WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

FIELD

1 Jun 42

0800

Bn move off from Fishers Fm (1342) on a leisurely hop to concentration area at 9930. Covering a distance of 17 miles the marching tps arrived at 1430 hrs. Brig H.N. Ganong marched several miles with this unit during the day. The aide-de-camp of the army-commander, Lt-Gen Montgomery, passed along the line of march and conveyed to the tps the hearty congratulations of the army commander, on their splendid showing on the exercise “Tiger”. MT left Fishers Fm area at 1600 hrs and proceeded under Bde arrangements arriving at 1830 hrs.

FIELD

2 Jun 42

0800

Marching tps move off, covering 13 miles to area at 902303, MT proceeded as before under Bde arrangements. On arrival, several barrels of beer provided by officers of the unit were rolled out and issue. Also the K of C, which since Sunday have been giving an issue of a pie, chocolate bar and packet of smokes to each man each evening came thru with another issue. Casualties and elements of the Bn that had got strayed from the unit had made their way back to Highden Ho, were, for hardening purposes, marched out to meet the unit and finish the journey with them.

WORTHING

3 Jun 42

0730

Tps move off on first leg of final hop, halt in wood at 6531 at 1230 hrs until 1800 hrs then finish the trek to Highden Ho, arriving at 2100 hrs . Brig Ganong again marched a considerable distance with this unit. Distance covered on this day, 29 miles.

WORTHING

4 Jun 42

General clean up, dental and bath parades is the order of the day. Also worthy of mention is the fact that the unit is being paid today, causing those who are not on duty to envisage an evening at the “local.

1400

Maj J.A. Hebb attended a meeting at which Lt-Gen Montgomery gave a summary of the lessons learned on “Tiger”.

WORTHING

5 Jun 42

Unit carried on with routine training. A very quiet day on the whole. Several interesting reminiscences of “Tiger” have come to the diarists [sic.] attention. Lieut G.W. Theakston, while seeking cover from the driving rain one night in the early phase of “Tiger”, stretched his aching bones in blissful repose in a near-by small building. On awakening he was very much surprised to find he had become a foster-mother to a litter of new-born pigs. On the same night Lieut J.W.K. Smeltzer sought shelter in another small building and the following morning found his breakfast egg laid within two inches of his nose. Also on the same evening one Pte Jeremy endeavoured to share the bed of a hedge-hog but it is gathered that the hedge-hog objected rather strenuously.

WORTHING

6 Jun 42

West NSR today starts a fortnights [sic.] training of the 5 Bn Sussex (Worthing) HG. Training consists chiefly of battle-drill but other military subjects are also dealt with. Lieut C.H. Hopwood, IO, Lieut King and several ORs of 5 Bn HG have been attached this [sic.] unit for that period.

WORTHING

7 Jun 42

Church parades as usual. Unit carried on with training of Home Guards.

WORTHING

8 Jun 42

Unit still carrying on with training of 5 Bn Sussex (Worthing) HG. Lt-Col Green of that unit paid a visit to West NSR today.

WORTHING

9 Jun 42

0800

Coys demonstrated to the HG the use of cover and fieldcraft in our battle posns. Brig H.N. Ganong visited the area where this training was being carried out.

1100

H/Capt A.D. Butts attended a meeting called by Bishop the Rt Rev Col C.L. Nelligan, senior RC Chaplain of the Cdn Army. General discussion of matters leading to the betterment of morale of the tps from a spiritual and material point of view. During lunch hour the Chaplains had lunch at the Continental Restaurant, Dean St. This was followed by further discussion. Discussions were held in a room suited to the purpose on the floor above. After the luncheon the group had photographs taken. Meeting adjourned at 1630 hrs.

WORTHING

10 Jun 42

0800

Unit carries on with the training of the HG. The IO, Lieut C.E. Bent gave a resumé of the lessons learned on “Tiger” to the Bn I Sec. He pointed out that this was not a tactical exercise but purely and endurance test. Following the lecture some wag summed the affair up in a few words on the board, thus: Comment on Tiger: Never in the history of human conflict have so many received such a supreme (deleted) at the hands of so few.

WORTHING

11 Jun 42

This unit supplies a Bde Guard of two NCOs and nine men for a period of one week as from today. At 1400 hrs a lecture was given by an officer escapeologist [sic.] of the last war at Highden Ho. Lecture was on “Escape and Evasion of Capture” and was attended by one officer and two NCOs per coy of this and other units.

WORTHING

12 Jun 42

0800

COs inspection.

0930

Maj Stehelin went with the Bde-Maj to lay out a cross-country course for field firing.

2030

Our livewire IO, Lieut C.E. Bent has been giving lectures at Muir Ho to the I personnel of the 5th Bn Sussex (Worthing) HG. He dealt chiefly with the duties of the I personnel in the unit. On this evening Maj-Gen C.F. Pearkes paid a visit to Muir Ho while a lecture was in progress.

WORTHING

13 Jun 42

Lieut King of the 5th Bn Sussex (Worthing) HG who has been attached to this unit has left to return to his duties

A special film, “Next of Kin” has been secured for this unit. It is being shown by the K of C at the following times, 1800 and 2000 hrs 13 Jun 42, 1000, 1400, 1800 and 2000 hrs 14 Jun 42. This film is designed to make the beholders security-minded.

WORTHING

14 Jun 42

C of E church parades cancelled. Elements of the Bn busy training HG, most of the remainder proceed to Lancing on a working-party.

2230

I Sec get paid as they will go to range in the morning to zero rifles.

WORTHING

15 Jun 42

0715

Snipers proceed to Steyning range to zero the rifles of C and D Coys. Bn get paid. A Coy proceed to Cissbury range for range practise. Today the track team started training under the supervision of Capt Walker for the Bde track meet scheduled for 26 Jun 42.

1450

Officers of the Bn attend a demonstration of tubular-scaffolding as used against tanks. C Coy 5th Bn HG have field firing practise under supervision of WNSR.

WORTHING

16 Jun 42

0800

B Coy go to Cissbury for range practise. Provost and current detention en take their IQ test today. The whole Bn will get this test within the next three or four weeks.

1500

Maj-Gen G.F. Pearkes attended a cloth-model TEWT at the cinema, Highden Ho.

WORTHING

17 Jun 42

0800

Maj Stehelin went to a TEWT at Corps HQ. Bn carried out dawn and dusk firing on this day. Maj J.A. Hebb took out a class of four officers on a demonstration of co-operation with arty.

WORTHING

18 Jun 42

1030

Lecture given by Maj-Gen F.A.N. Browning DSO at the Odeon cinema, Worthing, on the “Employment and Job of an Airborne Div”. Attended by all available officers, details supplied for this diary by Lieut C.E. Bent.

1800

C and D Coys proceeded to Steyning Range to carry out dusk and dawn firing. Training of HG proceeded as per syllabus.

WORTHING

19 Jun 42

Due to the issue of a new 6 pdr gun to the A/tk Regts RCA the weapon that has been used by them up to date, e.g., the 2 pdr, is to be given back to the Inf within the next four weeks. A new pat will be formed in HQ Coys of units known as the A/tk plat. With a view to introducing Inf officers to the role in siting of this weapon, a demonstration has been carried out for the 1 Cdn Div under the supervision of Maj Courtney, WNSR, Maj Campbel, 1 A/tk Regt RCA, and Maj \_\_ 12th Tank Bn.

This demonstration began at 1430 hrs 18 Jun 42 at 1000 hrs the officers of the 1 Cdn Inf Bde and at 1430 hrs the officers of the 3 Cdn Inf Bde assembled at the same place. The demonstration began with a cloth model exercise in which Maj Courtney represented the OC of an Inf Bn which has been detailed as rearguard of a withdrawing Inf Bde nd is to take up a posn at Wiggonholt Common 4935. The Bn commander is tired and irritable He makes a map appreciation of his new area and makes his coy disposns. He then suddenly remembers that he has not given any consideration to the siting of his A/tk guns which the Bn has only recently received from the Arty. He shouts angrily for his A/tk plat commander who is, as all good supporting weapon officers should be, at his elbow. He then tells the plat commander where to site his weapons, giving no consideration to the proper employment of them but simply fitting them into his previous posns. Tactfully the plat commander points out to his CO the weaknesses in these disposns and the errors in siting. Having convinced his CO he is then permitted to make a recce of the area and report back within half an hour. Having done this the CO finds that the plat commander has been able to site the weapons to the best advantage and the only change in the Inf disposns involves moving one plat a distance of 75 yds.

There are four points brought out and emphasized: (1) this weapon should always be sited to engage AFVs from the rear or flank (i.e., in their weakest points), (2) the guns should always be sited in pairs, (3) the pairs should be mutually supporting, (4) it is sometimes necessary to site them well fwd or to flanks of main Inf posns. In these cases it will be necessary to detach Inf for their protection.

The second was the siting on the ground of the six guns which will come to us. IN this demonstration West NSR carriers were employed as tanks under the command of Capt S.D. Smth, West NSR. The tank tactics used were laid down by an officer of the 12 Tank Bn. The demonstration was very interesting, the concealment of the weapons was excellent as was their siting, and a valuable lesson was learned by all present.

Prior to 1 Jul 42 an officer and two from this unit will be detailed for this new plat and go on a course. By the 15 Jul 42 the plat must be a trained actuality.

WORTHING

20 Jun 42

0800

Bn HQ proceed to Cissbury for range practice.

1000

A lecture was given in the cinema at Highden Ho by Maj Stewart, GSO2, CASC, on the subject of air co-operation. The lecture which lasted for 2 hrs was broken down roughly under four headings, viz, (1) a general discussion of air-force co-operation as organized in the German army and British, (2) limitations and special features of air force policy as a whole covering air force and fighter commands as well as ARmy Co-op Sqns, (3) details of internal organization and administration of CASC, (4) direct application of air support as it concerned the Inf command.

Maj Stewart stressed the fact that the lack of immediate aerial support for fwd tps did not mean lack of air co-operation as it was to a great extent the policy of the higher command to use the air arm for the destruction and disorganization of enemy concentration and communications well behind the fwd area. IN discussing the methods used by the German Army he Emphasized the fact that for a considerable time past, army co-op units of the Luftwaffe had been an integral part of the army itself and that the use of dive bombers in fwd areas had under certain circumstances replaced or augmented artillery concentrations as a definite part of the fire plan.

The policy at present in force covering the activities of bomber and fighter forces was outlined and the present intentions with regard to the development of direct co-op units was discussed.

A chart was shown on which the relative posns of Bde HQ, Div HQ, CASC, CCMA and aerodromes were outlined and the disposns of W/T (13) sets explained. The method by which commanders of fwd tps would make application for air support was shown and the approximate time required for the fulfillment of such requests were given.

The personnel of CASC staff were listed with an explanation of their various duties and a large pro forma of the form (message) to be used in application was shown and explained.

It was first explained that the reason for the proximity of CASC to CCMA was that a request for support emanating from forward tps was primarily a matter for the arty and that only after CCMA had stated they were unable to provide this air support would the matter be taken up for air support arm. The chief point of interest to the Inf commander being obviously the question of time elapsed between a request for support and the arrival of that support. This matter was dealt with in some detail. It was stated that under normal working conditions the time lapse between the handing in of a request at Bde HQ and planes becoming airborne would be from 15 to 20 minutes and that this plus an allowance for the time required for the planes to arrive over the target would give the Inf commander an approximate idea of the total lapse. IN no case would the lapse exceed one hour. Another branch of CASC duty, recce reports, was dealt with in detail.

1300

A picked team of one NCO and five Ptes from each of the five coys had a shooting match at Cissbury Range. C Coy ran away with the meet.

WORTHING

21 Jun 42

0800

Training as per syllabus.

1100

Maj J.A. Hebb accompanied the Bde-Maj on a recce of Thunderbarrow [sic. Thundersbarrow] Hill for the purpose looking over the area to be used for fd firing 29 Jun 42.

WORTHING

22 Jun 42

0800

Training as per syllabus. A general re shuffling [sic.] of all officers took place today. Also Lieut G.F. MacNeil and Lieut C.B. Higgins received notification of their appointment as Capts.

WORTHING

23 Jun 42

0800

Tps proceeded on a 20 mile route march as per syllabus. The CO, 2 i/c, Adjt and IO proceeded on sig TEWT “Kitten”. Maj Gemmel and Lieut McCarthy went to CMHQ for an interview.

1500

Brig H.N. Ganong called on the unit. Three members of the St. John Fusiliers, Lieut J.F.H. Robinson, Sgt E.F. Merrit and Cpl C.E. Hanlon arrived at this unit to become attached for an indefinite period.

WORTHING

24 Jun 42

0800

Training as per syllabus.

1600

The CO and those who accompanied him returned from “Kitten”. This exercise was designed to test communications during a withdrawal. Beginning at the Western extremity of Ashford, the withdrawal was carried out on a general line westward to Biddendon and Mayfield. For the purpose of the scheme the 23 and 24 of Jun represented the 29 and 30 of May 42 which were the last two days of “Tiger”. Much useful practise was gained by personnel of the higher formations.

WORTHING

25 Jun 42

0800

Training as per syllabus.

1900

Brig H.N. Ganong, Maj Jerome and Cpt C.B. Higgins dined with the officers of this unit at Highden Ho.

WORTHING

26 Jun 42

Bde sports meet held at Rotary Recreation Grounds, Worthing, today, West NSR team practically ran away with the meet as usual. Following is a summary of how entrants from this Regt placed: 100 dash, Pte MacInnes 1st, L/Cpl Butler 3rd; 16 lb shot putt, L/Cpl Tommy Falls 1st; 880 yds won by Pte Letourneau; standing broad jump, L/Cpl Butler 1st; three ile run, Pte Smith 2nd, Pte Oickle 3rd; 440 won by Pte LeTourneau; 440 Relay won by WNSR; both classes tug-of-war won by WNSR in eight straight pulls.

WORTHING

27 Jun 42

0800

The Bn carried out a rehearsal of fd firing, the object being to exercise Plat and Sec commanders in control and fire orders.

1330

A party of fourteen officers proceeded to fd firing area at Thunderbarrow [sic. Thundersbarrow] Hill to watch the RCR go through their practise. West NSR carriers were used to provide a safety patrol for fd firing area on this date.

WORTHING

28 Jun 42

1000

C of E parade was attended by Maj-Gen G.F. Pearkes and Brig H.N. Ganong. At this service Maj Addie preached his farewell sermon to this unit.

WORTHING

29 Jun 42

0730

Bn proceeded to Thunderbarrow [sic. Thundersbarrow] Hill to carry out fd firing practise. Tps marched to area 6329 where they had lunch at approximately 1100 hrs, then continued the journey to the range. A rehearsal was carried out first, actual firing commenced at 1500 hrs. In spite of the heat and dust, this practise was enjoyed by the tps.

1900

Our light and heavy tug-of-war teams pulled RCE teams of the same weight in two straight pulls each at Highden Ho.

WORTHING

30 Jun 42

This day spent chiefly on improvement of coy posns and strengthening of the Bn HQ posn.

1900

A meeting was held of all the officers of the de to discuss the fd firing exercise. Brig H.N. Ganong expressed himself as being very much pleased with the showing of the Bde on the whole and particularly with the manner in which the Plat and Sec commanders of the Regt handled their men.