WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

JANUARY 1944

ORTONA

1

New Year day was remarkably quiet all along the front, no arty or mor fire, just an odd enterprising sniper disturbing the stillness. Weather clear and cool

2

Bn still in same posn with the exception of a pl of A Coy which is acting in a standing patrol on [illegible] tunnel mouth 311180, right flank of Carlt & York R. Intermittent enemy shelling during the day and just after last light he laid down harassing MMG

3

A Coy from each unit will be sent for a period of eight days intensive trg under Bde arrangements to an area near Lanciano. This is part of a plan to absorb the large cos of reinforcements now coming into the Div and bring the whole up to an efficient fighting standard. Word received today that Capt J P Fletcher and Lieut J C MacNeil have been awarded the MC and Capl J A MacLeod the M M for the actions prior to Campobasso.

4

0900

The CCRA and Brig Gibson visited the arty OPs this area. Three officers of [illegible] arrived on exchange with this unit.

1530

The 3” nors also eight 2” mors of this unit took part in the all day arty 2nd mor fire plan on Pt 39 and targets in the vicinity. C Coy, West N S R placed under comd of Carlt & York R and moved fwd in posn of readiness to assist them in their attack of Pt 39. The attack was successful and at last light West N S R received orders to change posns with Carl & York R. Move was completed at 2400 hrs. Bn now hold roughly square 3018 and slightly North and East.

5

0400

Enemy lay down harassing arty and mor fire our area commencing at this time and continued intermittently throughout the day, special attention being paid to the fwd Coy areas. Vigorous patrolling deep into enemy territory is now the order of the day.

1500

A reece patrol from C Coy got pinned down by MMG and Mor fire in the area of bridge (305188). Fighting patrol sent from C Coy to assist and succeeded in extricating first patrol by last light. Combined casualties of both patrols, 2 ORs killed 4 ORs wounded.

6

0950

Lt Gen H D G Crerar[illegible] CB DSO comdr 1 Cdn Corps accompanied by Brig Gibson visited the Bn area this morning.

Very active patrolling now being carried out by this unit, chiefly at night but some times during daylight as well. As part of his program, a patrol of 14 ORs under Lieut A M Mills of D Coy had a rather interesting brush with the enemy this morning. At approximately 0900 hrs this patrol was proceeding West across country towards rd june endeavour to get cover they came upon an enemy pl posn with the occupants very much off their guard. Our patrol killed ten of the enemy at this point and secured twelve PsW out when they started to return with the PsW they again came under very hy MMG and mor fire from high ground to the NW. This was so intensive that the patrol was forced to scatter and endeavour to get back on their own. The PsW were, of course, lost in the resulting confusion, not, however before three were killed, at least one by their own fire. Own casualties, 1 OR killed 1 OR wounded.

7

Lt Col R S E Waterman this morning proceed to Bde H Q to meet Gen Leese who has succeeded Gen Montgomery as comdr of 8th Army.

From information received from patrols and from observation it is suspected that the enemy occupy the buildings immediately NW of bridge (305188) during the hrs of darkness only. To verify this a patrol of one officer, Lieut D A Campbell and ten ORs from A Coy was sent out at 1100 hrs, under cover of arty and mor preparation on ridge immediately North and West of bridge. Patrol came under by MMG and mor fire from [illegible] And spur immediately West of bridge and were pinned down here until last light (1730 hrs) Casualties 4 ORs killed and 5 ORs wounded. Only local protection and contact patrols to flanking unit carried out night ⅞.

ORTONA

8

Lt Col R S E Waterman visited the Bde trg school area of Lanciano where B Coy this unit is at present undergoing intensive trg

Promotions within the Bn as per App2. This was a comparatively quiet day on our front, less than 100 shells landed in the Bn area up to last light. Weather very fine and warm

1900

Bn 0 gp.

9

Increase enemy arty activity this area today. West N S R carried out vigorous patrolling night 9/10. One of these was originally intended to go by water for which purpose two small boats had been brought fwd by lorry and launched [illegible] the Carl & York area but this plan had to be abandoned due to the fact that the moon was high all night with no cloud cover. That patrol (Liuet Shurkey and 20 ORs did however penetrate the enemy posn to an approximate depth of one half mile by travelling on or near the beach and secured much valuable information.

10

Our posns were shelled fairly hy throughout the day. Vigorous patrolling carried by own tps during the hrs of daylight and darkness. At 1800 hrs D & A Coys change posns. This is part of a schedule that gives the right fwd Coy relief every 48 hrs. Right fwd Coy posn is the hot spot of the Bn area. A Coy now right fwd, D left fwd.

11

Vigorous patrolling again carried out day and night. A small advance party of the Cape Breton Highlanders arrive this morning. West N S R will be relieved by that unit night 12/13. Enemy concentration on our Bn OP with AP shells at 1500 hrs necessitating some slight change in location.

12

1000

Further advance party of CHH? Arrive. Their entire Bn arrived at 2000 hrs and the take over was complete at 2230 hrs. West N S R however provided two petrol of one officer and fifteen ORs each to carry out the patrolling tasks this area night 12/13 these to rejoin the unit morning 13 Jan.

13

Bn moved by trans provided by 11 Bde to area near Lanciano arriving at 0200 hrs. Reveille at 1100 hrs hot meal served at 1200 hrs. Afternoon spent in cleaning up and getting established in the new area. Maj A M Russel of the Winnipeg Rifles and C S M Dalton of M? A S H arrived on exchange. Maj Russel posted to comd C Coy and C S M Dalton appointed A/RSM.

LANCIANO

14

EFI supplies were brought up and distributed. “Recreational tran[illegible] provide for parties to see film in Lanciano. Sp & C Coy go today. Bn still busy cleaning and getting established. The practise in this unit is that all parcels for decease personnel are distributed among their comrades and Coy comdrs thank the donors by letter.

15

Courses and intensive trg now to be carried out as per.

This is part of a plan to bring all branches of admin and operational tps to[illegible] higher peak of efficiency. Also parties to films daily on the basis that all work and no play…………

Lt Col R S E Waterman proceeded to Bde and Read Div HQ re administrative matters. Maj G W Woods and Capt A M MacMillan have been awarded and are wearing Africa Stars. Party of 12 officers this unit attend a dinner at the officers club in S Vito.

16

Maj F E Hiltz, 2[illegible] West N S R takes over comd of the Bde trg school. Orders received for this unit to move to Ortona area, Capt Burns and Lieut Dyer take a recce party to that area.

Church parades as per

Following church parades kit inspections will be carried out under Coy arrangements to determine shortages.

17

0800

Lt Col R S E Waterman presided at general court martial at R22eR HQ.

Advance party of one officer, Capt R G Therton and ten ORs to Ortona. Carrier Pl also moved to that area this morning.

Today was D Coys’ turn to see the film at Lanciano but on arriving there the projector refused to function so, no show.

18

1100

Lt Col M P Bogert DSO visited the unit. At 1300 hrs Bn moved by trans to the Ortona area. 3 Bde now has an operational role in support of 1 and 2 Bdes. Trg and courses to be carried on as arranged in the new dre[illegible]. Unit now has a paymaster, Capt R V I[illegible].

2000

Meeting of all officers of the Bn in Bn officers mess at which the MO and Padres’ views on the behaviour of men in battle were discussed.

ORTONA

19

Bn now settled in new posn. Intensive trg and courses being carried out. 150 men per day of this unit granted passes to film put on by Aux Services of 2 Bde. Weather has been very fine, there has been [illegible] rain or snow this area since New Years [sic.] Eve.

20

Lt Col R S E Waterman to discussion at Div HQ. Adjt and Ord Rm staff to Bde on one by course. This is part of the general brushing up being given to all branches of Bns under Bde arrangements with a view to improving admin and general efficiency.

21

0800

Trg as per syllabus.

Parties to film “The Iron Road” shown by the Auxiliary Services.

22

1000

Lt Col R S E Waterman and Lieut R E Campbell, IO, attended a discussion “Air Support” at Div HQ. Enemy dropped a few shells in the Ortona area today, no casualties this unit.

2000

Lecture in the Bn officers mess to all officers given by ADJA, this was followed by dinner and a social evening.

23

Church parades as per.

Ma Biley of the Edmon R was guest speaker at the Protestant service.

Light intermittent enemy shelling of Ortona area during day.

24

Maj Woods RCAMC left for 9 days 5 of which he will spend attending a course balance on leave. 4 reinforcement officers joined the unit.

1100

Brig Gibson visited the unit.

1400

Lecture to all officers of the Bn on “Street Fighting” given by Maj Stone, 2 i c Edmon R.

1900

Lecture to all officers on wireless procedure given by SO Lieut G M Chaplin RCCS.

25

0830

Bn HQ, Hq Coy and Sp Coy carry out a rehearsal of Bde comdrs inspection, this to take place 27 Jan. 1 reinforcement officer arrived with the unit today.

26

0730

Lt Col R S E Waterman leaves for Bde trg school, to visit our Coy undergoing trg there Voluntary War Service medals and clasps issued to those eligible. C Coy hold a Piat mor shoot. Rained night 26/27.

ORTONA

27

0900

Brig Gibson inspected Bn HQ. HQ and Sp Coys on a field in the trans area. Brig Gibson expressed himself as being greatly pleased at the turnout and steadiness of these tps. Balance of the unit carry out normal trg. During the past two days slightly over 200 bags of mail for West N S R arrived.

28

0900

Lt Col R S E Waterman to Bde HQ. Bn trg as per

In the afternoon C Coy proceeded by trans to S Vito to attend ENSA show there. Other shows as per

29

Bn normal Srg? Party of 50 each day to ENSA concert at S Vito.

This evening Lt Col R S E Waterman attends a dinner sponsored by Div Hq at the Sword and Drum, S Vito.

30

0800

Lt Col R S E Waterman proceeded to the Bde trg school to attend the marching out exercise of D Coy who finish their period of trg there today.

Church parades as per

1900

Lecture to all subalterns of the Bn on patrolling given by Lieut R E Campbell, IO. at Bde HQ, also some Cdn nursing sisters in attendance.

31

Lt Col R S E Waterman to Bde HQ. Bn carry out normal trg.

A dinner was arranged in the Bn officers mess for this evening, by Capt Allen and Lieut G M Chaplin. This was largely attended by officers of the unit, Brig Gibson being the guest of the evening.