WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT

WWII WAR DIARY

Place

Date

Time

Entry

JUNE 1944

POFI

1

Bn settled in area 5227 and resting neath a hot summer sun. The days are quiet and peaceful and rarely do we hear the sound of guns. A Mobile Bath Unit is established by the Sacca River. Also a Salvation Army Service Canteen which provides free tea and refreshments. A barber and watch repairer are also in full swing. This is a great change from the usual run of things and the men take full advantage of it Sports trg well under way.

2

Weather fine and warm but freshened by a soft breeze.

1000

Lt Col R S E Waterman attended an C Gp at Bde Hq.

1400

A Bn O Gp was held and the discussion centered on trg to be carried on in present area. Also arrangements made for Bde Sports Meet soon to be held. Methods to be used in future moves were also thoroughly discussed.

1545

Mr Doug Howe Canadian War Correspondent visited this Hq to obtain choice morsels of news concerning the part played by the West N S R in the smashing of the Adolf Hitler Line.

3

1000

Maj Lambert [illegible] Rep lectured to officers and NCOs of B Coy on the functioning of a Field Regt and the manner in which they work in conjunction with an Infantry Unit.

1030

Mr Foster digs officer lectured to Officers of D Coy on Signal Proceedure [sic.]. Fine & warm.

4

Weather fine and warm but a threat of rain in the evening did not materialize.

0900

R C and C of E Church Parades were held after which Protestants observed Communion Service which was well attended.

1100

Bn O Gp was held.

1930

B Ech was brought fwd. A party of 22 proceeded to Salerno on 8 days leave.

5

Weather fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus. West N S R Softball Team handed the second licking to 3 C I B Team. Also trimmed R22eR and Carlt & York Teams inf fast games during the past few days. Capt D I Rice I O proceeded on a few days leave. Also the Adjt Capt A Dyer. Capt Inman, Unit Paymaster is functioning with great gusto in their stead and the Bn Nerve Centre hums as never before. In the evening a film “You’ve got me covered” was shown in the Bn area by the Unit Auxiliary Service. E F F I supplies were issued. The usual half bottle of beer per man soon disappeared in the approved manner.

1930

Brig J P E Bernatches DSO, OBE visited this Hq.

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6

Weather continues to be fine and warm in spite of one or two showers which soon passed away.

0930

Lt Col R S E Waterman to Bde 0 Gp. Bn on one hours as of 1200 hrs to-day. Everybody packing in preparation for pending move to the South.

1815

Bn crossed starting point. Moved by transport to area 3700. All Coys in posn by 0200 hrs 7 June. Tac Hq established at 372001.

7

0930

Weather fine and warm. Bn 0 Gp. The day was spent in checking shortages of weapons and equippment [sic]. The Bn blossomed forth in all the finery of brand new Berets. As usual 700 men will discover 700 different ways of wearing them and this was no exception and incidently [sic.] rather hard on the RSM’s Blood pressure.

1400

A kit inspection was held. In the evening a film “Stormy Weather” was shown.

8

0900

A little cloudy but warm. Bn 0 Gp.

1400

Coy Comdrs recce area which will be occupied by the Bn on 9 June.

1500

Brig J P E Bernatches DSO, OBE visited this Hq. In the evening a film “By Hook or By Crook” was shown by the Unit Auxiliary Services.

9 0830

Weather fine and warm. A Coy moved to new area followed by B, C, D, and Sup Coys. Tac Hq established 378986. Coy posns as per trace. The ancient ruins of a small chapel in Bn Hq area was taken over by Hon Capt L Wilmot Unit Padre and converted into a quiet room for the troops.

10

0845

Weather fine and warm. Bn Sports Meet today held in the Bn area. All contestants made a fine showing and should go far in future meets.

1130

The Bn was paraded and addressed by Maj Gen C Vokes DSO. Brig Bernatches DSO, OBE. accompanied him. In the evening a film “The First of the Few” was shown.

11

1000

C of E Church Parade was held this morning in HQ Coy area. The weather was cool and a slight breeze blowing. A pleasant day and a pleasant hour. Holy Communion was observed at the close of the service, about 20 men being present.

1100

Bn O Gp. Maj F E Hiltlz took over comd of the Bn during the absence of Lt Col R S E Waterman who has proceeded on several days well deserved rest. In the evening a film “They Died With Their Boots On” was shown. Trg as per syllabus.

12

Weather fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus. Bath parades were arranged and are available to each coy in turn. The M O and staff are working overtime to ensure that all personnel are vaccinated and inoculated where necessary.

1400

Brig J P E Bernatches DSO, OBE paid a visit to this Hq. Sports trg vigoursly [sic] carried out in preparation for Bde Sports Meet soon to be held.

13

0800

Bn parade this morning all ranks wearing full battle order. The hot sun made this very uncomfortable and all were relieved when at last parade was dismissed to carry on with trg as per syllabus. All transport was grounded today to prepare for pending vehicle inspection. A film “High Diddle Diddle” was shown in the evening.

14

Weather fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus.

15

1400

The Bde Sports Meet was held today in the R22eR area. Under a hot summer sun the West N S R Sports Team got away to a sprinting start and led the entire Bde, taking first, second or third place in almost every contest; final score being 51 points as against 18 for the Carlt & York Regt and the R22eR 10. Refreshments we provided under the direction of Capt C Whynacht R Q M. In spite of a sharp downpour which threatened to cancell [sic] the remaining entries the programme was successfully carried through to a victorious finish. A special treat was served in the shape of a polo game precariously mounted on various examples of mule flesh and brandishing crudely made clubs originally intended for use in playing polo but today valiantly wheilded [sic] in a hopeless attempt to produce some semblance of motion in their sleepy mounts. Considerable difficulty was experienced in steering the animules [sic] but Brig Bernatches apparently discovered the knack of control and consequently scored three of the winning goals.

16

0500

Recreational tours have now been arranged and the first party left this morning by transport for Naples and Pompei which was really enjoyable in spite of the heat. The rest of the day was spent in Naples and a good time was had by all. Trg as per syllabus.

17

0800

Fine and warm. Bn parade at which Maj F E Hiltz acting C O thanked the Bn for their fine showing in the Bde Sports Meet and compared their winning spirit and determination to that which carried them through the Hitler Line.

1030

Lt-Gen Burns First Cdn Corps Comdr visited all Coys of this Unit.

1400

…and 1500 hrs. A G demonstration was held in H Q Coy area. 50% of each sub-unit attended each demonstration.

18

Heavy rains and a high wind soon turn the camp into a morass of mud. 7 men were selected to return to Canada as PWs escort. A draft of 104 reinforcements arrived and were attached to the Bn for a period of trg and discipline. They are known as E Coy. Church parade was cancelled owing to heavy rain and a voluntary service which was to have been held at 2000 hrs was also cancelled to the bad weather.

19

Weather cool with frequent showers. The first leave party to Rome left by transport today and will return on 21 June. Trg as per syllabus.

1730

Party proceeded to 8th Army Rest Camp Salerno on 7 days leave.

20

1630

Weather warm but somewhat cloudy. Bde 0 Gp in preparation for Exercise “Darby” soon to take place.

1830

Guests arrived at Bn Hq Officers mess and dinner was served at 1900 hrs. Among those present were Brig J P E Bernatches DSO, OBE, Lt Co M P Bogart, DSO, Maj W G M Robinson, Bde Maj and Maj Woods, our former Medical Officer.

21

Weather fine. Trg as per syllabus.

1400

One representative from each coy proceeded with Capt W H E David on a recce to area 1208.

1630

Capt D I Rice to discussion at Bde Hq.

1715

Bn moved as per movement order.

22

Weather fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus.

1800

A stage show “Westward Ho” was held at the Carlt & York Regt area and several from the West N S R attended it.

23

Trg as per syllabus.

1430

West N S R tug of war team pulled both Seaforth and R C R teams. The former took place in 2 CIB sports field and the RC Rs on 1 Cdn Div Sports field.

24

Thunder storms throught [sic] the day threatened to dispel our Div Sports Meet held today at the sports field near TELESE. Div Arty and 3 C I B ran neck and neck until 2 C I B made a spectacular sprint to take second place Div Arty, being first and 3 CIB third by ½ a point. Final scores were Div Arty 71 points, 2 CIB, 69 points, 3 CIB 8 ½ points Div Tps 42 ½ a point. Final scores were Div Arty 71 points, 2 CIB, 69 points, 3 CIB 8 ½ points Div Tps 42 ½ and 1st Bde 21 points. The R C R Bugle Band and the 48th Pipers provided fine musical intertainment [sic].

Crowning event was a race between Senior Officers of the Div mounted on the best mule flesh Italy could provide. By dint of much coaxing and threatening their musty mules broke into a sort of ragged trot but several seemed to lose their sense of direction and went dashing madly off across the tracks wildly pursued by a swarm of yelling urchins. Lt Gen Burns, riding “Hairless Joe” seemed to experience considerable difficulty in steering his baulky steed and trailed in near the end being pushed over the finish line by the mules angry owner. Lt Col Hutchins O C A/Tk Regt riding Calamity” dashed across the finish line leading the field with great gusto, many grunts and probably a very sore “sitting down place”. The Tug of war finals between the West N S R and Sask L I teams proved to be a fine example of team-work. West N S R team coached by Lt C Irving took two straight pulls. The coaching was superb the result being a sure victory for the “Herring Chokers”

Lt-Gen E L M Burns Cdn Corps Comdr, presented the Southern Italy. Trophy to the senior officer of the Div Arty Gp.

25

Occasional thunder showers. Trg as per syllabus.

Capt Bruce Cochrane struck off strength to 1 Cdn Div Hq.

Most of the Bn was issued with respirators and tested in a nearby gas chamber recently constructed.

26

Fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus.

A party left by transport for a day in Naples and Pompei. These trips are proving to be really educational and worth while [sic.]. Everyone up to the present has shown keen enjoyment and appreciation. Keep it up Canada!

27

Fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus.

1400

Corps Sports were held today in which the Div made a good showing. Div Arty took top place however.

28

0830

Capt D I Rice I O on recce to area 48 R T R.

A party attended an all Canadian Stage Show at PIEDEMONTE entitled “Rapid Fire” and featureing [sic] seen C W A C S, the remainder of the cast being male members.

29

Fine and warm. Trg as per syllabus.

1330

Bn moved as per movement order.

1400

A Scouts and Snipers contest was held at the Carlt & York Range. Each unit supplied an officer to act as judge, Maj F E Hiltz representing West N S R. West NSR team was made up by Pte Val Young, Pte “Snake-eye” Gaetes and Pte Rafuse and they carried all honours by taking first, second and third with respective scores of 63, 58 and 56.

30

Very hot. Today the Bn made the acquaintance of men of 48th R T R and spent an interesting and profitable morning learning something of the Churchills and Shermans eagerly shown us by the English tank men. Considerable amusement was caused by the somewhat akward [sic] handling of the tanks by the P B I so familiar with them. A break was enjoyed at 1000 hrs for the inevitable cup of English tea and a chocolate bar. The afternoon was spent bathing in the near-by river, especially welcome on so hot a day. Officers of the 48th R T R a the West N S R proceeded to Naples and in the course of the evening enjoyed a real old-fashioned Pow-Wow. A film was shown in the Carlt & York Regt area which was attended by men of the West NNS R and the 48th R T R.