WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

FEBRUARY 1944

ORTONA

1

Weather fine but cool. Bn carried on normal trg. Lt Col R S E Waterman and a number of other officers went to see a film “Five Graves to Cairo”.

2

Weather fine. Arrangements were completed for 24 men per week to spend 7 days leave at 8th Army Rest Camp, Bari. Leave parties to travel in parties of 12, two parties per week.

3

Weather fine. Coy Comdrs attended a conference at Bn Hq. The importance of night trg was stressed. Also trg of LOBs for reinforcements.

1400

Li [sic] Col R S E Waterman paid a visit to Div Hq. In the evening he was guest at a P P C L I Dinner.

4

1100

Weather fine. Lt Gen Sir Oliver Leese KCB, CBE DSO visited this unit. Viewed being carried out area sports field, trans park.

1400

1st Cdn Div Band gave a concert that was well attended and appreciated.

Lt Col R S E Waterman attended Bde “O” Gp. Orders received for this unit to relieve the H & P E R.

5

0800

A recce party left for the H & P E R. This was an unpleasant trip as it rained and snowed all morning but by mid-afternoon the storm was over.

1300

All officers, warrant officers & pl sgts attended a lecture at Bde Hq by the Div Comdr.

6

1330

More snow & rain. No church parade held to-day. Bn moved by trans to relieve the H & P E R general area 2914. Rain & snow alternately. Leading coys had taken over posns when word was received that this relieve was cancelled so Bn returned to ORTONA. Enemy mortared Bn Hq area quite heavily while move was in progress. No casualties this unit.

1900

Lt Col R S E Waterman attended Bde “O” Gp.

7

0700

Weather still unsettled. Bn “O” Gp. Party left to recce new area. Orders given to the effect that this unit will relieve R F F R general area 2813. Rear Bn Hq, “B” Ech and LOBs to remain in ORTONA.

1330

Bn moved by trans, first coy ( A ) take-over complete 1400 hrs. Last coy (Sp) in posn 1700 hrs. Enemy very quiet this sector. A & D coys mortared at approx 1600 hrs. Weather still wet and miserable.

SQUARE 2813

(near VILLA GRANDE)

8

0900

Advance party from C B H arrived. C B H to relieve this unit night 8/9. Light harassing fire area left fwd coy during day. No casualties. Considerable enemy activity observed across the AREILLI during hte day. Three partols were sent out night 8/9. Two of these contacted enemy. No casualties. Rained quite heavily during night. Relief not completed until 0530/9.

ORTONA

9

0600

Bn now occupy former billets in ORTONA. Raining very hard. Tps get what rest they can before the expected relief of the H & P E R..

1400

Lt Col R S E Waterman attended Bde “O” Gp. Bn will relieve H & P E R night 9/10. Tps moved by trans, first coy in at 1800 hrs. Relief completed by 2100 hrs. Still raining, cleared off however at approx 2200 hrs. Standing patrols only to-night. Enemy fairly quiet curing relief.

10

Weather fine and warm. The day was quiet and peaceful until 1800 hrs when “Jerry” landed approx 25 81 MM area Bn Hq. Shelling lasted some 10 minutes but caused no casualties.

1400

Lt Col R S E Waterman visited Bde Hq.

11

0900

Weather very cold with rain and snow squalls. Lt Col R S E Waterman visited Bde Hq and again at 1400 hrs this time accompanied by Lt R E Campbell, I O. Patrols Night 11/12 as follows: 3 standing to the right, center & left of fwd coys. A further patrol (fighting) of 1 officer & 25 O R attacked enemy posn just right of TOLLO rd 281144. Encountered heavy opposition here and forced to withdraw. Casulties [sic] 1 O R killed, officer & 5 ORS wounded. Tps are living entirely in split-trenches which in this weather is very uncomfortable and a liberal rum-ration is issued daily. Slight mortar fire this area.

12

Rain and snow with high wind. One inch of snow fell night 12/13. Standing and stealth patrols night 12/13. These had to be cancelled the latter part of the day due to white ground and moon-light.

13

This Sabbath is to be a day of silence along the entire Div front, not because it is Sunday but as part of a plan to get the enemy curious. Weather fine & cool. Lt Col

1400 R S E Waterman visited Bde Hq.

14

Weather unsettled with cold rain, commencing 1600 hrs. These circumstances make living in slit-trenches very uncomfortable. Patrols night 13/14 little to report. A two platoon raid by B coy is all teed up for 0530/15.

15

0530

A two platoon raid went in on ridge 284135. This was carried out by B Coy supported by arty, mortars, 4.2” & 3”, our own & those of the R22eR, also by standing patrol at 291143. No casualties & no prisoners but patrol established some definite facts re enemy on our front. Enemy M G? Fire was not exceptionally heavy but patrol had a lot of Phosphorous mortar bombs & rifle grenades thrown at them. The ground was white with snow and weather unsettled during day, however it soon cleared up & the snow finally disappeared although it remained cool. Orders received that R22eR will relieve this unit night 15/16, we to take up the original R22eR posn in rear of VILLA GRANDE. West N S R to provide patrols night 15/16, 3 standing & 3 fighting. Standing to 283154 & 279155 got on without incident but to 281143 did not reach objective. Fighting patrols also bumped enemy. No casualties. All Adjts & Staff Capts to meeting A & Q at Main Div. Attended by Capt Dyer, Adjt West N S R.

VILLA GRANDE

16

Bn completely relieved by first light Rain & snow add to the already extreme muddy condition of the ground. Billits of a shattered nature help some. E F I supplies are issued, 2 bottles of beer per man, gin & whiskey for senior NCOs & Officers. Day spent chiefly in resting up.

1430

Lt Col R S E Waterman, Lt R E Campbell, (IO), & Coy Comdrs attended a discussion at Bde Hq by Brig Gibson re lessons learned in recent period in the line. Sprites of the tps excellent in view of existing conditions.

17

Weather unsettled, rain & snow squalls. Bn still in an operational (reserve) role. Contact patrols to flanking units & our front carried out. Lt Col R S E Waterman making arrangements far tps to see a show at S. LEONARDO before we enter the line again.

18

Weather still unsettled with snow & rain. Whole area now a morass of mud. Lt Col R S E Waterman completed arrangements to have unit see show “Tin Hats” in groups of 75. Times are 1400 & 1800 hrs Sat., 1400, 1800 & 2100 hrs Sun. Maj Rogers one of the old originals had to be evacuated sick, Capt Rhodes replacing him as Comd D coy. IO & Pl Comdrs recce C & Y R area in preparation for relief of that unit in near future.

19

Orders received for this unit to relieve C & Y R night 20/21. Two groups of 75 to see film at S. LEONARDO in afternoon. Weather continues unsettled with snow & rain.

S. NICOLA

20

Weather dull & cool. Capt E N Rhodes came up from L O B to take over comde of D coy. Capt Theakston took over comd of A coy in the absence of Maj D Archibald. First coy moved by march route to relieve C & Y R. Bn change-over complete by 2400 hrs. Pitch darkness made this an extremely difficult move.

21

Weather cloudy & cool. Fairly quiet most of the day but occasional mortar bombs falling area left fwd coy. Capt Allen arrived to take comd of B coy from Capt H Burns who went out for a short rest. Usual patrol activities night 21/22.

22

Weather fine & warm. Some shelling left fwd coy also right rear coy. Own arty active on our front most of the afternoon. Contact patrols to units as usual also standing and fighting patrols during night 22/23.

23

Weather mild but cloudy. Normal trg carried on. The usual contact & fighting patrols were carried out. Lt Moors, pnr officer took a fighting patrol to 288168 and captured 2 prisoners, also a M G. Later 4 of the enemy gave themselves up to a standing patrol just fwd of B coy posn. Information from the PsW & the 4 deserters proved of great value and established beyond a doubt the identity of the enemy facing us.

24

1000

Weather fine. Two BBC representatives visited this Hq, and spent some time talking to Lt Moore & his patrol and taking the names of the men concerned. Lt Col R S E Waterman, Lt Moore & his patrol 48 hrs leave.

1400

Lt Col R S E Waterman visited Bde Hq.

25

0900

Weather cloudy with some rain. Lt Col R S E Waterman left to attend a two day conference at LANCIANO. Maj F Hiltz, 2 I C now in comd of the Bn.

1245

Heavy shelling area C coy & Bn Hq. Lasted 15 minutes. 1 OR slightly wounded.

26

Weather cloudy & mild with a little rain. Occasional shelling during day.

1400

A daylight patrol at 1400 hrs returned with valuable information & a anti-personnel mine believed at firse ti [sic] be a new type but later proved to be an old type used for the firse (sic) time on this front.

1600

Lt Col R S E Waterman returned from conference at LANCIANO. Two DAF officers arrived and were attached to coys to acquaint themselves with infantry operation.

27

Weather warm & fine. Lt Col R S E Waterman spent most of the day visiting Rear Bn Hq & Bde Hq. Slight shelling fwd areas. Fighting patrol to 288168 night 26/27 bumped enemy. Patrol Comdr Capt E M Crouse missing believed to be killed or badly wounded & a prisoner.

28

Weather fine & warm. Lt R E Campbell (I O) went to S. VITO to watch an arty & mortar demonstration which proved to be a pretty good show. Some shelling fwd coys by 88 MM. No casualties.

29

Weather very fine & pleasant. Recce party to R22eR area VILLA GRANDE in preparation for move to that area. Lt Col Allard R22eR CO visited this Hq. Lt Col R S E Waterman visited C & Y R, Rear Bn Hq & Bde Hq. Slight shelling during day. Standing & contact patrols as usual. Arty softened up area 288168 during afternoon & early evening. A recce patrol in same ares (sic) returned with valuable information. Ground much drier now and living conditions a little more pleasant. Capt B Cochrane took over comd of H Q Coy. Capt H Burns & Lt Kirk left for England on instructional duties.