WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

1 Aug 40

0300

Reveille.

0440

The head of the col of MT started to move down the hill from HQ Coy lines.

With this early start, the Bn began a day’s tactical exercise consisting of “attacks” on “enemy” infantry and ATk positions at COLDHARBOUR x-rds and at WYCH CROSS. The enemy personnel and weapons were supplied by the Bde ATk Coy. The umpires were R22R officers and NCOs. All Coys had a share in the battle, either in the first or the second phase of the attack.

1800

After a busy and very instructive day, we arrived back in time for a late supper. The chief criticism of our performance concerned the debussing, and Bde ordered us to do another debussing exercise later in the week.

Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

2 Aug 40

0800

PT.

0900

Gas chamber test.

1330

Route march by Coys. The Coys marched twelve miles this afternoon.

Major Courtney, Capt Miller and the IO umpired for the Carlt. & York R. today. That Bn was doing the same tactical exercise as the one we did yesterday.

Posted Strength Officers 25

Other Ranks 734

Reinforcements Required 18 Other Ranks.

In Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

3 Aug 40

1000

This morning the Bn carried out a debussing exercise, to show that it can debus in first class style. The whole Bn less Bn HQ and the administrative parts of HQ Coy embussed on the road through our lines and moved to RANOOR COMMON where they debussed and hid in the woods.

1147

The head of the col returned to our lines. “A” Coy was entirely off their trucks in 11 secs; “D” Coy debussed in 20 secs. By 1215 hrs all Coys had debussed in their own lines. This performance was considered good, in view of the great distance between Coy areas.

1400

Another debussing exercise this afternoon was better still. The whole convoy was debussed and clear of the road in 20 min.

1530

The 3 Fd Regt and the West NSR had a very exciting ball game. It was an extra-inning game, won by 3 Fd Regt with a score of 12-9. Major Ernst was the umpire.

1900

Entertainment in the YMCA tent. Moving pictures and a sing song.

The Bn is forming a choir, for singing at church parades, entertainments, etc.

In Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

4 Aug 40

0700

This morning was distinguished by the thickness of the fog.

0830

Church parades.

1030

Major Ernst and the IO went to CUKSEY’S [sic. COOKSEY’S?] FARM to observe the Tank plus Infantry attack. Our own Bn will be doing this exercise this week. Today, the attack was made by the “Hasty Peas”.

Today turned out to be one of the hottest and finest days of the summer.

The CO came back from his week’s leave tonight.

In Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

5 Aug 40

0600

Today, CSM Humpherson took over the duties of A/RSM.

0830

PT, training and route marching by Coys today.

0845

The officers of this Bn went to CUKSEY’S FARM to witness the attack with tanks and infantry. The PPCLI were supplying the infancy? and 1 Armed Div supplied the tanks.

While the rest of the officers watched the attack, Major Ernst and the IO went on a recce of a Bn SP, debussing area and vehicle park, for us to use on Wednesday.

0900

The following ORs went to Borden to take and officers’ training course: R.S.M. Maxtead, C.S.M. Bent and Sjt Curphey.

The biggest event of today was the return of the instruments to our band. We are all very pleased with the prospect of hearing some music again. These instruments were put into storage at the time we were preparing to go to France early in June.

1800

About twenty privates were entertained at the home of a Mr. Baker, a wealthy resident of this neighbourhood. They all had a very pleasant evening, with games, tea, beer and songs. The evening wound up with three cheers for the Bakers and a hearty invitation from them to come again.

In Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

6 Aug 40

0830

PT. For the rest of the day, carried out training by Coys in fire orders, field signals, fire and movement, pl and sec formations, and consolidation.

1300

A recce party consisting of all officers, PSMs and the cpls mechanic less one P1 Comd per Coy went on a recce of the “battle field” where we shall “fight” tomorrow.

1930

Our band initiated their new series of band concerts tonight.

1945

While the rest of the Bn were enjoying the band concert, the recce party that had gone out this morning plus the sec comds were in conference with the CO at Bn HQ to finalize the plans for tomorrow’s battle.

In Camp South of EAST HORSLEY

7 Aug 40

0400

Reveille

0540

The Unit moved off in MT convoy, proceeding to CHALDON X RDS, where the troops debussed and set out on foot to march to the assembly areas, a distance of about six miles. By 0900 hrs all the Companies were tucked away in the assembly areas awaiting Zero Hour. After a short period of Artillery preparation “A” and “B” Coys, which were to lead the Attack went “Over the top”, preceded by two echelons of I Tanks from the 1st Armoured Division. Following these two Companies came a Mopping up Company, drawn from HQ Company, with our Carrier Platoon and following them were “C” and “D” Companies in Reserve. “A” and “B” Companies carried on and consolidated the intermediate objective, at which point “C” and “D” Companies passed through and became the leading Companies which were to take the final objective. The attack proceeded on schedule in accordance with a timed program, although the Companies found the opposition well sited and persistent. The thorn hedges through which they advanced proved almost as tough to overcome as were the enemy. Proof of this was seen in the form of many scratches on the attackers after the “show” was over. This was our first real experience in an attack in co-operation with Tanks and the Exercise was instructive and interesting. Shortly after Noon the “Cease-Fire'' sounded and the Unit gathered near SOUTH PARK FARM to eat lunch. After lunch Maj-Gen G.R. Pearkes, our new GOC 1 Cdn Div, gave a very inspiring talk on the tactics that will probably be used if an invasion of England is attempted. He was also critical of a number of points during the Exercise, but his criticisms were constructive and helpful. It was during this talk that he asked that the expression “Held Up” should cease to be used in the 1 Cdn Div. Although he did find points to criticize, at the end of his talk he said “There has been much that was excellent in to-day’s Exercise”. Shortly after the conclusion of this talk the Unit embussed and proceeded to Camp.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

8 Aug 40

0800

The men were taken into Guildford to the LIDO BATHING CLUB where all enjoyed a dip in the pool. The remainder of the day was taken up with training under Company arrangement. The CO called a conference of Company Commanders to discuss Training and other problems.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

9 Aug 40

0800

PT. The band paraded and provided music, during PT, which seemed to be enjoyed by the men.

0845

A simple ceremony, but one that touched the hearts of those present, took place at the entrance to Bn HQ when the CO, in the presence of the 2 i/c and other Officers, raised for the first time our own NOVA SCOTIA FLAG. The band was present and played, O Canada, The Maple Leaf, and the Regimental March of the Unit. This flag was presented to the Unit by the Premier of Nova Scotia, Hon. Angus L. Macdonald.

Officers representing all Companies an attached troops proceeded to the vicinity of TURNBRIDGE [sic. TUNBRIDGE] WELLS to recce, a new “position of readiness”.

All signallers were withdrawn today from the companies, in order that they could carry out a period of collective training.

A Regimental Dinner was held today at HQ Coy Mess. This is the first one to be held in this Camp and the Band added much to the occasion with music during the meal.

Posted Strength 9th Aug 1940.

Officers 25

Other Ranks 744

Surplus, to WE 1 Staff-sergeant.

Reinforcements required 4 Officers.

“ “ 8 Other Ranks.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

10 Aug 40

The men enjoyed a good hot bath at the Mobile Bath Unit to-day. The remainder of the day being taken up with Training.

Major A.A. Ernst, 2 i/c of the Unit, proceeded to Southampton where he is to take a Course in Gas.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

11 Aug 40

Being Sunday, Church Parades were held as usual.

IN the evening a large number of men enjoyed moving pictures provided by the YMCA.

Major K. Harris returned to-day after an absence of several weeks, during which time he was on duty in the MAIDSTONE area, supervising the clearing of lines of fire for pill-boxes which are a part of the SE defensive system. He worked over about thirty five miles of this line of gun-emplacements and pill-boxes in which distance there are over 225 emplacements and pill-boxes. He also assisted in the camouflaging of these positions.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

12 Aug 40

0800

PT as usual.

The CO called a conference of Company Commanders to discuss plans for another Tactical Exercise to be held on 16 Aug 40 in the same area as the Exercise of 7 Aug.

Major K. Harris is now Acting 2 i/c in the absence of Major A.A. Ernst.

Training was carried out under company arrangements.

A very enjoyable concert was held in the YMCA Hut this evening. This Hut is becoming increasingly popular and a real service is being rendered the Unit.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

13 Aug 40

0800

PT as usual.

Most of the day taken up with Pay parades. Remaining time spent in Training.

Another conference was held concerning the Exercises which are to take place on 16 Aug. After the conference all the officers present proceeded to the Exercise area to recce the ground.

2000

The Unit Dance Orchestra, which has managed to keep itself and its instruments together through all our moving about, played to-night for a dance sponsored by the Women’s Institute of East Horsely [sic. Horsley]. A number of Officers and men from the Unit were invited and reported a very good time.

The CO attended a dinner at 3rd Brigade HQ this evening and the Regimental Band provided music for the occasion, for which they were thanked by the Brigadier.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

14 Aug 40

0800

PT as usual.

The remainder of the day taken up with Bathing Parades at the LIDO CLUB pool in Guildford, and with Training.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

15 - 16 Aug 40

0600

Reveille.

1020

The Unit embussed and proceeded in MT to the area where the Tactical exercises are to be held to-morrow, near SOUTH PARK FARM in the BLENCHINGLY area. After a six mile march from the debussing point all the Companies were tucked away in their assembly areas by 1500 hrs. At 1800 hrs, the CO proceeded to OP to receive Brigadieres Orders. A conference of Coy Commanders called for 1845 hrs was badly disorganized when an aerial dog-fight started overhead. Actually Orders called for a cessation of all movement around the OP area, but everyone forgot Orders in their excitement over the dog-fight. A flight of nine British fighters had intercepted a flight of about twelve German bombers. This was something new to most of those present, who were seeing real war and hearing the rattle of MCs fired in earnest for the first time. Doubtless there were few who realized or thought of the grimness of the “show” which they were thoroughly enjoying. The British AA fire broke up the German formation and gave the Fighter planes their opportunity, which they promptly made good use of, to the evident enjoyment of the group of Officers and men gathered to receive Orders for tomorrow’s mock war. In very short order five or six of the German bombers were knocked off by the RAF and one bomber, trailing smoke from its tail passed right across our OR. Two of the crew bailed out. One parachute did not function, the other did and drifted with its occupant in the direction of the OP. When it was seen that the German was going to land near us there was much loading of rifles and fixing of bayonets and drawing of revelers [sic.], accompanied by threats of what would befall this enemy when he landed. Finally he did drop down a short distance from the OP and landed in a group of men large enough to have captured a whole battalion. Despite the threats that had been made our men did not “polish off” the German. Quite to the contrary, within a few minutes they had his wounds, of which he had several, bandaged with their Field Dressings and some were offering him smokes. The parachute disappeared in remarkably short order, having been cut up into small pieces for souvenirs. The Prisoner was hustled into our ambulance and his wounds were properly dressed after which he was taken under guard to Div HQ where he was handed over to the Div LI O? And a receipt obtained for him. This is our first prisoner and is in fact the first prisoner taken by the 1 Cdn Div.

After this exciting incident the CO with some difficulty, managed to get our minds back to the job in hand i.e. Orders for to-morrow’s Exercise. In the rapidly gathering darkness this task was completed and Company Commanders gave their Platoons Orders, after which we all turned in for a short rest before Reveille which was blown at 0330 hrs.

The Exercise was based on a dawn attack by “C” and “D” Coys, leading, with a Mopping-up Coy, drawn from the “A” Coy. Carlton & York Regt together with our own Carrier Platoon. “A” and “B” Companies were in Reserve and were to pass through water the leading Companies had taken the intermediate objective and consolidated. Then “A” and “B” Coys were to lead the attack to the final objective. The leading companies were preceded by I Tanks from the 8th Tank Bn of the 1st Armoured Division. Zero Hour was set for 0445 hrs at which time it was still quite dark and a heavy ground mist further obscured the scene. The attack proceeded on schedule, the sections operating in open formations in the fields, rather than in the hedges as had been done in other Exercises over this same ground. THe Intermediate and final objectives were reached on time and the Cease-fire was blown at about 0700 hrs. After the men had been collected, the Officers were called to a conference to hear the impressions of the Exercise as seen by Lieut Gen MacNaughton, recently appointed Corps Commander, 7th Corps. He was very frank in his criticisms and deprecated our tactics of using the open fields instead of the hedges which we had previously used. After several other Senior Staff Officers had addressed the gathering of Officers the Unit prepared to return to Camp. “C” Company was left behind to act as “enemy” for the Carleton & York Regt, which was doing the same Exercise on the 17th Aug.

Posted Strength 16 Aug 1940

Officers 29

Other Ranks 742

Reinforcements required 10 Other Ranks

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

17 Aug 40

0800

PT as usual.

0915

A recce party proceeded to the latest “Position of Readiness” to recce. sub-Gp areas. Authorization was received to-day permitting the wearing of Unit Shoulder Badges, which had been withdrawn when a move to France was imminent.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

18 Aug 40

Being Sunday, Church Parades were held as usual.

A party proceeded to LYDD to recce the position where the Unit will carry out firing practices on 21-22 Aug. While the party was at LYDD, which is on the SE Coast, they saw some aerial action, involving large numbers of planes, which thrilled them. It seems that the Unit as a whole would rather be “down south”, where there is more action. Our men certainly are eager to get at the enemy, which speaks well for their morale.

A party also proceeded to make a recce of the area in which the Unit is to carry out a debussing Exercise tomorrow. A conference on this Exercise was called by the CO at 1900 hrs.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

19 Aug 40

0400

Reveille.

0540

The Unit moved off in MT, together with attached troops, proceeding to an area in the vicinity of EDENBRIDGE, where a Brigade debussing practice was taking place. The first vehicles arrived at the debussing point at 0757 and debussing was carried out quickly and efficiently, after which the Companies marched to assembly areas, a distance of about seven miles. At the assembly areas the troops rested until about 1600 hrs when the return journey to Camp was begun. “C” Company, while in their assembly area were royally treated by a gentleman living near their position. THis is just another example of the kindness with which we are received and treated by the people of England.

1900

The CO proceeded to WINTERBOURNE GUNNER where he is to take a Gas Course.

1935

Message received from OC local Detachment LDVs asking for assistance in dealing with parachutists (Theoretical only). This surprise message was quickly dealt with and “D” Company were called upon to provide the required party and within ten minutes, paraded and were ready to embuss. Major Courtney, with the LDV guide, dashed off in one of our Carriers to contact the LDVs and recce the situation. The remainder of the Company under Coy 2 i/c followed in MT, reaching the RV at 2000 hrs. They got into positions and attacked at 2030 hrs and in 20 minutes had the situation in hand. This exercise, which was a surprise one, proved our ability to move swiftly if the need arises and also gave us some idea of the functioning of the LDVs in case of parachutists landing. Major Courtney reported that the LDVs carried out their part very well indeed.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

20 Aug 40

1100

A party of 315 all Ranks moved off in MT to proceed to LYDD, on the SE Coast. At LYDD this party was to carry out firing practices on A-Tank Rifle, 2” Mortar, and AA with Bren guns. Near MAIDSTONE the party was held up for a “RED” Warning. They debussed and scattered under cover until the All Clear sounded.

Two Polish Officers reported to the Unit to-day. They are to be attached for a period, for observation and training. They are 2/Lieut Whitehead, 10th Polish Regt Cavalry, 10th Armoured Brigade, and Cadet-Sgt Kedzierjykowski.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

21 Aug 40

Training as usual for those who did not go to LYDD. A discussion arose as to the number who were available for training while the LYDD party was away. Major Harris settled the question by making a detailed census of the personnel in Camp. He found that there were actually only a very few available after accounting for employed personnel, so training was on a more or less individual basis, and a scheduled route march was cancelled after one Company commander phoned Bn HQ to ask if his two men were to march in single file or one on each side of the road.

A report of Training, at LYDD, handed in by Major W.C. Gemmell will be found in APP’X. II. The party carried out field firing practices as scheduled for MORTAR, A/TANK RIFLE and BREN GUN.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

22 Aug 40

The LYDD party embussed at 1800 hrs, after a day spent in further Field Firing Practices, and started on the return journey to Camp. Near ASHFORD it was necessary for the party to debuss and take cover during an air-raid. As the party neared REDHILL more air action took place, but the party did not stop. The greater part of the move was made during the hours of darkness, and without lights on the vehicles in the MT Convoy. One DR, Cpl Barton of the attached RCASC was seriously injured in a collision with a civilian car in the darkness. The party arrived in Camp at 0040 hrs 23 Aug and after a hot meal turned in for a well earned rest.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

23 Aug 40

The Unit to-day carried out a debussing Exercise on Ranmore COMMON, near Camp, after which they marched back to Camp by way of GREAT BOOKHAM.

Lieuts J.R. Cameron, D.W. MacAdams, G.L.F. McNeil and 2/Lt Whitehead (Attached), proceeded to FARGO CAMP to observe Artillery Firing.

Posted Strength 23 Aug 1940

Officers 29

Other Ranks 730

Reinforcements Required 22 Other Ranks.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

24 Aug 40

To-day the Unit, with Major K. Harris Acting CO, carried out an Exercise in co-operation with the local LDVs. The Exercise involved a move by MT to GREAT BOOKHAM COMMON, where it was supposed that several hundred enemy parachutists had landed and taken up positions in the woods on the COMMON. The CO and Coy Commanders went ahead of the Convoy to contact the LDVs and recce the situation. The movement of the Convoy was held up just at embussing time by an air-raid warning. As soon as the ALL CLEAR sounded the Unit moved off to a debussing point near the assembly areas. Company Commanders having received their Orders the companies moved quickly into positions and the attack proceeded. “A” Company acted as the “Clamp” from the left flank while “C” and “D” Coys attacked through the woods. There was some losing of direction due to the thickness of the woods, but the exercise was successfully completed. A scheduled march back to Camp was cancelled, due to the lateness of the hour as a result of the hold-up for the air-raid warning at the start of the Exercise, and the Unit moved back in MT.

A concert party entertained the Unit at the YMCA Hut, after which the troupe were entertained at the Officers’ Mess. The applause indicated that this was the most enjoyable entertainment that has been provided to date.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

25 Aug 40

Being Sunday, Church Parades were held, but not as usual. To-day we were honoured with the attendance at the Protestant Parade, of our GOC Maj-Gen G.R. Pearkes and Brigadier C.B. Price OC 3rd Cdn Inf Bde. AFter the Service the GOC took the salute for the March Past, which was led by the Regimental Band.

The Band today rendered a concert, on, BROCKHAM GREEN, DORKING, between 1500 and 1700 hrs. A collection was taken and the proceeds donated to the DORKING and DISTRICT Hospital. At the concert our NOVA SCOTIA FLAG was flown and excited some curiosity among the audience. After the concert the Band, together with the Officers and the Nurses from the Hospital were served tea. A number of letters of appreciation have been received by the CO from residents of DORKING.

The CO returned to-day from WINTERBOURNE GUNNER, where he has taken a Gas Course. Majors Harris, Bryson and Berringer attended a Cocktail party given by the CO and Officers of the 4th Bn Royal Tank Regt.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

26 Aug 40

0800

PT as usual.

1300

The Unit carried out practice in the “Platform Method” of embussing and debussing, and after debussing on RANMORE COMMON, marched back by way of GREAT BOOKHAM. The times taken for the whole Unit were: Embussing 16 Minutes, Debussing 18 Minutes.

1900

Another request from the LDVs for aid in dealing with parachutists (Theoretical only) who had landed at CLANDON Fm, about six miles from Camp. The Companies were advised to prepare to move and the Coy Commanders gathered at Bn HQ to receive details. This group went ahead to recce the situation accompanied by the Carrier Platoon which was to locate and “pin-down” the enemy, pending the arrival of the Unit. At 1920 hrs (20 minutes after the warning) the Unit moved off in MT to a pre-arranged assembly area. Busses [sic.] were tucked away and Companies took up positions. Meanwhile the Carriers dashed about theoretically keeping the enemy busy. The enemy were composed of LDVs acting the part. By 2100 hrs the situation was considered to have been “dealt with '' and the Unit embussed and returned to Camp.

To-night, as has become usual, we had Air-Raid warnings. But we have ceased to get excited about such things, even when we hear bombs exploding and planes overhead.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

27 Aug 40

Training as usual to-day.

The Troop of the 90th A/Tk Battery which has been attached to us for some time has been withdrawn in order to centralize the Battery. Of the original Z Group of which we were so proud there now remains only our Unit with RCASCTpt and a small Detachment of the RCE.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

28 Aug 40

Training during the morning as usual.

In the afternoon various Sports were undertaken under Company arrangements.

CO together with Coy Commanders proceeded on Recce of area in which exercises will be carried out on Friday and Saturday.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

29 Aug 40

Bath parades were held at the Mobile Bath Unit. Otherwise training was carried on as usual The CBC Mobile Unit came to our Camp today and recorded a half-hour program which is to be broadcast to Canada. The Band and The Choir rendered a number of selections, individual artists also were recorded. A number of the personnel were allowed to say Hello to the folks at home. The CO spoke also and the Adjutant recounted the episode of the German prisoner which the Unit captured on 15 Aug.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

30 Aug 40

A conference was called by the CO in the morning to discuss a proposed Exercise. The Brigadier was present, accompanied by Major Bogart, the new Bde Major. The Exercise is scheduled for 1250 hrs. At 1130 hours an air-raid warning, and large numbers of enemy planes about, held up preparations for the Exercise. A scrap was seen by the Unit and one German plane was seen go down in flames. One of the crew baled [sic.] out, but we didn’t get this one. The Unit finally embussed at 1304 hrs and proceeded to the vicinity of HORNECOURT Fm. During the move one halt was necessary because of air-raids. The Unit arrived at the debussing point and the troops debussed and marched to their assembly areas.

Posted Strength:

Officers 29

Other Ranks 727

Reinforcements Required 25 Other Ranks.

In Camp South of EAST HORSELY

31 Aug 40

After a very early Reveille and breakfast the Companies moved forward to their positions in rear of the starting line. “A” and “B” Companies were to lead the attack with “C” and “D” Companies in Reserve. This was a Brigade Exercise, the R22e Regt occupying the right of the front, the WNSR the left, with the Carleton & York Regt in Reserve. At Zero Hour the leading Companies moved off in almost complete darkness. The exercise proceeded as expected until the Battalion on the right met stiff opposition which was overcome when the Reserve Battalion came up and broke through, after which the fin objective was taken and consolidated. No tanks were used for this exercise and the same method of the REserve Companies, passing through at an intermediate objective, as had been done in recent Exercises, and becoming the leading Companies, was used. There were no incidents of special note during the Exercise, but it was apparently evident that some degree of realism was lost through the absence of the Tanks which had taken part in previous Exercises of this type. At the conclusion the troops had lunch and later embussed for the return journey to Camp. Due to hold-ups on account of Air-Raid Warnings the Unit was very late getting into Camp where a hot meal was awaiting them. During this Exercise Bn HQ sent out a Carrier which laid wire, as it went forward as close as possible behind the advancing troops, connecting with Bn HQ. The Adjutant used another carrier to dash about the front and follow the attack , an account of which was periodically relayed by the ‘phone carrying Carrier, to Bn HQ. This innovation proved quite a success and enabled Bn HQ to receive dispositions of the Companies and follow the progress of the battle with very little delay between the time of any development and the report of it reaching Bn HQ.