

W A R D I A R Y.

1st. Bn. Black Watch (R.H.R.) of Canada.
Month of August, 1944.

FRANCE. FLEURY-sur-ORNE.	1st. Aug. Tues.	Weather - fair and warm. Reinforcements continue to arrive and the Bn. is slowly approaching fighting strength. The day was spent once more in reorganizing and re-equipping and the men were occupied in cleaning up the new weapons.
FLEURY-sur-ORNE.	2nd. Wed.	Weather - cloudless sky, very warm. Routine continues. The Coys. commenced training.
FLEURY-sur-ORNE.	3rd. Thur.	Weather - very warm. No change, no word of any move. A Bath Parade was held in the afternoon much to the delight of all ranks. A strange paradox of war was to see some soldiers paddling canoes in the river.
FLEURY-sur-ORNE.	4th. Fri.	Weather - fair and clear. Once again we are to move. The C.O. explained the move at an O Group - the Bn. would move up and take over the positions of the FUSILIERS de MONT ROYAL, in ST. ANDRE-sur-ORNE. Advance B.H.Q. left the present position on the outskirts of FLEURY-sur-ORNE around 1530 hrs. and arrived at ST. ANDRE-sur-ORNE at approx. 1600 hrs.. B.H.Q. was established in a strongly reinforced cellar - the house itself was largely demolished but afforded almost perfect protection. The change over did not take place until midnight. Two companies of the REGIMENT de MAISONNEUVE (B. and D.) are attached to the BLACK WATCH and they will take over from the CAMERON HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA who are attached to the FUSILIERS de MONT ROYAL. At about 1730 hrs. the Hun sent over some 88mm. and some mortar, which hit very close to B.H.Q. but caused no casualties. Around 2345 hrs. he repeated the performance and this time managed to set fire to a building 100 yds. from us.
ST. ANDRE-sur-ORNE.	5th. Sat.	Weather - still fair and clear. Change over of the Bn. was completed at an early hour of the morning to the accompaniment of spasmodic shelling and mortaring by the enemy which caused us a few casualties, none of them serious. It would appear that there are a few enemy snipers scattered throughout the forward part of the town. At times their fire came most disturbingly close. Whether he does it on purpose, or whether his weapons are inaccurate we cannot say, but casualties from his sniping are, fortunately, exceedingly low. None the less it is rather disconcerting to have his bullets whistle around one's ears in the odd moments when we are not "biting the dust" on account of his mortar and 88mm. fire. At mid-day we were honoured by a visit, first by Brigadier MCGILL then later by Maj.-Gen. FOULKES - G.O.C. the 2nd. Div.. Apparently the enemy is withdrawing his depleted forces and we MUST keep contact with him and hold him where he is so that a larger plan may be successfully accomplished, which means that the BLACK WATCH WILL have to advance until the enemy is contacted. At approx. 1620 hrs. the Bn. moved up.

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ST. ANDRE-sur-ORNE.
(contd.)

5th.
Sat.
(con)

A. Coy. under Maj. T.D. ANYON was in the lead with D. Coy. following and B. and C. Coys. on the right and left flanks respectively. After the Coys. had gone up the C.O. and Mr. MCKENZIE, the I.O. went forward also to establish a B.H.Q. in May-sur-Orne. Not a mortar or 88 had landed within miles of us all afternoon, but no sooner had our boys reached the outskirts of MAY than Jerry started plastering them with both, as fast as he could load or so it seemed. One of his tanks then advanced down the centre of the road while A. and D. Coys were pinned down in the ditch and this tank caused havoc among their numbers. Maj. ANYON was killed and practically all of his Coy. was taken prisoner. One of our D.Rs. - STANBURY - was killed by a direct hit on his trench, Cpl. S. SMITH, the CO's. signaller, carrying and 18 set was killed by shrapnel through the head and Maj. BENNETT was killed when a mortar shell landed close beside him. Lt. MACKENZIE was wounded quite seriously in the side and in the head, but Lt. Col. Mitchell still hasn't a scratch in spite of being consistently where the going was toughest. Some of the new lads whom we have recently received as replacements are taking this action quite hard, for most of them are fresh from Canada - that wonderful country of ours where all is so quiet and peaceful. Around 2100 hrs. the Bn. was regrouping outside ST. ANDRE and to the right of ST. MARTIN de FONTENAY. Casualty returns are not yet in so we do not know exactly how we have fared. The occasional shower of mortar continues to land around us. Two coys. from the REGIMENT de MAISONNEUVE came up just before dusk and passed through us about 100 yards and took up defensive positions there. Together with them we had our patrols active around us for the remainder of the night.

ST. ANDRE-sur-ORNE.

6th.
Sun.

Weather - fair and clear. The Bn. seems to be firmly dug in between ST. MARTIN de FONTENAY and MAY-sur-ORNE. B., C., and D. Coys. are well established across the road leading to MAY-sur-ORNE with the remnants of A. Coy. occupying two slits and acting as B.H.Q. defense. Some Typhoons have been active against the enemy gun positions and tanks, with good results apparently as nothing has landed near us this morning. The REGIMENT de MAISONNEUVE is now on the outskirts of MAY-sur-ORNE, in close contact with the enemy. An incident occurred this morning which helped relieve the tension around B.H.Q. which has been established in a factory between ST. MARTIN and MAY. Our new Adjt., Capt. Law, was snatching a short nap between his many duties and his appearance in rest was such that an M.O. from the 18th. Amb., seeing him with his eyes only partly closed, his unwashed and unshaven countenance, presumed that he was a casualty. He dashed off and in no time reappeared with a jeep and two aides who immediately proceeded to load our recumbent officer on a stretcher. The dozing Adjt., so rudely awakened, was most anxious to know just what the H--- was going on and worriedly felt himself all over for wounds. The M.O., seeing his error, tendered his apologies, immediately accepted, while the onlookers laughed heartily. Our C.O. has had several close calls this last couple of days. Three times he has barely left

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ST. ANDRE-sur-ORNE. (contd.)	6th. Sun. (con)	a spot when mortars have landed on the self same spot, on two occasions causing quite a few casualties. The last time he had just left his B.H.Q. when a mortar scored a direct hit on the building, causing little more damage than was already there. We all are sincerely hopeful that his good fortune will continue throughout the duration of hostilities.	<i>[Handwritten mark]</i>
EAUVOIR FARM.	7th. Mon.	At 0200hrs. the Bn. moved back to reform in its new area preparatory to participating in the new large-scale operation TOTALIZE. The weather continued fair and warm throughout the day and we had little trouble from Jerry, so the time was occupied in cleaning up, resting, and catching up on some much needed sleep. In the early evening we could hear behind us and on our flanks the rumble of our tanks coming up into position. Promptly at 2300hrs. our guns opened up with a very heavy barrage, and this they kept up all night long. After the last few days it was a most comforting lullaby.	<i>[Handwritten mark]</i>
BRETTEVILLE -le-MAIS	8th Tues.	Weather - clear and warm. At 0700 hrs. we crossed the start line of the advance and moved up to an assembly area where we suffered intermittent shelling but no casualties. A few prisoners, mostly snipers, were taken. During the afternoon we were joined in this area by the 4th. Armoured Div. and what a heartening sight it was. At 2130 the Bn. moved on and after passing through ROQUANCOURT located on the outskirts of BRETTEVILLE le MAIS, where we went to work digging slit trenches before turning in.	<i>[Handwritten mark]</i>
BRETTEVILLE -le-MAIS.	9th. Wed.	Weather - fair and warm. The Bn. is located all around a large quarry which had been occupied by Jerry and used as a stores dump by him. There has been no enemy action near us today. This evening we witnessed the gallant death of one of our pilots. Some Typhoons had been over straffing the Hun positions, and had encountered a heavy flak. Two of the planes seemed to be in slight difficulties, and just as they were approaching us one was seen to burst into flames. To give us warning the pilot fired his guns, calling attention to his plight. No sooner had he done this than the nose of his plane pointed straight down. We all held our breath, until we could see a figure emerging from the flaming plane, but much to our dismay, for some reason his parachute failed to open, and he followed his plane down. This incident cast a pall over the Bn. that evening.	<i>[Handwritten mark]</i>
BRETTEVILLE -le-MAIS.	10th. Thur.	Weather - cloudless sky, very warm. The Bn. continued to occupy its position around the quarry, and the boys had a grand time browsing around the caves and collecting everything German from after shaving lotion to half-tracks. B. Coy sent a platoon in to clear a wood on our left flank, but no enemy were found there.	<i>[Handwritten mark]</i>

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BRETTEVILLE -le-MAIS.	11th. Fri.	Weather - warm and sunny. Everyone takes it easy in the merciless sun. The "dog days" are really with us. No reinforcements have as yet arrived. The Bn. as a "firm base for Brigade operations". This afternoon a Bath parade was organised to a nearby stream, and all afternoon men could be seen wending their way across the fields in single file, with rifle and towel. In the late afternoon A. and B. Echs. joined the Bn.:
BRETTEVILLE -le-MAIS.	12th. Sat.	Weather - warm and sunny. Most of the day was spent basking in the sunshine. Early in the evening the Bn. with A. and B. Echs. moved down the main highway to BRETTEVILLE-sur-LAISE, crossed the river and took up a position in the woods SOUTH of La BOUILLE. The boys dug in quickly. The position had been previously occupied by the enemy and as the sun went down noises throughout the woods and the orchard indicated that every movable piece of cover was being transported to the new slit trenches. We spent a quiet night with no enemy activity.
BRETTEVILLE AREA.	13th. Sun.	Weather - fair and warm, slight breeze. The Bn. is still Bde. reserve. The day was spent in training, and in improving trenches. A bath parade was held where a pool formed in a nearby stream, and many of us, at least temporarily, imagined ourselves back in the Laurentians, the surroundings were not unlike. The evening was marked by Coy. Church Parades to services conducted by Capt. RHOYLE, our padre. Whoever said, "There are no atheists in fox-foles" knew whereof he spoke, and we all went to bed tonight, much cleaner in body and in soul. Another quiet night.
BRETTEVILLE AREA.	14th. Mon.	Weather - fair and very warm, a "shirt-sleeve" day. A day of movement for the BLACK WATCH, however, first to an orchard off the road N.W. of GOUVIX, in the morning, then in the afternoon, after a very hurried lunch, by main road to another orchard at GRANVILLE-LANGANERIE. Just after supper orders were received for us to move again, the orders being accepted with a minimum of grumbling and a maximum of effort. These moves are now becoming almost in the nature of a drill. This move was down the main CAEN-FALAISE highway to BONS TASSILLY. The location necessitated quite an extensive spreading of the Coys.. Another quiet night, during which we were joined by A. and B. Echs.
BONS TASSILY	15th. Tues.	Weather - fair and mild, sunny with slight breeze. An uneventful day. The Bn. continued to occupy this area. A. and B. Echs. shook themselves out and started functioning. Everyone is very interested and very optimistic about the Battle of the Falaise Gap.

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BONS TASSILY

16th.
Wed.

Weather - bright and mild, more wind than usual. The Bn. continued to rest and train while occupying this posn. Training took the form of 'sections in the advance'. In the evening G. Coy. under Maj. PINKHAM was despatched to clear QUESNAY WOODS in our rear. The boys, most of them new reinforcements, galloped through firing their weapons at every conceivable type of cover. Net result, no Jerries in wood, but a good time was had by all. An undisturbed night.

BONS TASSILY

17th.
Thur.

Weather - fair and warm, slight breeze. C. O. and I.O. disturbed to find Brigadier calling O.Group for 0830 hrs. Nothing momentous, however, merely to put them in the picture, no movement for the BLACK WATCH. Bath Parades organised in afternoon and evening, this time to a mobile bath. The men were very much impressed with the procedure of dumping their dirty clothes in one pile, taking a shower, and picking up clean clothes from another pile. During the afternoon an enemy plane swooped low over our position sending the newest recruit and the oldest veteran to the same slit trench with equal alacrity. It does not take long to learn the rudiments of staying alive in this game. In the afternoon the C.O. and the I.O., Lt. WOOD went to ST.ANDRE-sur-ORNE to review the Bn's. attack of 25th. July on FONTENAY le MARMION. They saw the little cemetery there, beginning to look very neat and well tended. This morning when we awoke it was to find that Jerry had dropped in our area five petrol containers by parachute. At first it was thought that they were unexploded bombs and every one gave them a wide berth until it was proven otherwise, whereupon there ensued a mad scramble for the parachutes. One complete parachute and bomb, however, was rescued complete and duly despatched to Bde.H.Q..

POINT 168
near
EPANCY.

18th.
Fri.

Weather - sunny, slight breeze. New Sigs. officer, Lt. MILLS, arrived. After lunch the Bn. moved from BONS TASSILY to relieve the CANADIAN SCOTTISH REGIMENT at POINT 168 due NORTH of VERSAINVILLE. A very heartening O Group was held at Bde. where it was announced that the gap is to be closed at TRUN some time within the next twelve hours. The 2nd. DIV. is holding the line at FALAISE. The BLACK WATCH is in the rear of the REGIMENT de MAISONNEUVE and with them is herding P.O.Ws. to appropriate cages. Contact patrols were laid on with the CALGARY HIGHLANDERS and the R. de MAISONNEUVE. For the first time in many days the pipe band of the regiment played Retreat, to a BLACK WATCH almost up to strength. Those participating in this ceremony were Pipe Major Hector MacDONALD, pipers W.J.HANNAH and D.W.MacDONALD and drummers I.D.McLAREN and C.C.WILSON. There are some complaints from the men that the disinfected clothing they received yesterday at the bath is giving them a rash. During the night Jerry dropped many flares in our area.

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POINT 168	19th. Sat.	Weather - sun, scatterd clouds, and breeze. Lt. SHIDA the Scout Officer has been appointed I.O., Lt. WOOD going to A. Coy. An extensive training programme has been laid on and during the next two days all weapons, with the exception of A/Tk. guns will be fired. Once again Jerry dropped flares during the night.
GRAND MESNILS	20TH Sun.	Weather - fine and warm. Moved up to GRAND MESNILS this morning. Bde. O Group at midnight - O Group in area at 0100 hrs. The Bn. will move forward in the direction of ORBEC, some 16 miles away, with F. Ech.. The 3rd. Div. is on our left, 4th. Armoured Div. in front, and the Polish Armoured Div. on our right flank. Enemy planes dropped a large number of Anti-Personnel bombs around Bde. H.Q. at NORREY EN AUGE.
VIMOUTIERS	21st. Mon.	Weather - rain and very muddy. After an early start the Bn. ran into some opposition near VIMOUTIERS. At approx. 1700 hrs. Lt. Gaull, Sgt. CARTWRIGHT and Sgt. SHERWOOD were killed in the action.
VIMOUTIERS	22nd. Tues.	Weather - fair and warm. The Bn. moved into VIMOUTIERS and consolidated. Our casualties from yesterday's action were three killed and five wounded. The Bn. moved forward in the direction of ORBEC after the 6th. Bde. had passed through us.
VIMOUTIERS	23rd. Wed.	Weather - fair and warm. Although not engaged in any direct action the Bn. suffered 34 casualties today, as the result of enemy shelling. Of this number A.Ech. had two men killed and 12 wounded when shells landed in their location in an orchard. As a result of this shelling, just as the call had gone for supper, and a further shelling about an hour later the A.Ech. moved back to VIMOUTIERS and spent the night in the positions previously occupied there. One 15cwt. was lost and two carriers damaged.
LE PLANQUAY	24th Thur.	Weather - rain in morning clearing in afternoon. The Bn. moved forward another 10 kilos to LE PLANQUAY. Bde. held an O Group regarding the move forward to the SLEINE river.
BERTHOUVILLE	25th. Fri.	Weather - cloudy, clearing later: Early in the morning the Bn. Moved forward to BERTHOUVILLE where most of the day was spent. At 1700 hrs. they moved forward again BRIONNE, leaving F. Ech. behind. During the night F. Ech. and the Bde. area was bombed. We sent out a patrol to recover a jeep which had been taken from two Regt. de Maisonneuve officers during the bombing, finding it intact.

[Handwritten signatures and initials in the right margin]

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BOURGTHEROULDE	26TH Aug. Sat. Sat.	Weather - fine and clear. At 0300 hrs. the Bn. crossed the line "WIMPY" and went on to BOURGTHEROULDE meeting enemy m.g. and small arms fire as well as snipers. Casualties were caused when one TCV was blown up by a mine. The Bn. arrived at first light and passed through the town when the word was received from Bde. to curl up on "LINCOLN". Meantime D. Coy. had been cut off from the Bn. by some A/Tk.guns in the middle of the town. At this period the Bn. was out of communication with the rest of the Bde., and fought all morning. As the Jerry guns were all sited in anticipation of a frontal attack the C.O. decided that the Bn. should attack from the rear, which manoeuvre proved successful. The CALGARY HIGHLANDERS advised us that as they had run into some very heavy fighting elsewhere they would be unable to move up beside us. The Bn. then became the target for heavy mortar and shell fire. Capt. McNABB our T.O. and Cpl. SWAILLES were both killed at the same time. We had, lined up against the wall of B.H.Q., about 50 prisoners, and in this shelling they received a liberal dose of their own medicine many being killed and wounded. A German map, marked with many gun positions, was discovered and the I.O., Mr. SHEA and Maj. WATSON of the Artillery pin-pointed each in turn, and Lt. TESSIER got his Mortars going.
BOURGTHEROULDE	27th. Sun.	Weather - fine and clear. During the morning A. Ech. rejoined the Bn.. The day was a busy one, being taken up in getting straightened out after yesterday's heavy action. Cpl. SUNDBERG of the I. Secn. was today transferred to Bde. as I. Cpl..
LA BOISSON	28th. Mon.	Weather - cloudy turning to rain. Shortly after noon the Bn. moved forward to the banks of the River SEINE at LA BOISSON area, in the FOREST de la LONDE. Much mortaring, both ours and the enemy's causing light casualties.
LA BOISSON	29th. Tues.	Weather - raining. Little change in the situation. Mortaring continues. The disposition of the Coys. is: D Coy.-along main road BOURGTHEROULDE - LA BOISSON. A. Coy.- East side of ROUEN road contacting CALGARY HIGHLANDERS. C.Coy.- East side of ROUEN road. At 1900 hrs. the Bn. moved around to MAREVAL to a concentration area for our next move across the River SEINE.
AUTHIEU	30th. Wed.	Weather - cloudy. Early in the afternoon the Bn. moved through ELBOEUF, where everyone was cheered, and so, on across the River SEINE and up to the new conc. area.

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TOTES.

31st.
Thur.

Weather - fine and warm. The Bn. pulled out at 0300 hrs. and later halted for an hour at an ex-German H.Q. on the outskirts of ROUEN. The move through ROUEN proper was like unto a triumphal procession. The boys of the Rifle Coys. rode on tanks through the city, D. Coy. leading. During the earlier part of the day's ride the boys may have been somewhat sleepy but any lethargy vanished in the city of ROUEN where civilians lined both sides of the street, throwing flowers, kisses and fruit, and madly, gladly reaching up to shake as many hands as they could reach. We felt we should like to come to know these people better. Around mid-day we stopped at COTE COTE for two hours while the 8th. RECCE paid a visit to TOTES a small town some 10 miles away. They returned with some 40 odd prisoners and the news that the town was now cleared. En route once more we arrived at TOTES at 1630 hrs and stayed there for the night, enjoying a quiet night's rest.

Before writing FINIS to the month's diary it must be noted that although elements of other units had passed through ROUEN prior to our doing so, the 1st. BN. THE BLACK WATCH (R.H.R.) OF CANADA was the first complete unit to pass through the town itself, which probably accounts, at least in part, for the warmth of the reception we received.

J. Mitchell
Lt. Col.