. No transport could enter “B?” Coy area and rations, etc, were taken forward by mules along the railway from near Caroville.

17

0700

Capt Buchanan, FOO?, from 1 Cdn Fd Regt, RCA, proceeded to Vasto Girardi. His 22 set of mules provided the chief means of intercommunication with [illegible] Coy patrol at Vasto Girardi.

0900

Lt [illegible] Hersey commanded a patrol which using carriers most of the route recced area Pagliarone 1948. Following his return about 2600 hrs a platoon from “A” Coy [illegible] was sent to Pagliarone to prevent any attempt by the enemy to destroy the village. About 1500 hrs a German patrol of from 10 to 15 men approached Vasto Girardi and were fired upon by Lt [illegible]omkey’s platoon. Four of the enemy were killed, the remainder withdraw

The enemy were identified as paratps. Following this threat of strong German patrols in the area another platoon [illegible] was sent to Vasto Girardi from “[illegible]” Coy.

18

After first light the standing patrol of one platoon from “A” Coy returned from [illegible] Carriers and jeeps can now reach [illegible] Coy area.

R22eR and Carly & York R arrive at Vasto Girard? And Andorra road junction 265[illegible],

Thus relieving West NSR of main patrol commitments. At 1530 hrs the two platoons of “B” Coy return from Vasto Girardi. Shortly before noon the third platoon of “?” Coy commanded by Lt Blanchard was sent by Bde orders to S. Pietro, 1554. This patrol encountered a German patrol at 175520?, after a brief fight at close quarters [illegible] of the enemy were seen to be hit, possibly killed, and Pte [illegible] patrol was mortally wounded. AS the German patrol outnumbered his own rather heavily, Lt Blanchard began to withdraw toward Vasto Girardi when a Coy of R22eR enroute to S. Pietro appeared. Arty fire was directed on the area and the enemy withdrew. Our patrol then returned to its Coy area.

2000

A patrol from “C” Coy (Lt C B Cochran) was sent to Rocca Sieura [sic] as a German patrol had been reported near the town on the previous night. This patrol however encountered no enemy.

The pioneer platoon under supervision of Lt [ilegibe] Hersey was employed in the all day task of sweeping the Bde Maintenance area for mines Some German wooden? box mines were found. During the afternoon “A” Coy moved from Carovilla to Poglianone.

19

The pioneer Pl was again employed to check the secondary road from Pascola-ciano to main road junction. About 0830 hrs “C” Coy began to move to Poglianone [sic. Pogliano?]. Meanwhile a patrol of “A” Coy (Lt Doane) advanced from Poglianone towards Castel di [illegible]angro, leaving a second patrol at S. Pietro station. The forward patrol encountered enemy two miles east o fCastel di Sangro and did not enter the town. It is expected that West NSR will soon move complete to the S. Pietro area. Air photos available at Bde HQ show little shelter for troops in this area. The town of S. Pietro was completely by the Boche as part of their scorched earth policy, south of the [illegible] River.

20

0830

West NSR was ordered to move to S. Pietro area at 1000 hrs today. Orders for the move were “[illegible]” Coy to be transported from Carovilla to Vasto Girardi, the same transport to return and transport “D” Coy. Meanwhile, “A” and “C” Coys would march from Paglianone to the S. Pietro area via Vasto Girardi. HQ Coy and Bn HQ Would move forward later with own transport.

0900

A recce party, Lt col M P Bogert, Capt A W Rogers and Capt H M Eisenhauer, proceed to Vasto Girardi were Capt Buchanan, FOB, from 1 Fd Regt joined the party. Proceeding on foot from S. Pietro station the recce party climbed the feature 1260. Coy posns were chosen, Capt H Burns having meanwhile come forward, “D” and “B” Coys were given patrols tasks for night 20-23 as follows: “D” Coy to send a patrol into Castel di Sangro and to recce the river line from the town to river junction. “B” Coy patrol to cross river farther east and if possible enter the town of Rocca Cinque Miglia. No transport was allowed west of Vasto Girardi and it was about 2200 hrs before the bn was in posn. Bn HQ and HQ Coy remained at Vasto Girardi and Sp Coy at Carovilla to avoid congestion.

1900

Major McNeil and Capt Archibald, each with a Platoon Comd, Lt Cochran and Lt Lynch respectively, reported at Bn HQ and were given patrol tasks to begin at first light on 21 Nov 43. These patrols roughly duplicated in daylight the patrols of “B” and “D” Coy.

With effect this date, Capt W H P David becomes TO West NSR, Capt C E Bent becomes TO HQ 3 Cdn Inf Bde.

21

During the morning Bn HQ and HQ Coy moved forward. The personnel were housed in the tunnel of an otherwise demolished tile factory. A Bn OP was immediately established on the high ground from which Castel di Sangro, Rocca Cinque Miglia [sic. Roccacinquemiglia], Pietrofarsi and Roccasaro were visible. Barely was this OP established when at 1230 hrs a German patrol which had concealed itself on a rocky knoll 300 yds North West of the OP opened fire on a patrol from “D” Coy under Capt Dodge returning from Castel di Sangro and also on a patrol from “B” Coy under Lt Romley, which was going out to the right of the knoll. The enemy being paratps had numerous automatic weapons but were driven from the feature with one killed.

1400

Capt Dodge reports his patrol returned from Castel di Sangro. The patrol had been in the town for some hours without incident but were fired on from point 1000 on returning and also from the rocky knoll as described above. About 1900 hrs Lt Lynch’s patrol returned having carried out a valuable recce of the river line in the Castel di Sangro area. Lt Cochran finding the river to be over 4 feet deep in the area East of Rocca Cinque Miglia, followed the river line to the East and returned through the R22eR area at 1900 hrs.

S. PIETRO

22

0900

Brigadier Gibson and Lt col Lane OC 1 Cdn Rd Regt visit HQ West NSR, accompanied by Lt col M P Bogert they watched registration of arty targets from the Bn OP. Plans were made to have “B” Coy West NSR capture point 1000 leaving the Coy area at 0100 hrs 23 Nov 43. During the afternoon the G2 Corps, Capt Cotton, IO 1 Cdn Div and Capt Prince IO 3 Cdn Inf Bde, visited Bn HQ and studied the ground from the Bn O[illegible].

23

0100

“B” Coy leave Coy area enroute to point 1009. Wireless communication with the OP thence by phone to Bn HQ worked well until the Coy reached the road at 0330 hrs when the wireless suddenly ceased and nothing further was heard until the Coy returned at 0930 hrs.

0430

Lt Scott commanded a patrol which protected an engineer recce party looking for suitable bridging places along the Sangro on West NSR front.

0930

No activity could be seen at point 1009 from the OP and at 0930 “B” Coy appeared immediately in front of the OP returning from that area. Here Capt Burns reported to the CO that point 1009 had been strongly held and that ll platoon commanded by Lt Blanchard had been permitted to penetrate the enemy position which was on the top of a steep rocky knoll. This platoon was then challenged and fired upon and although strong attempts were made to send 10 and 12 pls into the feature, machine guns and grenades prevented our troops from scaling the rocky slopes. It was by this time daylight and Capt Burns took advantage of a heavy fog to extricate the Coy from its rather precarious position. Only a small part of Lt Blanchard’s pl succeeded in escaping. He himself was wounded twice and ordered his men to leave him and return. “B” Coy was sent to BnHQ where the men would get cover in the factory tunnel to dry their clothing and rest after a very wet night. It should be noted that all rifle coys since arrival in the S. Pietro area have been living in the open and that rainy weather still prevails. Deep snow is visible on the high ground to the North and West.

24

0800

“O” Gp at Bn HQ. Lt col Bogert issued orders for an attack on pt 1009. “A” & “C” Coys and BnHQ were to take part in the action with two dets three inch mortars from Sp Coy and one pl MMGs of Sask LI under comd. The plan of attack was to advance directly toward Pt 1009, leaving the Bn OP area at 1200 hrs, with “C” Coy leading, followed by BnHQ, with “A” Coy last. “C” Coy was to act as a fire coy while “A” Coy attacked the rocky knoll from the right. Sask LI and mortars would keep the enemy’s head down if necessary. A preliminary arty program was arranged.

1145

Last minute details were checked at the Bn OP.

1210

The advance begins from area of OP, three inch mortars and MMG mounted on mules as was the 22 set of the FOO 1 Fd Regt who went fwd with the attacking force. The first part of the route was entirely down hill and progress was good. On crossing small river the enemy arty fired on the rd junc, killing one Cpl of Sask LI but causing no casualties to West NSR personne. The advance toward the rocky knoll was difficult, due to heavy mud. About 1500 hrs “C” Coy and BnHQ were a crest 800 yds East of “The castle” a heavy stone building atop Pt 1009. The MMGs were siting along the ridge to fire on the castle if necessary and 3” mortars ranged on the knoll. “A” Coy on moving to the right flank came under heavy shell fire and it was decided to attack from the left. At 1630 hrs “A” Coy was in occupation of the knoll, no enemy having been encountered. Three wounded men of “B” Coy were found in the castle, where they had survived our own arty fire, incl medium concentrations. Two dead from “B” Coy were found and one dead German. “C” Coy was meanwhile in posn about 500 yds South East of the Castle with BnHQ digging in 800 yds East. As soon as darkness prevented enemy observation, the Sask LI MGs were placed on mules and taken fwd into the castle feature. “D” Coy was informed by wireless to come fwd and relieve “A” Coy early the following morning. Apart from intermittent shelling in the proximity of our posn, the night was quiet, with light rain and rather high wind.

25

0500

Before first light BnHQ and “C” coy returned to the Bn area near S Pietro, arranged on the previous day Before first light “C” Coy and BnHQ were under cover of the wood on the slopes leading to the Bn OP.It was a ling difficult climb and the Bn area was not reached until about 0830 hrs. Near the Bn OP “D” Coy passed BnHQ and “C” Coy on the way to Pt 1009 to relieve “A” Coy. “D” Coy had one man killed and two wounded when one member of a small patrol stepped on an S-mine near Castel di Sangro in the afternoon.

Stretcher bearer parties were organized to bring back the wounded personnel from point 1009, a long, difficult carry.

S. PIETRO

25

During the afternoon Sp Coy moved from S. Pietro station to a group of buildings 400 yds West of the station.

West NSR has no tactical commitments for 48 hours.

26.

0630

Sixteen men of Sp Coy leave Bn HQ to carry back the last wounded from Pt 1009 At 1130 hrs Col, The Hon H L Ralston, Minister of National Defence, visited HQ West NSR accompanied by Lt Gen Crerar GOC 1 Cdn Corps and Brig T G Gibson Comd 3 Cdn Inf Bde. After being introduced to the BnHQ officers and Coy Comds present by Lt col Bogert, Col Ralston spoke to the officers of West NSR expressing appreciation of the work the Unit had done. He stated that much remained to be done before the war was won and told West NSR to “carry on with the good work”. Col Ralston, Lt Gen Crerar and Brig Gibson were then guests of Lt col Bogert at lunch, after which Col Ralston chatted informally with other ranks of the Unit before departing at 1240 hrs. Lt col Bernatch R22eR, also met Col Ralston at HQ west NSR.

Meanwhile the Bn OP which had accompanied D Coy to Pt 1009 was pointing out enemy posns and movement to the arty FOO and the Sask LI MMGs. One target was a German Sec of inf which was attacking a small patrol of R22eR on the North bank of the Sangro near Rocca Cinque Miglia [sic. Roccacinquemiglia] . The enemy was dispersed and the patrol extricated. Enemy arty and 8.1 cm mortars fired on D Coy posn during the day, but no casualties resulted. OP report - Appx 1.

27

0830

“D” Coy having been relieved on pt 1009 by a Coy of the KOYLI, 5 British Div, returned West NSR area and was billeted near S. Pietro Station.

1730

“B” Coy augmented by the carrier platoon of Sp Coy, moved to Agnone to relieve D Coy Carlt & York R, who were protecting engineers working on the rd Agnone - Castiglione

28

0830

In expectation that West NSR would later move to AGNONE a recce party, consisting of the 2 i/c, Major Waterman, Capt H M Eisenhauer, Capt G G Taylor, and Lt R W Bullock with several NCO of Sp Coy, proceeded to Agnone and determined suitable billet areas for the bn.

Only one coy West NSR is now in posn on feature 1260. D Coy, today occupying the feature, sent a patrol of one Cpl and two men to contact 5 Div at br 111539 at 1130 hrs.

S. PIETRO

At 1400 hrs and 1800 hrs a film “Second Chorous” [sic. Chorus] was shown in Sp Coy area by Supervisor James Losie, K of C.

At 1400 hrs two planes, believed to be Spitfires Mk VI, no markings identified, strafed Sp Coy area, causing no personnel casualties, but damaging one anti tank gun and several vehicles.

29

1400

Lt col Bogert and IO attend “O” Gp at Bde HQ. Brig Gibson revealed that 1 Cdn Div was to move to the Adriatic coast to replace 78 Div in 5 Corps. 78 Div is now well across the Sangro river. West NSR is to move to Agnone on 1 Dec and on to Casalbordino on 4 Dec 43, providing flank protection for the remainder of the Bde Gp from Agnone to Castiglione before joining the Bde coln.

At 1530 hrs Lt col Bogert revealed these coming events at a Bn O” Gp.

1600

Mobile Officers[‘] shop open at Vastogirardi.

42 reinforcements arrived today. Capt J W K Smeltzer is attached to BnHQ to assist the adjt in Boards of Adjustment, Court-martial documentation, etc.

30

1145

An enemy shell, believed to be from an 88mm dropped 50 yds from BnHQ, apparently firing counter-battery on 1 Fd Regt in the vicinity. Several more shells fell during the day, especially at dusk. No casualties were caused in West NSR.

Major Waterman proceeded to Agnone to complete billeting arrangements.

1600

The Bde IO Capt R D Prince visited BnHQ with latest intelligence summary.

Some concern is felt regarding the shortage of officers, the Bn is now 9 officers under strength.