WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

WEST N S R

MARCH 1944

S. NICOLA

1

Weather fine and mild. Slight shelling fwd Coy posns during day.

Maj F Hiltz has assumed comd the Bn during the period that Lt Col R S E Waterman is on leave.

1130

Recce party of the R22eR visited the Bn area in preparation for the relief to be carried out night 2 / 3.

2

Weather fine. Slight shelling fwd area, no cas.

Lt Gen Sir Oliver Leese, KCB CBE DSO, presented medals to 77 all ranks of 1 Cdn Div and ancillary tps at S Vito. Members this unit receiving awards were, Capt J C MacNeil MC, Sjt D G Tait MM, Cpl J Amero MM, Cpl J A MacLeod MM, L/Cpl J W King MM, Pte H W Pelly MM, Pte R E Brown MM.

Change over completed by 2200 hrs without incident, Bn now occupying res Bn posn at Villa Grande.

3

Weather fine. Slight shelling Bn area, no cas. EFI supplies issued today, this included Cdn beer. Ground gradually drying which helps to make the Italian smells more pronounced.

Party of 75 to S Leonardo by tpt to see film, “You are always in my heart”.

4

Weather fine and warm. Eny very quiet today.

1100

Coy Comdrs discussion at Bn HQ.

5

0900

Voluntary church parade (C of E). Weather dull during with rain commencing in the evening.

6

Cold with snow and rain, ground very muddy. Normal res area trg carried on.

Bn rest centre opened at S Leonardo known as the “Nova Scotian Hotel”. This will be used to accommodate tps for 48 hr periods of rest and relaxation.

7

Still raining, a large number of dug-outs and slit-trenches are now flooded.

1030

Maj F Hilt to Bde HQ where he received orders to relieve Carlt & York R night 8/9.

1600

Bn 0 gp re relief to be carried out tomorrow night.

ORTONA AREA.

8

Weather cloudy and mild. Extremely muddy condition of the ground makes life in the fwd area increasingly miserable.

Take-over completed without incident by 2400 hrs. Bn now occupying general area 2814.

9

Rained very hard throughout the day. Eny quiet this sector. Recce and contact patrols only carried out night 9/10.

10

Day cloudy with some rain. Farty of 4 officers and 114 ORs reinforcements arrived at Rear Bn.

11

Weather fine and warm. Lt Col R S E Waterman returned from leave and Maj F Hiltz resumes his duties as 2 i c at Rear Bn. Slight shelling our FDLs, no cas. Contact and standing patrols only night 11/12.

12

High wind and heavy rain again. Enemy very quiet our sector. Contact and standing patrols as usual.

13

Weather fine and warm.

0800

Coy comdrs meeting at Bn HQ to discuss the NCO situation within the unit.

Brig Gibson visited the Bn during the morning.

A fighting patrol of one officer and 10 ORs put in a raid on area. Got within 20 yds of their objective when they came under hy MG, MP and grenade fire. Patrol was forced to withdraw with 2 ORs wounded and 1 OR missing presumed killed. Three eny MG posns were pinpointed by this patrol.

14

Weather fine with high wind. DVs today included Lt Col K S Bjorn of OCTU Selection Centre and MAj Morgan both of whom remained over night.

Eny shelling this sector was on an increased scale today causing 2 serious as well as several minor cas.

Recce patrol to area 280143 located 5 eny weapon pits that are being manned.

15

Weather fine and warm.

1400

Lt Col R S E Waterman attended a discussion at Bde HQ.

Fighting patrol of 1 officer (Capt E D Hersey) and 18 ORs went out at last light. Encountered eny in strength area 281154. After sustaining 4 ORs cas and himself being wounded Capt Hersey Withdraw his patrol.

2135.

Eny pulled some SP guns into the Ariella river valley and shelled the area of Villa Grande for approx twenty minutes. Very few of these fell in the Bn area, no cas.

16

Weather fine and cool, ground now drying nicely. Eny shelling and mortaring our area was on a reduced scale to day, no cas sustained from this.

At least light Lieut Moore took a fighting patrol of ten men to area 279154. Having approached to within 20 yds eny posns that area came under hy MG, MP and rifle grenade fire. Mr Moore and his senior NCO were seriously wounded and patrol were forced to withdraw bringing their wounded with them. It was learned with regret the next day, that Cpl Peach of the Pnr Pl, long a familiar figure within the Bn, had died of wounds as a result of this action.

17

Weather fine. Very quiet day on our front. Contact patrols only carried out night 17/18.

18

Weather fine and warm.

1000

Lt Col R S E Waterman attended an 0 gp at Bde HQ. Orders received that this unit will be relieved by R22eR night 19/20.

1400

Recce party to area now occupied by R22eR.

19

Clear fine day.

1000

Recce party of the R22eR arrived to liaise with their opposite numbers this unit. Eny was very quiet this sector throughout the day and the take-over was completed without incident by 2230 hrs. Patrols for night 19/20 were supplied by this unit These included one fighting patrol which [was?] however in without cas by 2230 hrs.

20

Very fine day. [illegible] in Bde reserv.r [sic.] area. Morning spent in cleaning and checking of weapons, Afternoon in cleaning equipment for march past to be carried out 22 Mar 44.

21

Rain in the morning clearing at 1400 hrs. Day spent in resting and preparing for the march on the morrow.

22

0730

Rain which had been threatening all night came down in torrents accompanied by a wind which reached gale proportions. Tps moved off at 0800 hrs as [illegible] but had not reached the SL when word was received that the march was postponed. Tps move back to coy areas where balance of the day was spent on drying where possible.

23

Day overcast with slight Grizzling raid. EFI supplies were issued today, highlight of this being 2 bottles of Cdn beer per man.

Orders were received for this unit to relieve Carlt & York R night 24/25, move to be completed by 2400 hrs.

1900

Officers discussion at Bn HQ.

It is with regret that news was today received that our M O, Maj Woods is to be posted away from this unit.

24

Day fine but slightly cool.

Maj H C Johnston, RCAMC arrived to be attached this Bn.

1915

Bn move off to relieve Carlt & York R in the right fwd Bn area of the Bde front. Take over was completed without incident by 2230 hrs.

25

Fine but cool. Little or no eny shelling or mortaring our sector today. At 1500 hrs our arty laid down a box smoke barrage around BOURLON in an effort to draw fire from that posn, but due perhaps to the fresh wind which quickly dissipated the smoke this ruse was not successful.

Two officers of the Desert Air Force arrived to spend 48 hrs with the Bn. This is part of a system of exchange of airforce and Inf personnel to permit each to study the methods of the other.

Besides the usual standing and contact patrols, 2 recce patrols were sent to the area of GREBE and BOURLON respectively.

26

Day fine but again cool with high wind. No eny mortaring or shelling on our front during the day. Recce patrols only tonight with a view to gathering information on which to base a fighting patrol tomorrow night.

27

Fine but cool with high wind. No eny shelling our sector today.

It is believed that caves in the gully on the right flank of our Bn posn known as PLOVER are occupied by the eny in the day time so a PIAT det was positioned approx 230 y’s from the a/m caves and fired 18 bombs. Three were observed to be direct hits on the caves, no eny movement was however observed during or after the shoot in that vicinity.

Fighting patrol attempted to raid the caves in PLOVER at last light Came under heavy fire before they reached the objective and forced to retire.

28

Day fine but cool.

0445

2 officers and 14 ORs put in a raid on BOURLON under cover of supporting program of mors and arty, but found no eny occupying that feature. 2 snipers took up a posn just right of that feature to remain during the day to observe and snipe.

Acting on information brought back by the raiding party, an attempt was made at first light to secure the BOURLON feature The leading sec was engaged by grenades and MG when about 30 yds into the ruins and rubble. Forced to withdraw and take up posn in gully 75 yds in front of BOURLON. From here a fire fight was carried on with the eny throughout the day using all Pl weapons including the PIAT.

1930

A Pl attack was put in on BOURLON which met very heavy opposition. Attacking party force to withdraw suffering in cas, 3 ORs killed, 1 OR missing believed killed and 13 ORs wounded. Truly a place of many surprises.

29

Weather fine and warm.

DVs (distinguished visitors) this morning included Maj-Gen Vokes, GOC 1 Cdn Div and Brig Gibson. Enemy shelling and mortaring of our posns was on an increased scale from 1700 hrs until midnight.

Three recce patrols of 2 scouts each sent out this night to gather infm on which to base fighting patrols following night.

ORTONA AREA

30

Weather fine.

Lt-Col of 2 Pol Corps visited and was wined and dined at this HQ. Informed us with some disgust that he had under his comd a Bn of Italian tps. During his visit to the fwd area he was most impressed with a shower bath at our 3” mor base plate posn. This is within 500 yds of eny posns.

Increased eny shelling and mortaring of our posns during day.

Tonight the Coys rotate clockwise which brings A Coy into the reserve coy posn.

Two recce patrols each of two scouts to areas of BOURLON and PLOVER.

31

Weather fine today.

Lt-Gen Allfrey, comdr 5 Corps accompanied by Brig Gibson visited the area today.

Shelling and mortaring of our area was on a reduced scale.

All villages and owns this Bde area placed out of bounds. Capt C B Cochran recced a new area for Bn HQ.

Patrols tonight consisted of two ambush patrols which however had no success.