

M.F.M. IIA.

ORIGINAL.

SECRET.

WAR DIARY.

OF

1st. BN. THE BLACK WATCH (RHR) OF CANADA.

C.A.S.F.

From 1st. June 1940 To 30th. June 1940.

Volume 7.

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
P.Q. 1.6.40. 0600
0600

All N.C.O's not detailed for a specific duty reported to Major Ibbotson, for a refresher course in map reading.

Numerous pamphlets received from the War Office stress the increased importance of this subject and as a result of these many N.C.O's have already received a fair amount of instruction by taking a voluntary course from members of the Intelligence Section.

Owing to the shortage of officers and the increase in duties for those remaining it has been difficult to find time to organize sports for the men.

Saturday afternoon is the only one for games and the men find it hard to occupy themselves.

There is very little sports equipment available, unlike Toronto ~~where~~ where Citizens Committees supplied the troops with every necessary article.

The following officers have been detailed to proceed on Command to Ottawa to take ~~the~~ Small Arms Courses.

Lieut. D.H. Taylor, "E" Coy.
Lieut. H.S. Peck, " "
Lieut. A.P. Boswell, " "

No increase nor decrease in strength.

Done

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
P.Q. 2.6.40. 0600
0600

No parades.
Major I.L.Ibbotson, Major Hamer and the Intelligence Officer
taped out a trench system to be commenced this week.

DBB

No Increase nor Decrease in strength.

* 3.6.40. 0600
0600

Kit inspections have so far shown that the men are inclined
to be lax after a move. Several pieces of equipment have been
interchanged making a detailed check of every item necessary.
In one case web equipment lost some months previously and
since paid for by the owner was found tucked away in the bottom
of his kit bag.

The cleanliness of the cook-houses once more has been
questioned. Fatigues supplied are more than adequate for the
job and probably the trouble is an example of "Too many Cooks".
D-81454 Sgt. Birch, J. The sergeant cook has been the subject
of much discussion and this latest complaint should prove
to be his stumbling block.

DBB

No change in strength.

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
P.Q. 4.6.40. 0600
0600

Digging was started by C & E Coys in an area West of the Camp chosen for an inter battalion scheme. Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal have already commenced their second task and it is the natural objective of the Black Watch to surpass their effort allowing more than a weeks start. This appears at present to be a trifle optimistic as the Fusiliers have shown themselves to be fast and very capable workers. Black Fly and Mosquitoes, Dear Fly and Hornets are on the scene causing their usual havoc. Every Coy will strain to finish their allotted area before the plague reaches a peak. The improvement in the men's physique is most notable. This has been remarked upon by various Officers. Perhaps compulsory P.T. for all would be wise. L/Cpl. White C.H. D-81518. eastwhile member of the Intelligence Section has been attached to Brigade Staff as Intelligence Sergeant.

No change in strength.



WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 5.6.40, 0600
0600

D-81454, Sgt. Birch, J. H. Coy has been S.O.S.
Battalion on posting to Regimental Depot, Montreal.
Training continued as per syllabus.

Strength Increase Nil, Decrease 3.

6.6.40, 0600
0600

Firing at the 30 yard range was indulged in by casuals
of C. Coy. Although the Battalion had the opportunity
to fire quite a number of T.E.W.T's at Long Branch
the markmanship of the Battalion is not too good.
In a effort to remedy this all Coy's are starting
firing practice from the beginning.
This does not intend to convey that our average is below
that of other units, the contrary exists, but the
standard arrived at after nine months training is not
desirable and reflects strongly on the lack of equipment
which has hampered training since mobilization.

Strength decrease 5, increase 24.

W.B.B.

W.B.B.

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 7.6.40. 0600
0600

A short route march of some 12 miles was taken by the Battalion giving the men their first opportunity to show off since their return from Toronto.

NSB

No change in strength.

" 8.6.40. 0600
0600

Another decrease in our Establishment of Officers so badly needed occurred to-day when the undermentioned Officers and N.C.O.'s proceeded on command for courses of instruction.

Lieut. J.W. Knox,

Lieut. R.G. Slater.

Lieut. I.R. McDougall.

D-81288. Sgt. Redmond, P.V.

D-81013. Sgt. Martin, L.V.

D-81869. Sgt. Bolton, C.W.

D-81020. Sgt. Webster, C.A.

D-81253. Sgt. Lett, H.W.

D-81081. Sgt. Foam, A.G.

D-81097. L/Sgt. Mitchell, D.W.

D-81677. Cpl. Fitzmaurice, T.

D-82277. Cpl. Airth, W.A.

D-81250. Cpl. Bateman, J.P.

Strength Decrease 1, Increase Nil.

The Peak attained by the Battalion's A.W.L. list shortly after arrival at Valcartier came to 43.
The list now stands at 8.

NSB

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 9.6.40. 0600
0600

The Battalion still lacks the necessary sports equipment to organize inter Coy games of any sort. A number of the men have equipped themselves with rod and tackle and are meeting with fair success whipping the neighbouring trout streams.

MB

No parades.

" 10.6.40. 0600
0600

Coy Commanders traced out trench sites and digging commenced on the support lines. Compass marches by night are frequently taken and the majority of the men have a working knowledge of the instrument.

MB

Strength Decrease 2, Increase 1.

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 11.6.40. 0600
0600

Capt. B.D. Robertson, M.O. is well pleased with the results of his timely warning re sunburn, no personnel have reported sick. Many of the tents issued are very poor, thirty-one have been condemned as unserviceable but these replacing are possibly worse. The night's rain soaked through thoroughly wetting the men and their equipment, This condition should not be necessary. The tents in some cases date back to 1903. Major General V.W. Odlum, G.O.C. 2nd. Div. arrived on a visit to the camp at 1600 hours. The Major General proceeded to Brigade Headquarters to meet the Staff. Lt. Col. K.G. Blackader was present.

Strength decrease 13, increase n1.

Valcartier,
Que. 12.6.40. 0600
0600

Major General V.W. Odlum, G.O.C. 2nd. Div. arrived at 0815 hours on a visit to the Battalion. ~~Due~~wing to bad weather, the usual tour of inspection was not carried out. After being introduced to the Officers of the Battalion by Lt. Col. K.G. Blackader. Major General V.W. Odlum, G.O.C. 2nd. Div. gave a short talk to the Officers. Bad weather with considerable rain continued but has not hampered the Battalion in its digging of the trench system. Considerable practice in compass marching by night is in effect and the results, while encouraging show the great need for a continuation of this most important part of a soldier's training.

No increase or decrease of strength.

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 13.6.40. 0500
0600

Training continued as per syllabus with C & D Coys undertaking night digging in the trench system and H.Q. Coy and Bn.HQ fulfilling their various specialist employment and training.

W.P.B.

No increase or decrease of strength.

" 14.6.40. 0600
0600

The morning was occupied by specialist and W.T. while a Pay Parade was held in the afternoon. Approximately a quarter of the Battalion left for leave in accordance with C.A.S.F. R.O.375.

W.P.B.

No increase or decrease of strength.

" 15.6.40. 0600
0600

Training was in accordance with the syllabus ~~xxx~~, namely a practice occupation of the trench system. The afternoon was given over to sports. The training of Company Scouts by the Intelligence Section, which was commenced in Toronto and has been actively followed since arrival in Valcartier Camp has shown excellent results and been of great assistance to the scouts platoon commanders. A sample syllabus is attached.

W.P.B.

App.3
Syllabus.

No increase of strength, Decrease 8 men.

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 16.6.40. 0600
0600

The Battalion received orders before dawn to move, to an unnamed destination,.

With the Commanding Officer and Adjutant away on embarkation leave the bulk of the work fell on the shoulders of the 2 i/c Major I.L. Ibbotson and A/Adjutant, Capt. B.R. Ritchie.

The move was considerably complicated by the fact that over two hundred officers and men were on leave and had to be recalled, with the additional difficulty attendant on the issue of complete new equipment, great-coats, ground sheets and gas-masks. However the fact that they were at last, after almost ten months of waiting, about to move caused all ranks to work with tremendous enthusiasm. Special praise was merited by the way in which Quartermaster issued new stores and took in old, while to the layman's eye a very harrassed Quartermaster seemed to be surrounded by tremendous mounds of military weapons and haberdashery nevertheless it was a masterpiece of impromptu organization. All ranks worked far into the night.

The unfortunate fact that ~~it appeared~~ while it appears that ~~the necessary~~ the necessary equipment was available it was left until the eleventh hour before the Battalion was supplied necessitated considerable work and delay in movement which might easily have been avoided, the time in which the Battalion did move was entirely due to the hard work and cheerfulness of all ranks,

No Increase or Decrease of strength.

DRB

WAR DIARY.

Valcartier,
Que. 17,6.40. 0600
0600

After Reveille at 0500 hrs and an early breakfast, the Battalion completed its preparation for departure. Reinforced by the members returning from embarkation leave the Battalion paraded at 1030 hours, marched to Valcartier Camp railway station and entrained for Quebec Harbour. At the Harbour embarkation proceeded in a most efficient and orderly manner which was later remarked upon by the Master of the ship, the S.S. Antonia, in a most complimentary manner. At 1640 hours the ship pulled away for its destination, this must have revived memories in the hearts of any of those members who remembered the departure of the original 13th Battalion in 1914, as its descendant the 1st. Battalion was leaving Canada to carry on its duty to the Empire in a recurrence of the fight against the old enemy, but this time the Black Watch wore the "battle-dress" a garb hardly in keeping with the honoured and traditional dress of the Royal Highland Regiment. It was indeed sad to say farewell to the dark tartan of "Am Freachadan Dubh" as had the Battalion the day before departure but modern warfare has little respect for honoured things, however, all ranks still sport with pride the red hackle.

As the ship was still in home waters there was no black-out and most of the men spent the evening on deck admiring the scenic St. Lawrence. Quarters were somewhat cramped and many men had to sleep on deck or in the public rooms but this was accepted gladly, why not, the Battalion was on the move abroad at last.

Previous to leaving Quebec there was a considerable decrease in strength due to the fact that men on furlough were not easily located and others were hospitalized or posted to depot for various reasons.

Strength increase 16, decrease 114.

App. 4
Movement
orders.

Handwritten signature

WAR DIARY.

At Sea. 18.6.40.
0600
0600

With the exception of boat-drill, posting of A.A.L.M.G's and lookouts there were no parades and all ranks were allowed plenty of latitude to enjoy or suffer, as the case ~~may~~ might be, the sea voyage which to many was quite a new experience. The meals were exceptionally good and a very nice gesture was made by the some two hundred Newfoundlanders on board who were going to England to enlist in the Royal Navy, these men volunteered to serve the men of the Black Watch at all meals and so made it much easier for all concerned. Total black-out was instituted at night, no lights being allowed nor smoking on or between decks.

No increase or decrease of strength.

DTB

At Sea. 19.6.40.
0600
0600

All ranks learnt their destination, Newfoundland, and while it had been generally hoped that they were bound for England such disappointment was more than outweighed by the fact that they were at least bound on a mission as trusted and trained troops and that ~~they were at least bound~~ the days of waiting in training centres were now over.

No increase or decrease of strength.

DTB

WAR DIARY.

At Sea. 20.6.40,
0600
0600

The day was extremely foggy and at times the ship was hardly making way. Quite a number of the troops were feeling the effects of the long Atlantic roll but the great majority were thoroughly enjoying their sea cruise. Much amusement was caused by the lunch menu for the Sergeants as the dessert was "Balmoral Pudding" and previously a somewhat stronger gust of wind than usual had carried Major Routledge's Balmoral to a watery grave.

DSB

No increase or decrease of strength.

At Sea. 21.6.40.
0600
0600

After a foggy start the sun came out and at lunch time land was sighted. The ship reached Botwood Harbour in the Bay of Exploits at approximately 1700 hrs. The order for disembarkation was D Coy as defense Coy, H.Q. and Bn.Hq.details, B Coy to unload at the docks, C Coy to pitch camp, E Coy, A Coy to unload Antonia and as clean-up party with provision of A.A. defense. However as the ship was unable to moor alongside the wharf due to her heavy cargo and no tender was present, all ranks remained aboard. Lt.Col.Blackader, the 2 i/c and the Adjutant went ashore for a brief reconnaissance.

DSB

No increase or decrease of strength.

WAR DIARY.

Botwood,
Nfld. 22.6.40. 0600
0600

The Newfoundland Government tender "Clyde" had arrived over night and the disembarkation commenced, in the order given the previous afternoon, at 0800 hours.

Getting the men ashore was a simple and orderly task but the large amount of stores, equipment, food, not to mention two army trucks, nicknamed the "Fuddle Jumpers", presented a much more difficult problem.

All ranks worked extremely hard at their respective tasks and when night fell the best part of the job had been done; E Coy and the bulk of H.Q. Coy and Bn.H.Q. left by train at night for the airport near Gander Lake, they will be followed by B and A Coys as soon as their tasks are completed.

D and C Coys will remain in Botwood with detachments from the Signals Platoon, Transport, Pioneers and all the Intelligence Section. All those who had not left for the airport continued to work at unloading "Antonia" throughout the night.

No increase or decrease of strength.

MSB

WAR DIARY.

BB
Botwood,
Nfld. 23.6.40, 0600
0600

The force under the command of Major I.L.Ibbotson consisted of "C" Coy, Major Jaquays, "D" Coy, Major Wright, Major (QM) Hamer, Capt. B. Robertson, M.O. and medical details.

A Signal detachment under D-81264, Sgt. T. Ward and the Intelligence Section under D-81858 Sgt. D. B. Francis.

This force will be stationed in Botwood for the protection of the Harbour and approaches, a task of some considerable difficulty in view of the several approaches available to an invader whether by sea or air and the very limited number of troops to be used for the defense.

The Botwood force spent the greater part of the day assisting the completion of unloading the transport, arranging camp site facilities, cleaning the area and in emergency defense posts. These tasks, undertaken by tired men who had worked all night, were not made any more pleasant by a chilling downpour of rain.

No increase or decrease of strength.

DTB

WAR DIARY.

Botwood,
Nfld. 24.6.40. 0600
0600

Company Commanders reconnoitred their respective defense sectors and selected O.P's and gun positions upon which ^{work} immediately started. The terrain in the immediate vicinity of Botwood is hilly and rises quite abruptly from the shore line, the sub-soil is rock and there are several rock out-crops from the main ridge, known as the Kings Ridge, one or two of these make excellent positions for defense. The Signal section were rapidly linking up the various positions and places of importance with inter-communication and connection with Bn.Hq. "D" Coy prepared to move their lines from Bn.H.Q. and "C" Coy area to a higher position near the paper-storage buildings of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co.

No increase or decrease of strength.

DBS

WAR DIARY.

Botwood,
Nfld. 25.6.40, 0600
0600

"D" Coy moved to their new camp site which is now named Highland Camp and once again the weather seemed to be against the troops as the move was accompanied by a steady drizzle of rain.

The drainage system and installation of proper latrines was made easier by the arrival of a Sergeant and nine Sappers of the R.C.E. who set-to with a will at their various occupations and expressed their great satisfaction at not being stationed at the Airport, which from all accounts is infested with black flies and mosquitoes and at which place the balance of the Battalion is living under appalling conditions.

Attached W.E.F. 22.6.40 and posted to H.Q. Coy; -
1 Sgt, 9 Sappers. R.C.E.

W.E.F.

WAR DIARY.

Botwood,
Nfld. 26.6.40. 0600
0600

Work proceeded on the defense positions several of which are being hewn out of solid rock. The work and spirit of all ranks is excellent.

The only map of the area is a copy the Intelligence Section made from a 1903 admiralty chart of the Bay of Exploits, while on "Antonia". This copy gives only the shore line and a few high land points with the result that the entire area, all roads, heights and tracks have to be surveyed, plotted and mapped by the Intelligence Section _____ a work which has been rendered harder by lack of equipment, there being only one compass available, and that belonging to Lieut Wood, T.O., with one protractor, two old twelve inch rulers and paper of letter-size only which has to be glued together to make a size sufficient for a map showing all points of importance. While ~~their~~^{the} situation is due to lack of maps of the area ~~it~~ it is one which might occur quite frequently in a strange theatre of operations and if Infantry Intelligence Sections were provided with a complete and compact equipment to meet this type of situation and an issue of three or four prismatic compasses were permitted, considerable time could be saved with the consequent increase in efficiency and additional information of importance might be supplied to the officers responsible for defense sectors.

No increase or decrease of strength.

Handwritten initials

WAR DIARY.

Botwood,
Nfld: 27.6.40, 0600
0600

Lt.Col.K.G.Blackader,M.C.E.D. visited the Botwood Force and was taken round the defensive positions by Major I.L.Ibbotson. While there has been plenty of hard work done by the men they have also managed to find some recreation, fishing with improvised rod and tackle appears to be the favourite pastime with one man catching as many as 30 in one hour. The meals, although cooked under difficult weather conditions, leave no cause for complaint and the addition of the occasional fresh fish supper smacks almost of an hotel cuisine.

DSB

No increase or decrease of strength.

Botwood,
Nfld. 28.6.40, 0600
0600

Continued work is in effect on all posts, perfecting their protection, visibility and camouflage. The Harbour's posts and Intelligence Section keep a close check on all incoming ships, both local and ocean-going. A censorship on all letters going out from the detachment has been instituted. Major Ibbotson and Lieut. J. Bourne i/c A.R.P. attended, in an advisory capacity, a meeting of the Home Defense Council of Botwood where plans were commenced for evacuation of women and children and provision of medical assistance in the event of an air-raid.

DSB

No increase or decrease of strength.

WAR DIARY.

Botwood,
Nfld. 29.6.40, 0600
0600

Major Ibbotson, Captain Ritchie, Adj, Sgt's Ward and Francis made a reconnaissance to Sandy Point Lighthouse to see if it were possible to have visual communication from there to Force H.Q. and ~~whether~~ whether or not an outpost could be situated there to watch for any hostile incursion from the sea. Reconnaissance party proceeded by Imperial Airways Power-boat, that being the only means of arriving at Sandy Point. Everyone was greatly cheered in the afternoon by the arrival of the first mail from Canada. P.S.M. Sims of D Coy and 11 others arrived in camp, they were among those members who had missed the embarkation from Quebec. The arrival of a drummer and two pipers was also of considerable comfort as all, even those with no Scots connection, have missed the sound of the pipes to which they had become accustomed after the months in Montreal, Toronto and Valcartier.

WJH

Strength increase 14, decrease 3.

Botwood,
Nfld. 30.6.40, 0600
0600

A respite was given those men who were not on outpost or guard duty but vigilance at all O.P's was not relaxed. A church parade was held for Roman Catholics.

WJH

No increase or decrease of strength.

WAR DIARY.

Nfld. Airport. 23.6.40, 0600
0600

The force for this ~~sector~~ ^{sector} under the command of Lt. Col. K. G. Blackader, arrived by train from Botwood in the morning and immediately proceeded to unload the train. In the afternoon the weather again failed, rain poured down and before the troops could erect the tents all were soaking wet, in addition this prevented the provision of proper meals. Altogether a thoroughly miserable day but considering the previous hours of hard work at Botwood and an uncomfortable train journey at night the spirit and good humour of the men was splendid.

W.B.C.

" " 24.6.40, 0600
0600

Work on the camp site continued in clear and fine weather but even this change was a mixed blessing as myriads of black flies and mosquitoes appeared and played havoc amongst all ranks. If this is a regular occurrence the provision of fly oil will become an urgent necessity. Defense posts were placed at the Transmitting and Receiving Stations and at Gander Lake. Radio Stations are of primary importance and Gander Lake, two miles to the south and out of sight from the Airport, would provide an excellent place for hostile seaplanes to alight.

W.B.C.

WAR DIARY.

Nfld. Airport. 25.6.40, 0600
0600

A general reconnaissance of the Airport was made and weapon pits sited. It was decided to have these manned from one hour before dawn until 2200 hours daily, except in foggy weather when, on the advice of Sqn. Leader Carscallen, R.S.A.F., this will not be necessary. The sanitary conditions in the camp are very bad but it is hoped they will be improved shortly. Lieut. G. Jefferson, 2 Sergeants and 23 other ranks of the R.C.E. were attached for duty W.E.F. 22.6.40 and were posted to H.Q. Coy for duty, 1 Sergeant and 9 O.R.'s of this attachment left for duty with the Botwood force.

STB

" " 26.6.40 0600
0600

H.Q. Coy, commenced weapon pits on the airport and a further reconnaissance was made on the west flank inclusive of railroad. It is apparent that the number of men are inadequate for this task as the posts are spread over a considerable area due to the immensity of the landing ground and these are also insufficient to provide a proper reserve.

STB

The density of the woods and underbrush may be judged from the fact that PSM Bleasdale and Sjt Broadhurst, who had had gone on a fishing trip on the afternoon of 25.6.40, were to-day found at Gander Lake at 1430 hours completely lost and very exhausted from hours of wandering yet at no time were they more than three-quarters of a mile from the nearest outpost.

" " 27.6.40 0600
0600

The Commanding Officer and Major Molson proceeded to Botwood to inspect the area there. Aircraft took off for the first time since the arrival of the Black Watch but returned before lunch because of fog. The weather also caused withdrawal of crews from defense posts. Rain in the afternoon soon filled the drainage trenches dug around the tents and seeped into them, however most of the men have constructed beds for themselves from odd bits of lumber and were undismayed

STB

WAR DIARY.

Nfld. Airport, 27.6.40. (Cont'd.)

by the miniature flood.
A consignment of food arrived from Botwood which helped to relieve this rather precarious situation.

DSB

" " 28.6.40. 0600
0600

Wing Commander Reid R.C.A.F. arrived by plane from Halifax in the course of a routine inspection of all airports. He toured the defensive positions and seemed quite satisfied with the precautions taken but took away a great many suggestions with him. The C.O. left for St. John's to visit the Gov't and expects to be away until Monday, it is hoped that this will clean up the status of the Battalion, produce some signs of what the future may hold. At 2030 hours a terrific downpour of rain inundated the camp.

DSB

" " 29.6.40. 0600
0600

Major F.J. Smith arrived at 0130 hours with 44 OR's who had been away on week end leave when the Battalion left Valcartier. In addition the first mail from Canada arrived some 7 large bags. L/Cpl. Mercier, the Battalion post-man worked from 0001 hours until 0600 hours to sort it. As the men have worked unceasingly for two weeks it was the considered opinion of the officers that the coming Church Parade be made voluntary, while this may annoy the Padre the work the men have done under incredibly bad conditions merited a day free from Parades or fatigues.

DSB

App. 5

Strength increase 44, decrease nil.

WAR DIARY.

Nfld. Airport. 30.6.40. 0600
0600

There were no parades or fatigues other than the necessary daily duties. The Church Service held was voluntary as had been previously arranged. A number of men hopped a freight train going west and M.P's were sent after them in the Bud car, eight were brought back and placed in detention. It appears that men, no doubt due to the isolated and desolate area they now occupy in contrast to their previous quarters in Montreal, Toronto, and Valcartier, are getting the urge to wander and strong measures will have to be taken to counteract it. Quite a number of men went fishing and judging by the resultant catch the fish were biting well. The Commanding Officer telephoned and will not be back until Tuesday night. It has been proposed to have the Officer's mess located in the Club House but this cannot be decided upon until the Commanding Officer returns.

S.A.C.

No increase or decrease of strength.

Total strength;- 916 all ranks.

Blackader
T.P.P.