WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

DECEMBER

1939

(Signed) G.W. Bullock, Lt. Col.

BRIDGEWATER, N.S.

1/12/39

0800

C & D Coy’s moved to Aldershot.

A Court of Enquiry investigated motor accident involving members of this Unit.

ALDERSHOT

2/12/39

0800

Bn. HQ moved from Bridgewater to Aldershot.

Col. Bullock proceeded to Halifax on official business.

Zeroing of rifles completed on Aldershot range.

ALDERSHOT

3/12/39

0900 - 1200

Church parade.

1330

Muster parade by entire unit to list deficiencies in clothing and equipment.

ALDERSHOT

4/12/39

0800

Dental Board continues to function and dental repairs.

Dental Board consists of: Dr. Dowel, Dr. Cameron, Dr. Christie, Dr. Harris, & Dr. Fluck.

The O.C. received a warning order setting the date of proceeding overseas at 9th December.

ALDERSHOT

5/12/39

0800

Dental Board continues.

Issue of clothing and equipment.

1330

Col. Adamson, Brig. Constantine inspected Unit.

ALDERSHOT

6/12/39

0800

Dental charting and work.

Issue of equipment continued.

0900

On parade 507

Total 880

ALDERSHOT

7/12/39

0800

Continued issue of equipment and clothing.

Dental charting and work continues.

1900

Court of Inquiry assembled to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the motor vehicle accident involving Pte. Lohnes.

0900

On parade 473

Total 880

ALDERSHOT

8/12/39

1030

Inspection of Unit by Col. Price, Major Faulkes, Major Larry, & Col. King.

1430

Heavy snow fall.

Officers sleeping bags arrive.

The date set for the unit proceeding overseas is cancelled. We are to remain in Aldershot till further notice.

ALDERSHOT

4/12/39

0700

Officers tents frozen stiff with rain and snow.

Wet Officers slept warm in flea bags.

Water pipes newly installed in camp were frozen up this morning. Fine clear day, some wind.

ALDERSHOT

10/12/39

1000 - 1200

Church parade, all denominations.

2030

Sing song in Capitol Theatre, Kentville. This was sponsored by the local Chapln. I.O.D.E. and followed by supper in U.C. parish hall. Blanket pass to all ranks to 2330 hrs.

0900

On parade 389

Total 858 (Reserve Depot 206)

ALDERSHOT

11/12/39

0700

Rain & sleet.

0800

Continuation of equipping the men.

Letter received setting the date of embarkation for overseas at 20th December, 1939.

0900

On parade 454

Total 881 (Reserve Depot 200)

ALDERSHOT

12/12/39

0900 - 1200

Final check on clothing and equipment.

1400 - 1630

Coy’s carrying on training.

2030

Capt. Thomas Frances Cashen, Military Chaplain, reported for attachment to this unit.

0900

Cn. parade 556

Total 881 (Reserve Depot 178)

ALDERSHOT

13/12/39

0900 - 1200

Muster parade of entire personnel to check nominal rolls.

1400 - 1630

General Training & routine.

1200

Our new Adj.-Capt. William Clark Gemmell reported for duty on transfer from P.L.F. (M.G.).

Capt. J.H. Mason transferred to HQ Coy.

0900

On Parade 564

Total 881 (Reserve Depot 179)

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

14/12/39

0900

Parade all Coy’s. Kit inspection.

Balance of day general training.

0900

On parade 542

Total 695

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

15/12/39

0900

All Coy’s on parade. Routine training.

0900

On parade 547

Total 702

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

16/12/39

0900

Routine parades.

1400

Muster parade all Coy’s checking nominal rolls.

Col. King and Col. Adamson carried out a general inspection of the unit.

1830

Lt. Col. Bullock, Capt. Gemmell and Lt. Annand proceeded to Halifax on official business in connection with the embarkation of the unit.

0900

On parade 562

Total (Bn.) 710

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

17/12/39

1000

Church parade. All Coy’s.

1500

Pay parade.

0900

In Aldershot 552

Total 692

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

18/12/39

0900

Preparation for all Coy’s for kit inspection.

1400

General inspection of all Coy’s in marching order, by Brig. Constantin & Col. King. [Illegible. Latn?] Brig. Constantine addressed officers in Officers Mess hall.

2030

All ranks in Barracks.

On parade 536

Total 669

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

19/12/39

0900

General training under R.C.R. instructors

1400

Bn. parade.

1430

Meeting of O.C. Coys. in officers’ mess to receive instructions from Col. King and Col. Adamson concerning the transportation of the unit to Halifax. The first “flight” of the unit was warned to be ready to march off at 0530 hrs. 20 Dec.

1530

Muster parade to check nominal rolls.

2000

Personnel of the first “flight” told to remain in bed till 0600 hrs. And to eat breakfast as usual.

On parade at Aldershot 534 A/R

Total in Bn. 801

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

20/12/39

0900

Waiting for the order to march to Kentville for entraining.

1530

Rain, freezing on ground, makes walking very difficult.

1800

Arrangements made to have unit entrain at Aldershot instead of at Kentville.

ALDERSHOT, N.S.

21 Dec. 39

0310

Alarm clock awoke officers who were sleeping in their bed rolls on the floor of the Officers’ mess.

0400

Reveille. Troops all awake before Reveille. Heavy rain.

0430

Troops of first “flight” ready for cups of tea or coffee.

0515

Roll call – all coy’s.

0545

Bn. HQ and HQ Coy start getting on train at Aldershot station.

0625

First flight finishes entraining. (324 all ranks).

0647

First train leaves Aldershot. O.C. Train was Major Berringer. Transport Officer was Lt. Beck.

0700

Breakfast served on train.

0730

Second “flight” entrained and leaves Aldershot. Major Harris was O.C. train.

1000

First train reaches Halifax station.

1100

Second train reaches Halifax station.

1115

First flight all on board M/S Chrobry.

1130

Second flight all on board M/S Chobry.

The Anti-Tank Platoon from the P.L.F., consisting of Lt. Oxley and twenty-one other ranks, were already on board. Also the drafts from other Nova Scotia units, totalling

M/S CHOBRY

22/Dec/39

0800

Officers trying to find their men. Personnel of Coys and details were not systematically located by embarkation officers. Bn. H Q, for example, has 37 cpts and ptes berthed in 13 different room in all parts of the ship.

No typewriters issued for use on board ship. Only typewriters available are three owned by officers.

1000

Boat drill with life belts.

1115

Other ships in convoy start moving out of Halifax Harbour.

1255

A tug takes a line from the bow of our ship, and the ship starts to swing away from the pier.

1310

We pass St. George’s Island and head for the open sea.

1345

Snow. Halifax Harbour disappearing in the mist and snow.

2000

Still trying to find our men.

2200

Capt. M.W. Plunkett conducts a sing-song for officers in lounge on B Deck.

M/S CHROBRY

23 Dec. 39

0900

Settling down and getting organized. Officers still trying to find their men. This work occupies the whole day.

2000

Clocks set ahead one hour.

M/S CHROBRY

24 Dec. 39

0930

R.C. church service.

1015

O.D. church service.

1130

Our A.A. Lewis guns were tested by firing a few rounds.

1635

The Canadian destroyers leave the convoy and turn back towards Canada.

1800

Banquet for officers, with toasts and Christmas trees.

1930

Carol Service for all ranks, with lantern slides.

2030

The Polish crew held a Christmas Eve banquet. Lt. Col. Bullock and certain other officers were invited as guests.

2230

Clocks set ahead one hour.

2330

C. of E. Communion service. Lt. Col. Bullock officiated.

M/S CHROBRY

25 Dec. 39

0015

R.C. midnight mass, conducted by Capt. Cashen. The choir was composed of one U.C. clergyman, one Baptist, one Presbyterian and two Lutherans.

0930

R.C. Christmas service.

1015

O.D. Christmas service.

1215 - 1315

Christmas broadcast from the B.B.C. was heard throughout the ship. Officers drank a toast to the King at the conclusion of the King’s message.

1900

Strong wind coming up.

2100

Wind increasing in force, accompanied by rain.

M/S CHROBRY

26 Dec. 39

1930

Band concert and sing song.

2230

Clocks set ahead one hour.

M/S CHROBRY

27 Dec. 39

0600

Strong wind. Rougher sea.

0930

Wind rising, waves higher, many men seasick.

2230

Clocks set ahead one hour. Now on London time.

M/S CHROBRY

28 Dec. 39

1000

More ships of the Royal Navy met us this morning, and are now with the convoy.

1430

Wrestling and boxing matches on “B” deck.

1605

Boat drill, with life belts. All personnel were at assembly stations by 1610 hrs.

1930

Entertainment for all ranks. Moving pictures, band selections, sing-song; and songs, story-telling, tap dancing, etc., by officers and representatives of the press and Y.M.C.A. and Salvation Army.

M/S CHROBRY

29 Dec. 39

0830

A.A. Lewis gun crews stand by their guns. This is to be kept up all day from now till the end of voyage.

0930

The French ship “Dunkerque” left the convoy.

1400

The Captain of the Chrobry warned Lt. Col. Bullock that danger from submarines was threatening. Lt. Col. Bullock went down and warned all soldiers to remain on deck with lifebelts, except for meals.

1447

Life boat drill.

1915

The supply of champagne on the ship exhausted. Last bottle purchased by Capt. Hebb for the officers at his table.

2100

Two lights, apparently from lighthouses, visible on starboard side.

2145

Celebration in the officers’ bar & officers of the W.N.S.R. and R.C.E. compete in singing songs.

M/S CHROBRY

30 Dec. 39

0730

The ship stops in the Firth of Clyde.

1020

The ship drops anchor in the River Clyde.

1205

The following officers paid a visit to the ship: Mjr. Gen. MacNaughton, Col. Montague, Mjr. Bankine and Capt. Smith (E.S.O.). Capt. Smith remained on board, while the others departed, taking the representatives of the press with them.

1930

Sing-song and entertainment for the troops. Capt. Plunkett, as usual, led the proceedings.

M/S CHROBRY

31/12/39

0600

Breakfast for ORs.

0645

Breakfast for Officers.

0745

Troops parade by Coy’s. & details Rolls called.

0826

Troops begin to embark on Lightes

0932

The lighter moves away from Chrobry carrying all troops.

0942

The Lighter ties up at pier at Guroch, Scotland.

1100

First train pulls out, men jammed in too tightly for comfort or rest.

1200

Dinner served on train.

1210

Second train pulls out.

1430

Bagage train pulls out.

1555

First train crossed the River Twied and entered England.

1700

Tea served on train.

2000

All food exhausted on train.

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Appendices