WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

West N S R

September 1944

BORGO S. MARIA

Early hours of the morning enemy shelled bn area, inflicting very little damage.

1100

Lt col R S E Waterman DSO considers the Bn completely re-organized and ready to move.

1200

Bn placed on one hours [sic.] notice to move. We were informed that we would take up posns presently occupied by the CYR, area 054753.

2100

Bn once more moves across river FOGLIO and double-banks the night with the CYR area 054753. No enemy activity up to 2400 hrs. Weather today was fine and warm.

2

Sep 2 dawns fine and warm and continues thus throughout the day.

0600

CYR moves off to new area.

1000

Without any previous warning Bn ordered to move immediately to area 0372.

1010

Bn on the move

1200

All sub-units reported in posn, Tac HQ established 039783. Remainder of the day was spent checking arms and amn and generally preparing for action. Indicating hast of the enemy retreat in this area, three 88mm guns were found, two of which were in good working order.

3.

Weather today fine in the morning but several light showers in the afternoon. We are informed that there are more artillery guns against us than ever before in Italy, a fact that by this time we are well aware of. The day was spent by this Bn waiting for orders to move forward but they were not forthcoming.

4

0700

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

0800

TCVs arrive and prepare to move Bn forward.

1200

Recce party goes forward to new area.

1515

Bn moves off by tpt to new area 9783 as per movement order.

1730

All sub-units reported in posn. Tac HQ established at 974830.

1900

Bn placed on two hours notice to move.

Weather this date fine and warm.

5

Despite the fact that the Bn was placed on two hours notice to move at 1900 hrs yesterday, reveille this morning finds us still in area 974830

0700

Bn placed on one hours notice to move.

1730

Marching personnel and vehs move to area 9389.

2030

All sub-units reported in position, Tac HQ established 936894.

2100

One officer and 25 Other ranks arrived as reinforcements. Weather today was fine and warm.

RIOCIONE

6

No indication today as to when we will be committed to action. Light shelling Bn area but no casualties. Weather this morning was fine but frequently light showers during the afternoon.

7

Considerable rain during the night which left the ground rather muddy and sticky this morning.

1015

CO and IO go to an “O” Group at Bde HQ.

1500

Bn “O” Group. CO issued orders for relief of HPER who are presently in area 9190.

1945

Bn leaves by march route to relieve HPER.

2300

All sub-units report in position and relief of the HPER is complete. Tac HQ established at 913906. There was light shelling during the take-over but no casualties.

8

0230

Two patrols left Bn area to investigate buildings at 904912 and 902918.

0430

Patrol from “C” Coy returns and reports enemy occupying buildings at 904912.

0500

“B” Coy patrol returns, reports no enemy area 902918 but numerous unoccupied enemy posns.

0515

Enemy patrol approaches “A” Coy area and in an exchange of small arms fire, “A” Coy suffered two other rank casualties, one killed and one wounded.

0900

CO goes to “O” Gp at Bde.

1030

“O Group at BnHQ, CO outlines plan for changeover with 1 Bn Greek Mtn Bde.

1100

Greek Reps arrive and made acquainted with enemy and out own picture by CO and IO. Considerable shelling in the Bn area today.

1400

An HE shell came through the wall of BnHQ house but failed to explode.

2000

Reilef of the Bn by the Greeks as per Movement Order began.

2300

Bn settled in old area 9389 with Tac HQ established at 936894.

2330

Word was received that Lt C B C G Cochrane one of the original officers of the unit and presently LO at HQ 1 Cdn Div had met with a rather serious accident while riding a motorcycle.

9

Weather today fine and warm.

0900

Five reinforcement officers arrive, among them Major G L F MacNeil MC and Lt D G Kirk two officers who had landed in Sicily with the unit and returned to England on exchange some months ago.

1900

CO Lt Col R S E Waterman DSO and IO Capt R E Campbell called to Bde O Group where plan for new offensive was outlined. West NSR to relieve Irish Regt of Canada in area 8988 tomorrow.

2330

Enemy air raid in vicinity of Bn Area which caused everyone to keep their fingers crossed for a few minutes, however no damage was done in the Bn area.

10

0800

CO with All Coy Comds and IO left for recce of Irish Regt positions. Enroute the party guide Cpl Charlie Fleet lost his bearings and led the entire party along a ridge in full view of the enemy, and within eash [sic.] rifle shot, for three quarters of a mile. Jerry was apparently so surprised that he forgot to pull the trigger, and the entire party reached the Irish Regiment of Canada unscathed.

0930

Both Church of England and Roman Catholic Church services after which C of E held Holy Communion Service.

1900

Bn moved off by march route to relieve Irish Regt of Canada.

2350

Relief completed, Tac HQ established at 895884. Weather this date fine and warm.

BESANEGO

11

Today the shelling and mortaring is quite intensive, however the Bn is well dug in and the only result is that we have not freedom of movement.

2100

Patrols from “C” and “D” coy both 1 and 10 in strength leave to investigate building at 880887 and 882892.

2300

Stealth patrol of three scouts accompanied by an engineer officer at NCO left to investigate river crossing at 887903. Today a message of encouragement was received from the GOC 1 Cdn Div.

Weather today was fine and warm.

12

0200

Patrol from “C” Coy returned from investigating buildings at 880887 and reported buildings clear of the enemy and slit trenches in the area unoccupied.

0240

“D” Coy patrol returned from 882892 and reported buildings occupied in strength by enemy. Enemy very active and alert in this area, using numerous verey lights and firing small arms.

0330

“A” Coy Comd reports enemy tank moving about on his front.

0530

Stealth patrol returns from area 8790 and report getting involved in a fire fight between the enemy and the CYR. Patrol was discovered by the enemy and had to crawl a considerable distance before being able to return to the Bn Area. They were unable to reach the river crossing.

1800

CO Lt col R S E Waterman DSO held a conference at BnHQ where he outlined plan for 5 Cdn Div attack on our left flank tomorrow.

2000

Our air force put on a fine demonstration of close air support on our left flank and front, aided by flares. The attack was so close to our own FDLs that for a moment there was a bit consistently during the day and tonight. Weather this date was fine and warm.

13

1000

CO held a discussion with officers at BnHQQ.

1100

CO attended “O” Group at 3 CIB HQ.

2100

Bn “O” Group. CO gives his orders for our attack at 0330 hrs, on the town of SAN LORENZO. West NSR to attack and secure R MARANO river line and then to attack and secure enemy strong points at SAN LORENZO and 858929 after which we are to exploit north west to the River AUSA. The attack to be done in two phases. Phase 1: to fight for and secure MARANO river line and, Phase 2: using river line as a start line, attack and secure SAN LORENZO and strong point at 858929. During phase 1 A Coy to lead with one tp of tanks under comd, and B Coy to follow at 200 yarda [sic.] intals. Supporting arms to be on wheels ready to move forward when required. Coys with tanks to be in FUP 898891/897888 by 0230 hrs and to cross start line (lateral road 894888/896891) by 0300 hrs. First phase to be completed by 0530 hrs and Bn to reorganize with A & B Coys forward each with a tp of tanks. C & D Coys in reserve. Second phase to start at 0630 hrs under artillery concentrations prepare on a corps level. A & B Coys to secure intermediate objectives, then C & D Coys to pass through A & B, pick up tanks and continue to final objectives. When final objectives secure B Coy to pass through and exploit as far as River AUSA.

2200

“O” Group being finished, officers returned to their respective commands to brief their officers and men. During this morning tanks supporting the 5 Cdn Dv attack while manouvering [sic.] in our D Coy area drew considerable enemy fire and caused a number of casualties in D Coy Weather today fine and warm.

14

0100

Tac HQ moves to house at 894887 which afforded a good view of the battle area.

0300

Forward sub-units cross start line.

0500

Forward elements reach area 888894 and encounter heavy resistance, which included small arms fire, mortar and shelling and SP guns. Resistance proved much greater that previous intelligence had led us to believe and fighting for the MARANO river line became very fierce which resulted in the Bn plan being changed several times

0700

C Coy caught under our own barrage of air bursts and its 18 set knocked out.

0800

Forward coys had by now fought their way to 888899 occupied by the CYR.

1815

CO went forward to 888899 leaving IO with communications at 894887.

0900

CO was rallying the Bn and preparing for a renewed assault.

1015

D Coy under Capt W H P David attack the village GHETTO DEL MOLINO 884901 with a tp of tanks and did a splendid job of house clearing.

1030

IO with remainder of Tc HQ joins CO at 888899.

1100

Lt col M P Bogert DSO paid a visit to Tac HQ and was greeted by a hail of enemy bullets and shells.

1200

With the exception of a few isolated pockets and two SP guns enemy by this time had been cleared up to the river MARANO

1300

Advance continues with “B” Coy under Capt J H Jones CM leading. Advance at this stage became so rapid that Lt G M Hebb (later killed in action) in charge of the leading platoon in B Coy was able to dash across the bridge at 879903 and tear the wires from the demolitions thus preventing the enemy from blowing the bridge, which if blown could have held up the advance for a considerable period of time.

1500

D Coy under Capt W H P David reach village of SAN LORENZO but being unsupported by tanks (which by this time had been all knocked out) had to withdraw 800 yards and consolidate.

1800

CO decides to move forward to our FDLs.

1900

Fresh squadron of tanks promised earlier had not arrived so the CO decides to attack SAN LORENZO without them.

2000

D Coy again on the outskirts of SAN LORENZO with B Coy on it’s [sic.] left, but without support of tanks it was found impossible to storm the height and the CO ordered all coys to retire and consolidate, in area 8690. Tac HQ established at 867909

2400

Supporting arms, cookhouses and amn truck had by this time arrived and all coys fed and amn replenished [sic.]. Numerous casualties in men and equipment suffered in todays [sic.] action. Weather was fine and warm.

SAN LORENZO

15

0100

Our own 3-in mortars on base plates in Bn Area and busily engaged in harassing fire on SAN LORENZO.

0200

Still no tanks, but CO held “0?” Group and on instruction from higher authority issued orders for a further attack on the hill feature SAN LORENZO B & C Coys to attack forward and A & D Coys in reserve.

0230

B & C Coys cross start line.

0345

In the darkness D Coy got in front of C Coy and found itself with B Coy once again on the outskirts of SAN LORENZO and again found it impossible to take the feature without support of tanks and withdrew to old area to re-organize.

0800

Another squadron of tanks arrive, CO has an immediate “0” group and issues orders for yet another attack on SAN LORENZO. B Coy with two tps of tanks under command and C Coy with one tp of tanks under comd to lead and A & D Coys to follow. Time across start line 0830 hrs. Due to the fighting in recent actions the fighting strength of the Bn was greatly reduced and the men are extremely tired and battle weary.

0830

B & C Coys cross start line.

0930

C Coy gets caught under very heavy mortar concentration and becomes disorganized. All its officers including the OC. Major W G Stothart become casualties

1000

A Coy under Major R G Thexton takes over from C Coy and continues a very slow advance with B Coy.

1030

Advance held up by SP guns and machine gun posts in and around houses on ridge near side SAN LORENZO. Tanks asked our Tk guns to engage houses.

1045

A Tk guns engage houses with good results.

1100

Enemy 150 mm troop engage BnHQ house with deadly accuracy until 1200 hrs, causing numerous casualties among BnHQ personnel. Also knocking out all our communications with the exception of the Bn 18 set. During the early afternoon the coys reported slow progress against stubborn and fierce resistance.

1700

B Coy reports on objective. A Coy close behind.

1800

CO Lt col R S E Waterman DSO orders ll support weapons forward to help coys consolidate on the objective.

1830

Bde Comd congratulates Bn on its success.

1900

Tac HQ moves forward to SAN LORENO and established at 865917

2400

Bn now firmly established on the objective with all support weapons in position.

Capt J H Jones MC OC B Coy and Lt S K Nickerson also B Coy deserve special mention in this phase of the action. Shelling now has become quite intense. Weather this date fine and warm.

16

0200

Patrol of Scouts and snipers attempt to reach river AUSA but are driven back by enemy snipers.

0900

Bde Comd Lt col M P Bogert DSO paid a visit to BnHQ and discussed previous days action and future intention with the CO Lt col R S E Waterman DSO. All last night and today Bn was subjected to severe shelling and mortaring. Bn is busy today re-organizing having suffered rather severe casualties in men and equipment the past couple of days. Padre H/Capt L F Wilmot was collecting and burying the dead. Weather today fine but a bit cool.

17

Intense shelling remainder of night.

0920

CO Lt col RSE Waterman DSO called to Bde HQ and this subsequently proved to be his farewell to active command of the regiment.

1100

Major F E Hiltz 2 IC of the Bn arrives and assumes command.

1130

“0” Group at BnHQ. OC issued orders for B Coy to attack and secure GANOFANIO at 854916.

1200

B Coy crosses start line.

1245

B Coy now consolidated on objective having met no opposition.

1300

Section of Machine guns moved down and take up a defensive posn with B Coy.

Considerable shelling today up to 2400 hrs. Weather fine and warm.

18

In the early hours of this morning enemy shelling intensified and continued thus throughout the day

0700

One of our Spirfires [sic.] straffed [sic.] the Bn area and dropped one bomb on the church burying some engineers and one platoon of A Coy causing some casualties.

1150

OC Major F E Hiltz ordered to Bde. Major Hiltz was told that intention was for West NSR to pass through CYR with tanks immediately and capture high ground 831944. However engineers reported that it would not be possible for them to prepare crossing for tanks across the river AUSA until after last light so the plan had to be delayed

1800

Major F E Hiltz again called to Bde “0” Group.

1900

Major Hiltz returned and held immediate “0” Group and gave his orders for the final attack on the Div objective. Intention: West NSR will attack and secure high ground area 831944, with R22eR on left and HPER on right. A & B Coys forward with C & D coys in reserve. FUP in B Coys area, start line 843931/847937. A & B Coys each to have a tp of tks under comd another tp to be with C & D Coys. Infantry to marry up with tks at start line. Major F E Hiltz was to take 1 tank with a 19 set and a 18 set and his carrier with another 18 set and follow leading coys. IO with wireless and telephone communication to Bde HQ, 19 Set on tank link and 22 Set set and 18 set link to CO, to remain at SAN LORENZO until called forward. At approx 2400 hrs leading coys left FUP and proceeded to start line.

19

0300

All sub-units plus tanks in posn ready for attack at 0400 hrs.

0345

Engineers report having completed the river crossing for our tanks.

0500

Forward sub-units cross line and almost immediately came under heavy machine gun fire. OC called for more smoke on feature but enemy fire was so intense that troops were forced to ground Despite numerous attempts to push forward towards evening the Bn was forced to consolidate 300 yards in front of this mornings [sic.] start line. Shelling, mortaring and small arms fire was intense all day. Weather was fine.

POMPOSA GRANDE

20

Intense shelling and mortaring during the night.

0700

OC ordered C & D Coys to outflank objective on the left while A & B attack from the front.

1100

A Coy on objective with very little opposition. Remaining coys following closely.

1200

Objective firmly in our hands. During the morning Lt col A L Saunders arrives and assumes command of the regiment. After 1200 hrs the men tried to get what rest they could under a hail of mortar and shell fire. Meanwhile Coy Comds and officers under the direction of the new CO were busy re-organizing. Weather fine and warm this date.

21

Weather today fine in the morning, heavy showers in the afternoon and evening. Heavy shelling all day but few casualties. Padre with carrying party collecting and burying our dead. All remaining officers and NCO busy re-organizing the unit.

22

Weather today cool with showers. Day spent in clearing up the battle field and

CATTOLICA

23

Weather fine.

1000

Bn moved to area 976876 for a rest after a very strenuous month of action. In the battle for TRIMINI this unit had 199 wounded, 39 killed and three missing. Prisoners of War captured were in excess of 200.

1200

All sub-units of the Bn reported in new area.

1300

Bath parades laid on for all personnel of the unit and their [sic.] was also a salt water beach for all who were interested.

1930

Moving picture shown in the Bn recreational centre.

Weather today was fine and warm.

24

0930

Major General C Vokes DSO OBE paid a brief visit to the Bn. In a short address he congratulated the whole Bn on the very fine work they had done in the recent action.

1100

Roman Catholic and Protestant Church parades held in the Bn Area.

Swimming parades are now held each day under coy arrangements.

1300

Pay parades laid on for all sub-units.

1930

Film “Captain Blood” was shown in the unit recreational centre.

25

Weather fine and warm.

Training carried out today under coy arrangements.

2000

Dinner held at the Officers Mess, Guest of Honour, Lt col R S E Waterman DSO who was in command of this Regiment since December 1943 until nearly the end of the recent action. Lt col Waterman made an appropriate speech of farewell to the Regiment. Other guests included Brigadier J P E Bernatchez DSO OBE.

26

Trg as per syllabus.

Weather fine and warm after a severe thunder storm during the night.

1100

EFI issue one half bottle of beer per man. During the morning Major R G Thexton OC A Coy and Capt J H Jones MC OC B Coy attend demonstration of flame thrower on Churchill Tank.

Lt col A L Saunders had several discussions with the coy comds re training and adjustment of the officer and NCO slates in the Bn.

1930

Film “Five Graves to Cairo” was shown.

27

Weather cloudy and cool with showers late in the morning.

Training as per syllabus

0930

Capt C F Spence leaves on a three day attachment with the Desert Air Force.

1000

CO with several other officers attends demonstration of flame thrower on Churchill Tank.

1500

Band Concert in Bde Area.

1930

Film “Beautiful Cheat” was shown.

28

Weather cool with frequent showers.

Training as per syllabus

1230

Party incharge of Padre H/Capt L F Wilmot left on a sightseeing tour of the castle GRADARA.

1930

Film in the unit recreation centre “Hold that Ghost”.

During the last few days leaves for both officers and men have been arranged.

29

Trg as per syllabus

Weather very disagreeable today, heavy rain with high winds.

0830

Bn Parade. Lt col A L Saunders inspects the Bn and congratulates all ranks on the fine turnout despite the fact that the weather tried to make it otherwise.

1500

Col the Hon J L Ralston Misister [sic.] of National Defense, accompanied by several high ranking officers of the Canadian Army visited the Battalion and in a short but appropriate talk congratulated the Battalion on its many successes in Italy and assured the men that the people back in Canada had not forgotten about them and were following their every move very closely.

1930

Film in unit recreation centre.

30

Weather cloudy and cool. Training as per syllabus

0800

Lt Reese RCE gave a lecture to the Officers and NCOs on assault river crossing. Afterwards the officers and NCOs went to river 974877 where Lt Ferguson RCE gave a further lecture and engineers gave a demonstration in assault boats.

1400

Bn Muster Parade was held.

Concert Party held in R22eR recreation centre.