WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

West N S R

August 1944

FOLIGNO

1

0845

Bn “O” Group in which all officers are made acquainted with orders regarding expected move to Q8135.

0900

All ranks were made acquainted with security measures regarding the move north, by their coy comds.

1 Cdn Div now under Comd 13th British Corps.

Weather this date fine and warm.

2

0530

Bn moves by tpt to area 8427 (Sheet 113 1/100,000)

1200

Bn halted at Div Staging area near town of CASTELINA [sic. CASTELLINA] Q8135 for 5 hours. All ranks had 2 hours swimming in a nearby lake, which was thoroughly enjoyed because the day was hot and the roads dusty.

1700

Bn again moved off by tpt as per movement order

2000

All sub-units in posn at destination.

CASTELINA [sic.CASTELLINA]

3

Weather fine and warm. CO held a discussion with officers both in the morning and afternoon concerning pending operations.

1500

Lt col R S E Waterman CO attended a conference at Brigade.

4

Occasional showers throughout the day. Trg was carried out under Coy arrangements.

1400

Meeting of all officers at Bn HQ where pending operations were again discussed.

5

Occasional showers throughout the day. Lt col R S E Waterman spent most of the day addressing each coy in turn, he spoke particularly of the part our Bn was destined to play in the coming battle of the Gothic Line. Failure is out of the question he stated and his talks throughout were interesting to all ranks

1630

Recce Party went forward to area 7262 where the Bn was expected to move the following day.

2000

Film “How Green Was My Valley” was shown.

6

Weather fine and warm. Bn did not move as was expected but indications are that we will move tomorrow

1930

Movement Order Issued for tomorrows [sic.] move to area 736565

7

Weather warm in the morning but much cooler late in the day.

0800

Bn moved by tpt as per movement order

1100

All sub-units in posn at new area. Tac HQ established at 720620, near FLORENCE.

1130

Lt col R S E Waterman went to Brigade.

1430

Lt col Waterman has a discussion with his coy comds.

Near FLORENCE

8

Weather fine and warm. Indications this morning are that we are going to move again to a new area.

2200

Bn moved off by tpt as per movement order

9

0200

Bn arrived at staging area near SIENNA Q8216, and remainder of night was spent sleeping.

SIENNA

10

0730

Bn continued move as per movement order.

1545

Bn arrived area 6583PERUGIA Sheet 122. BnHQ established at 654835.

1630

Lt col R S E Waterman wwnt [sic] to Bde.

Weather this date fine and very warm.

PERUGIA 10

One or two showers during the day but weather generally fine. Trg carried out under Coy arrangements.

11

Weather fine and warm. Trg under coy arrangements.

1900

H/Capt L Wilmot held bible discussion which was well attended.

2100

File “Lifeboat” was shown.

12

Weather fine and warm. Rifle ranges selected. Officers will hold a shooting competition tomorrow. Pay Parade was arranged and there was an EFI issue which included half a bottle of beer per mn.

13

Weather very hot.

0830

Roman Catholic and Church of England Church parades were held, after which the Church of England observed Holy Communion.

1000

Rifle Competition held by the officers and also a competition between the best other ranks in the regiment and the officers.

2100

Film “Dangerous Cheat” was shown.

16

Weather again fine and warm. Trg carried out under sub-unit arrangements.

0700

Officers and seniors NCOs attended river crossing exercise carried out by the R22eR, which was umpired by Brigadier J P E Bernatches DSO OBE, and Major Robertson OBE Brigade Major.

17

Weather fine and warm.

0700

Officers and Senior NCOs carry out a river crossing TEWT where the Bde HQ staff were spectators.

18

Weather rather cool with occasional showers during the day.

0900

Recce party proceeded to area S3836 IESI where Bn was expected to move in the near future.

1100

Bn “O” Group, movement order issued.

19

Occasional showers throughout the day.

Bn busy preparing for move.

1945

Bn moves off by tpt to new area. Owing to very heavy traffic Bn halted some 20 miles short of new area and bedded down for the night.

IESI

20

0800

Bn moves off by tpt. Weather fine and warm.

0930

Bn arrives in new area, Tac HQ established at 235395.

1400

Lt col Waterman goes to Bde HQ.

1500

Brig J P E Bernatchez DSO OBE paid a casual visit to this HQ.

1800

C of E Holy Communion service held by H/Capt L Wilmot in coy areas.

21

Weather fine and warm. Bn spent the day re-checking ammunition and equipment and generally preparing for pending action.

1100

Lt col R S E Waterman paid visit to Bde HQ.

22

0900

Lt col R S E Waterman attended a conference at Corps HQ.

Weather this date again fine and warm. The officers of the Bn were busy briefing the men on the probable ground we would cover in the coming offensive.

23

Weather fine and warm.

0900

All officers attended a discussion at BnHQ after which Lt col Waterman briefed the men on the forthcoming operations.

1400

Lt col Waterman and coy comds attend a river crossing demonstration at 268449.

1700

Recce party left to recce new area S1751.

24

0945

Warning Order issued for all personnel to be prepared to move to new area, time to be notified later.

1000

Movement Order issued.

1745

Tpt moves off as per movement order.

1900

Marching personnel move off.

MODINNO

25

0400

All sub-units reported in posn in new area. Tac HQ established at 167532.

1400

Lt col Waterman attended conference at Bde HQ.

Weather this date fine and warm.

26

Weather continues to be fine and warm.

0700

Bn placed on one hours [sic.] notice to move.

0700

Bn placed on one hours notice to move.

1000

Bn moved off by march route to area 1357.

1200

All sub-units reported in posn, tac HQ established at 1355575.

Official notification was received of Immediate Awards to personnel of the unit for action in the Hitler Line: Lt col R S E Waterman – DSO; F49817 Sgt Newcombe L J – MM; F40106 Sgt Vingar A – MM; F39668 L/Sgt McKinnon R T – MM.

1745

Brigadier J P E Bernatchez DSO OBE paid a visit to BnHQ and congratulated the reciepients [sic.] of the above mentioned awards.

27

Weather this date fine and warm.

1630

Movement order issued regarding move to new area.

Recce party leaves to reccce new area.

1730

Bn moves by march route as per movement order to area 1165.

2130

All sub-units reported in posn at new area and Tac HQ established at 112654.

CARTOCETO

28

Weather again fine and warm. Bn spent the day resting in preparation for action.

1330

H/Capt L Wilmot affectionately labelled by the men as the “fighting padre” arranged communion services in the coy areas.

Light shelling during the early evening but there were no casualties.

29

1200

Bn placed on 4 hours notice to move. Intention is to relieve the 48th Highrs of Canada who had captured the high ground overlooking the River FOGLIO area 0772.

1215

Recce party went forward with the CO Lt Col R S E Waterman to 48 Highrs posns.

1630

Bn ordered to move.

2200

Relief of the 48th Highrs of Canada commences.

2400

Relief completed. Tac HQ established at 075735.

Weather today was fine and warm.

30

0200

Patrols from C & D Coys each with an engr officer and NCO were ordered to recce the river line, approaches and crossings, and were briefed by the IO.

0300

Patrols from C & D Coy reported leaving the Bn area. Night was very peaceful considering that the main defences of the Gothic Line were no more than half a mile to our front.

BORGO S. MARIA

30

0700

Both patrols report back to BnHQ and are briefed by the IO. The river was found to be fordable throughout our area, and both patrols having crossed the river reported the nearest mines to be approximately 300 yds north of the far bank. Approaches were good and river 30 yds wide. Neither patrol encountered any enemy opposition.

0830

Coy Comds, C & D Coys ordered to recce daylight approaches and coy posns to and on lateral road south of river FOGLIO area 0575/0675, with a view to moving coys down in daylight.

1030

C & D Coys Comds left the Bn Area on a joint recce.

1300

Recce patrols returned and informed the CO that the area was unsuitable to move to in daylight as it was all under enemy observation.

1330

Two Italian civilians were interrogated by the IO and their information was hat the enemy had retired across the river two days previously and that area across the river was heavily mined.

1400

“0” Gp held at Bn HQ. CO issued orders for attack on the Gothic Line. B Coy under comd of Capt J H Jones MC ordered to attach and secure point 133 square 0277 after which remaining coys were to move forward under COs orders and secure bridgehead across river FOGLIO.

1600

B Coy moves across the start line 053753/043745 without any enemy opposition. A, C & D Coys form up ready to form bridgehead when B Coy secures objective.

1630

B Coy crosses river and advances towards objective.

1640

B Coy runs into enemy minefield. Unable to find route through or around so continue cautious advance.

1710

Leading platoons B Coy reach gulley 037758 and push on to lateral road 038766/030756.

1715

B Coy comes under enemy small arms fire and has several casualties due to Schu mines.

1730

Forward pls B Coy reach lateral road and come under heavy enemy small arms and mortar fire.

1830

Dispite [sic.] numerous efforts to push forward B Coy forced to consolidate on lateral road area 038766/030756.

1930

A, C & D Coys under Major R G Thexton, Capt S D Smith and Major A Nicholson respectively ordered by CO Lt col R S E Waterman DSO to form bridgehead across the river FOGLIO.

2040

All four coys firmly dug in north of the river.

2300

CO moves forward across river to coy posns.

2400

Communications firmly established, CO prepares to continue battle. Casualties were evacuated during the evening with some difficulty under direction of unit padre H/Capt L F Wilmot.

31

Weather today fine and warm.

0200

“0” Group at Tac HQ. D Coy to attack through B Coy posn. C Coy to follow D Coy. Both coys to consolidate in vicinity of point 133. All coys now under considerable mortar and shell fire.

0600

C & D Coys moved through B Coy, follow axis of gulley 035757 short distance north of lateral road. Both coys forced to ground by very heavy small arms and mortar fire also Schu mines.

0630

C & D Coys ordered to withdraw but were unable to do so as they were pinned to ground.

0700

Artillery lay smoke screen to cover withdrawal of C & D Coys.

0900

All elements now in comparative safety gulley 027758.

1430

Bn ordered to move back across river FOGLIO to area 054753 where coys dug in and began re-organizing in preparation for an advance the following morning.

1630

Burial service at RAP in Bn area for the dead.

During the remainder of the day and night unit under considerable enemy harassing shell fire. Casualties during this phase fairly heavy, 13 being killed 72 wounded and three missing. Casualties included Major A Nicholson OC D Coy, Capt S D Smith OC C Coy who were both rather severely wounded.