

# **The History of the 23rd Canadian Field Regiment (SP), RCA**

Extracts from 23rd Field Regiment War Diary written by Lieu. Lawrence Smith.

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## **Introduction**

One hot black July night in 1944 a long column of vehicles which, to any onlooker must have resembled great prehistoric monsters, lumbered through the road junction at Wych Cross Sussex and rolled up the highway to London. After being confined to camp for several days awaiting the anticipated order, the 23rd Field Regiment (SP) RCA was on its way.

. . . . Destination - Normandy !

That broad London was the first leg of the long "Green Up" route which those SP's followed throughout the ten months, a route which took the clanking tracks over the dusty, dirt-laden roads of Normandy, the tree lined cobblestones of Belgium and Holland, and the muddy, cratered peat-bog trails of northern Germany.

It has been a long trail - sometimes difficult, other times easy and pleasant-and this is the story of the men and machines of the 23rd who followed the trail till the job was done. This is the tale of the guns and the men who fought the guns, the men who provided the artillery fire so necessary to modern warfare. It makes no claim to completeness, for to be complete every man would have to write his own story. But within the limits of human remembrance and official records, this is the true story of this group of men with "23RCA" on their shoulders, whose motto is "Ubique quo fas et gloria ducunt", and who, in addition, proudly claim: -

**“We’re SP”**

## CHAPTER 1

### PETAWAWA THE RAW MATERIAL

The little tent camp at the southwest end of Petawawa Camp was the real birthplace of the 23rd Cdn Field Regiment RCA. Of course the paper work which initiated the formation of the regiment has been done long before. The order had gone out that a new regiment of artillery was to be created and the work of mobilizing three batteries had commenced early in the spring of 1942.

But it was on the hot sandy plot that the fusion of three separate sub-units, coming from various parts of Ontario into an efficient fighting team was first started. During May, June and July the men - the raw material for any regiment - kept coming in. Some arrived from the artillery training centres; veterans of six months to a year in battledress. Others, few in number had spent several years in England and were looked upon with just a touch of awe by many of the others. But the vast majority were new to the army and half doffed their soot suits with neat pleats in answer to the energetic recruiting campaign carried on in the districts where the three batteries were mobilized.

The "senior" battery, the 31st, had formed part of the 7th (Toronto) Field Regiment (Reserve) and most of its members came from the "big city". Initially the battery was commanded by Major A L Skaith but in June he became Second-in-Command of the Regiment and Major Alan Harper, back from overseas, took over the battery. Many of the men who joined the 31st were sent for basic training to Brantford where under the guidance of Captain John White - more familiarly known as "Uncle John" - they were initiated into the manifold mysteries of the army. After the basic training period they arrived at Petawawa to join the rest of the Regiment.

Simultaneously, a battery was being mobilized in Cobourg Ontario a little town which claims to have turned out one of the highest per capita number of gunners in the province. Commanded by Major H K Walker, back from England, the 36th Battery originally contained a high proportion of Cobourg Officers and most of the men came from the area of Cobourg, Port Hope and Peterborough. However, it was found to be impossible to raise another complete battery from that district and, several months later a large draft from the 26th Field Regiment, a Toronto unit, arrived to fill out the ranks of the 38th. The rest of the regiment had barely heard of Cobourg, referring to it jokingly as the village where the Toronto train stopped only on being flagged, but the little band of men from the lakeshore have always given the 36th a definite "Cobourg flavour" and have made the name of their hometown widely known. Nor have the Port Hope men been very silent!

The junior battery was the 83rd formed largely out of the 8th Field Brigade (reserve) which was the reserve army formation covering Hamilton, Brantford and St Catharines. Recruiting was carried on in these three cities under direction of Major R A Hainsworth who had come back from overseas to form the Battery. In St Catharines and the Niagara district Captain W B C Burgoyne, one of the few original Officers with the regiment at "Cease Fire", did the recruiting.

The 83rd was then and always has been a real Niagara district battery.

## **Sussex Christmas 1942**

Christmas was fast approaching, bringing with it the time when most of the Regiment would be entitled to a two-week furlough. It was decided to send half of the Regiment over Christmas this group to include the married men, with the other half going over New Year.

Those left behind on each occasion managed to celebrate the holiday quite adequately, although the season was somewhat marred by the news that the Commanding Officer was leaving the Regiment. Command was given to Lt. Col. G.W. Wishart who arrived several days before Christmas but did not actually take over until January 9th when Lt. Col. Robertson left. At the Christmas dinner when the Officers and Sergeants served the men their turkey and cranberry sauce, "Jamie" introduced the new C.O. to the Regiment.

Lt. Col. Wishart, who had been chief instructor at A-2 Petawawa, introduced some sweeping changes in the Regiment. Within the next few months all three Battery Commanders left the Regiment because their age would probably prevented them from going overseas again, and a number of the junior officers also left. Major Hainsworth went to Petawawa to take over a training battery and Captain J. Maxwell was promoted to Major to assume command of the 83rd. He had been the original Quartermaster and had subsequently been Battery Captain of the 31st when Capt. Glenn-Murphy became RQM. The adjutant, Captain Peter Chipswick, was promoted and took over the 36th Battery in place of Major H. K. Walker. In April Major Harper left and the 31st was taken over by Major E. M. D. Smith, also from A-2.

Most startling was the order that all ranks would "whiten" their Canada badges forthwith, using white ink or whatever solution Canadian ingenuity could devise. It didn't take Canadian ingenuity long! The perfect whitening process was soon found – after some hideous experimentation – to be white ink to which, when dried, was applied a solution of clear nail polish. This helped prevent smudging and also rendered it water-proof!

Early in the new year the one announcement was made which was to effect the future of the Regiment more than any other. Along with the 19th Field Regiment, the 23rd was to be converted to a Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment and would be re-equipped with the 25 – pounder on a Ram tank chassis. The mounts, already in production, were expected to arrive at any time and the training of the Regiment was to a degree channelled into lines which would prepare it for taking the new equipment into use.

The driver problem was to be the biggest one facing the regiment. With a bit of training anyone could drive a gun tractor. A tank was a different matter, however, and there was no one in the Regiment who knew a bogie from a turret. In late February a large number of drivers and several officers were sent to Camp Borden, the Armoured Training Centre, for a long course in tank driving and maintenance. One of the officers was Captain Roger Murphy who later became technical adjutant, a new appointment in the regiment as a result of the revised war establishment. Other changes in establishment was substitution of drivers tank for drivers wheeled and a substantial increase in number of driver operators, for each mount was equipped with radio and it was thought R/T would play a large part in the deployment of self-propelled equipment.

At the same time GPOPA came into being and called a convention to decide what their fate was to be in the new order of things. The initials stand for Gun Position Officers Protective Association, and the main topic of discussion was the type of vehicle the GPO and CPO were to use. With all this talk of bullet-swept deployment areas and the aggressive deployment of SP's which had lots of protection, the subalterns displayed a rather marked hesitancy about roaming around in universal carriers, 15-cwt trucks or any other thin skinned vehicle.

After considerable discussion it was agreed that some type of armoured vehicle was needed probably along the lines of an SP mount minus the gun and with built in artillery board and other equipment needed to operate a command post. In a request from NDHQ our ideas on the subject were forwarded in the spring of 1943. The thing was almost forgotten, except for a brief moment in England, when one was on display, until March, 1945, in Tilburg, Holland, when a phone call from Div Arty instructed us to pickup six GPO command vehicles. Lo and behold, they were practically the same thing that had been asked for in Sussex two years earlier!

The conversion to self-propelled also involved a change in name, The official new name given the Regiment was **23rd Field Regiment (SP) RCA**. Those two initials in brackets caused a good deal of trouble at first, and a number of letters from fond families were addressed to the 23rd Special Police Regiment!

### **March 1943**

The first SP mount was finally delivered early in April but before then a new Commanding Officer arrived. He was Lt Col K N Lander who arrived one afternoon late in March wearing the maroon patch of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. He had commanded the 17th Field Regiment, RCA in England.

An excellent disciplinarian and training officer, Lt. Col Lander gave the Regiment a thorough look-over before he commenced any changes. When they came some of them were considered very startling and, in fact, caused some discussion among the men but on looking back it is realized that his work was largely responsible for bringing the Regiment to a stage where it was fit to go into action.

First tangible change to emanate from the new CO's office was the order to whiten not only Canada badges but also stripes and badges of any kind. And further, he pointed out, the white paint was not to be just smeared on the stripes, but each tiny herringbone thread was to be whitened individually. The language in the sergeants mess was unfit for human ears for a short while, but when the sergeants appeared in public they were a beautiful sight. Howls and whistles followed them down the street and at night you could distinguish a 23rd NCO while he was still two blocks away! By the time a man had white on his Canada badge, his gun and his rank stripes he had quite an armful.

The CO's Batman, (also L/Bdr and Sgt at various stages of his turbulent career) Hogan, was the most whitened up man in the regiment, especially when he first got a stripe, and he fully earned the title which Lt Col Lander bestowed on him of the "walking Christmas-Tree". Somehow he had earned a fancy MT badge and several good conduct stripes so that his arm looked like New York's "Great White Way".

The officers were all ordered to wear red artillery wedge caps and many were the barely-suppressed smiles which greeted them when they came on parade the first day after that order was issued!

The space between the officers' lines and line of office huts was turned into a parade ground, and once again the trucks were busy hauling crushed gravel. Great emphasis was placed upon foot drill but with a few new quirks such as lifting the foot high and stamping it down on the turns and halts. Every drill move was done to the count with everyone counting aloud until they could do it together. The parade ground and drill hall were scenes of pandemonium with several squads simultaneously shouting out "Hup-two-three" as they right turned or about turned or halted. Regimental route marches and parades were instituted as a weekly feature and within a short time every foot in the regiment stamped down as one on the order "Halt", setting up a crack that echoed as far as Moncton.

Every Saturday morning was devoted to a regimental inspection in full battle order, each Battery stood rigidly at attention while it was being inspected, and when the CO passed on to the next it stood rigidly at ease. On a hot day an average of about five men (and officers) would keel over. It was considered tough but it gave the Regiment a smartness and discipline and a life-long hate for Blanco and Silvo which had previously been lacking.

## **April 1943**

The arrival of the first self-propelled mount marks the end of a phase in the 23rd's history and the opening of another phase which was not to end until the equipment was turned in after "Cease Fire" in Europe.

At first many were sceptical, including the New Brunswick Department of Highways who took an exceedingly dim view of these overgrown monsters chewing up their roads and knocking down their bridges. However before long all the officers and men were wholeheartedly in favour of the mounts as opposed to the towed guns. The Department of Highways, it is feared, remained sceptical!

Suitable deployment areas for the mounts were a problem at first, but soon a good area was found near Penobsquis, a few miles southeast of Sussex. It was a rough scrubby area with no cultivation and no buildings. Here troop crash actions were practiced incessantly for at that time it was thought that self-propelled equipment would be deployed in bullet-swept areas and with a need for utmost speed. The general idea was that the GPO, travelling some distance ahead of his troop, would immediately find a deployment area on receipt of the order to go into action.

He would position his vehicle in the designated zero line, and if time permitted, would set out two stakes by means of which the first mount to hit the position would drive up and be "on line". This procedure was substituted (?) made necessary because the mounts did not have compasses in them. When they were equipped with them they would drive on to the position and halt on the bearing passed out by radio to them. Once the first gun was in position it could start ranging, at the time passing an angle to the GPO director which, it was hoped, would be mounted in his vehicle. He in turn would pass angles to the remaining three guns to put them parallel to Number One.

History has shown that there was rarely the space or the occasion for deploying by this method in action, but the time spent in evolving this drill was not wasted. After a few weeks a troop could get into action in very short order and was unhampered by fences, small ditches, trees and other obstacles. If there were any trees in the way the mounts simply knocked them down, a most valuable accomplishment at times. When Charlie Troop first deployed after the Caen breakthrough, four telephone poles had to be knocked down this way and it reminded everyone of the way the tall timber used to crash down at old Penobsquis.

No one was quite sure how strong the New Brunswick bridges were especially the many rickety wooden covered bridges, so that every trip with the mounts meant a thorough recce of routes around bridges. The mounts use to go through most of the rivers, but no matter how careful a recce was made, somehow some mount always knocked the railing off a bridge, damaged a farmers field, tore his fence down, broke a culvert. Therefore, every deployment or move had to be followed next day by a road or fence building party which spent most of its time wishing they could get to Germany and really knock things down.

Through the CO's efforts a live firing range was made near Penobsquis and permission obtained from NDHQ to proceed with actual firing. The OP was near the rangers tower on a hill in the practice deployment area and the gun position which with squeezing would accommodate a battery was just off the road about 4000 yards distant.

A considerable amount of simple course shooting was done here and both the, OP and gun position personnel learned a great deal. The GPOs seemed to make more mistakes than the others, however, and after the first days shooting most of them trembled in fear at the words "GPO to the set" which would thunder down over the R/T after someone had fired on "fire by order" or some such error. The CO's wrath was the topic of the regiment and it seemed to reach its height when blasting GPO's. It took Lieu Bill Buchner to send it to previously un-recorded levels, however, when after a five minute blast over the radio from the CO he blandly answered "Hello Roger 3, say again, over".

After Col Lander arrived the Regiment ran into name trouble again. It was his feeling that since we had become more or less mounted we should bear the designation "Royal Canadian Horse Artillery" Anyone versed in Artillery tradition will realize the furore with which this was bound to be greeted. The title "RCHA" was a permanent force name and the only Regiment to use it was the 1st Field Regiment, the original PF Regiment.

Somehow permission was obtained to change the name to 23rd SP Regiment RCHA, and RCHA shoulder badges blossomed forth on all battledress. The Officers appeared with the traditional ball buttons on their serge uniforms. Except for a few humorous remarks and horse-laughs from other units nothing happened at all, but it was simply the lull before the storm. The furore was to burst out on arrival of the Regiment in England.

Towards the end of June it appeared that the long awaited trip across the sea might soon materialize. The number of troop trains passing through Sussex was increasing daily. Rumours were flying about furiously.

Something was in the air.

## **Tracadie**

### **June 26th – July 11th 1943**

A final practice camp period at Tracadie was arranged with each battery going up in turn. The 36th went up first on June 26th and the third battery had completed its practice and was back in Sussex on July 11th where the warning order to proceed overseas had been received. We were to be ready by July 16th.

The Tracadie practice was of great benefit as a last minute workout, and it is interesting to note that brigade had to lay on 12000 gallons of high octane petrol for the mounts to cavort around the ranges there. No wonder this war cost money!

Tracadie had its tragic side too, for in a road accident on the trip up Gunner Mouncey was killed.

After returning to Sussex the regiment's time was spent doing the million and one things necessary before boarding ship. Take the little detail of kitbags, for example. Paint your name, rank and number and the Regiment's serial on the side of the kitbags said the first instruction. All kitbags were duly painted. No No, said the second order, paint out the rank and number. So that was done. Ah!, there has been a great mistake, said order number three. The name, rank, and number must be painted on the bottom so that when the kitbags are all piled up a man can find his own easily. By the time the regiment embarked every bag was covered with blue, black and brown paint blotches, and no one now quite remembers what was painted on them - or where!

The necessary documentation, medical checks, security instructions, packing details and trial turn outs in full equipment were eventually got through, along with numerous route marches which, in that hot weather, always ended up with a "birthday suit" swim in the river.

### **July 20th 1943**

July 20th finally arrived. The great hush – hush move was out at hand. Of course, nobody in the town knew about it! Officers and Sergeants messes had paid up all their bills and that in itself was enough to let Sussex know that something important was stirring. Every drugstore in town was sold out of toothpaste, shaving cream, and razor blades, officers and men had been changing dollar bills for sterling drafts at the bank; huge overseas boxes were sitting down by the railway siding in plain view of one of the town's main streets. But, of course, it was a secret move!

Just how widespread was the knowledge of our move was shown when the Regiment moved down to the train shortly before midnight. With the exception of Fox Troop, RCCS, who had left that morning, the men had been standing around since supper time, fully packed. All the barracks had been scrubbed, closed and securely locked and everything was in order, except for Easy Troop who had left all the lights burning in their hut! About 11 o'clock the march began down to the train which was sitting on a siding in front of the main camp gate. The column reached the gate to find hundreds of people lining the street – wives, children, friends, - all came to say goodbye to the 23rd.

Slowly the train pulled out and the men settled down to sleep or shoot craps. When morning came the train was steaming into Halifax. As it came to a stop by the docks, huge funnels could



be seen protruding above the dock warehouse. "It must be the Queen Mary or the Queen Elizabeth" the excited buzz went around. It was the Lizzie and the 23rd crammed its way in with 16000 other troops who filled every nook and cranny of this great luxury liner, now turned warrior.

## **Halifax**

### **July 23rd 1943**

It was not until the afternoon of July 23rd that the huge ship finally moved away from the pier, passed through the submarine boom and set off alone across the broad Atlantic. Comfort was certainly not the keynote of the crossing, and lack of comfort was compensated for by excellent meals and a quick unescorted four-day trip from port to port. One moved by order on that ship and according to definite traffic regulations. A loudspeaker system blared instructions about meals, boat drill and changeover of personnel all day long. Americans staffed the ship in part and "line up for chow" became the most familiar and favourite order. You ate huge meals twice a day at times stated on the meal card issued to you at the start of the trip.

Due to overcrowding the men spent 24 hours in cabins and then would change over with another group and spend 24 hours on deck. During the deck period they had to sleep in the corridors inside and were extremely uncomfortable.

The voyage passed with little incident, apart from the good news that Mussolini had resigned. The only signs of other human beings during those four days was an occasional flying boat and as we neared Britain, a few fighter planes.

The officers were given 24 hour-a-day dissertation on what to do and how in England and the "perils of sea travel" by Captain John Monahan and Lieu's Sam Pinkerton and Carl Rombold, all of whom had been in England before. Much to their disappointment no subs attacked the ship, and they doubtless felt personally annoyed at Hitler for rendering all their dire predictions about the terrors of wartime ocean trips false.

## **Scotland**

### **July 27th 1943**

One lovely summer evening, with the setting sun painting the hills and clouds a gorgeous hue, the giant liner slipped into Gourock harbour in Scotland and dropped anchor. It was 2030 hours 27th July 1943. The Regiment was overseas.

They're here!

## **Chapter 2**

### **Eastbourne**

Eastbourne turned out to be a beautiful seaside city, nestled behind the great promontory of Beachy Head. Great hotels lined the boardwalk "Grand Parade" which ran for several miles along the seafront. Most of them were closed due to damage from air attacks, and the others were being used as billets for the army and WAAF personnel who were stationed in the city. A large part of the civilian population had been evacuated and it was into their homes in the western end of the city known as Meads Village that the 23rd moved.

The only other Canadian unit in Eastbourne at the time was the 6th LAA Regiment. At a later date the 8th and 19th Field Regiments moved in, along with some 5 Div Infantry, but they stayed only a few weeks..

The regiment was without equipment when it reached Eastbourne so that the first six weeks were devoted to brushing up basic training subjects, foot drill, route marches and general hardening up. The Downs provided excellent material for any hardening activities, for simply to climb from the street beside Roger or Queen Batteries to the top of the Downs was enough to ruin most men. One couldn't go anywhere in Eastbourne without having to climb at least one good sized hill.

A regular weekly feature for each troop was a bath and swim parade at the public Devonshire Baths down on the front. For sixpence you could have a private bath and then swim in the pool: wearing a moth-eaten Gay Nineties bathing suit which cost another few pence.

### **August 15th 1943**

Shortly after the Regiment got to Eastbourne, Major R E Hogarth arrived to take over the appointment of 2 IC and Major A L Skait took over the 36th whose BC, Major Chipswick did not come overseas with the unit.

Within five days of arriving in Eastbourne the first group of men were away on privilege leave, with Scotland apparently in priority spot, as the place most Canadians want to see first. At the same time courses got cracking and on August 15th a party of 68 officers and men left for a driving and maintenance course at an armoured corps training centre. A number of other unfortunate souls were despatched on a battle-drill course which almost killed them. They all survived the rigours of the course and returned to the unit in top physical condition, eager to try out newly acquired tricks on the unsuspecting remainder of the Regiment.

During the fall an intensive course of instruction for gun position officers and aables was started under the guidance of Major C.F Martineau who was attached to the regiment as IG with the aim of raising it to battle worthy level. Considerable technical work was covered and the drill for Mike (regimental) targets was given to us for the first time.

In Canada there had been no attempt at regimental deployments and the drill had not been taught. In Eastbourne, however, it was perfected. Each Battery would set up a command post in their area, line would be laid, R/T communication maintained, and the entire procedure for firing Mike targets - minus the firing of the guns - was run through time and again.

The spirit of competition entered in as each battery vied with the others for the honour of being first ready. The 31st battery command post staff, under their GPO Lieutenant Kim McIlroy; always seemed to lead the regiment in those days. The other batteries even resorted to sending spies around to watch them in action, but they never found the secret nor could they obtain anything to substantiate their friendly accusations of cheating.

Command post staffs who have had to work on a 24-hour a day basis throughout European operations will appreciate a little item which appeared in operation orders for one of those numerous command post exercises in England.

Para 3. Com'd Post staffs will not exceed normal personnel to be expected in action, ie, CPO, ACPO, 4 CPOA's and one officer or able from each troop.

A far cry from nights in action when it was often difficult to have one officer and two ables in the command post.

### **September 3rd 1943**

Meanwhile by the end of October the Regiment was fully equipped with mounts. Five mounts had arrived on September 3rd, four of them going to Charlie troop who were the first men to enter the Battle of the Stirrup Pumps. Enough water was poured onto the mounts through that winter to drain the English Channel and eliminate the need for a cross-channel invasion, but no doubt the heavy rainfall of the British Isles was the factor which allowed the channel to retain its normal level.

Throughout October deployments were practiced on the Downs and the Regiment started going to the Alfriston Ranges for course shooting almost every week. Fog, rain, cold winds off the sea and equally cold haversack lunches seem to make up the main memory of those days - mostly Sundays! - at Alfriston. The Regiment would usually start moving from Eastbourne about 0430hrs after a big Saturday night. Out over the Downs and along the coast road through Seaford and Newhaven might be the route, or, depending upon the deployment area the column might head out through Old Town and Polgate. No matter which route it was always cold. And it was colder still up on the high ground where the OP and the guns were always located.

Despite the uncomfortable conditions the Regiment learned a lot during those course shoots, both at the guns and at the OP. Shoots of all types were done there – Mike targets, battery, smoke and HE plans of complex natures, and the usual variety of neutralization and destructive shoots. The favourite target was "Toronto Crater" a huge dew-pond on the side of a ridge about 4000 yds from the OP. Lieutenant S M Pinkerton made a name for himself one day by dropping his first ranging round plum in the crater.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Exercise Jing**

The New Year came and went, with the regiment still in Eastbourne and the whole world starting to wonder about the so-called Second Front.

By now the Regiment was a fairly smooth operating unit. The usual training program continued without letup and huge quantities of water were still being sloshed on tracks, hulls and suspensions in what was supposed to be maintenance. Through a change in vehicle organization, the GPO's and OP officers were now equipped with Ram command tanks with troop leaders riding in universal carriers. This was still by no means the perfect state of affairs as far as they were concerned for it did not give them a vehicle which could be used as a temporary command post, and the tanks proved to be most cumbersome for loading and unloading the command post equipment. The CPO and ACPO each had carriers at this stage and they too were quite unsatisfactory.

The method for deployment of an SP regiment was fairly firm by this time, and differed very little from that of a towed regiment, with the big exception that wagon lines and manhandling were eliminated. In a normal SP troop deployment the GPO on the recce planted four flags to mark the gun platform. These flags were coloured, from the right, red, yellow, blue and green. (Earlier one had been white but it was thought the displaying of white flags on the field of battle would be an unhealthy practise). In line with each of these flags the GPO, using a compass, planted another flag of corresponding colour to show the line of fire. As the guns approached, led by the troop leader each gun Sergeant directed his mount onto the appropriate marker depending upon which flank the approach had been from. In this way the four guns were roughly on zero line immediately and were ready to receive accurate line from the director. Battery and regimental problems were exactly the same as in any other regiment.

### **February 1944**

In February a large sized scheme for the 4th Armoured Division of which we were now a full-fledged part, was evolved calling for an armoured advance from the Eastbourne area to Salisbury Plain. It was designed to give practice in the handling of an armoured formation on a single thrust line, and to the average gunner it seemed to be one great Traffic snarl. However, it brought out sharply the problems of road space, deployment sufficiently forward to be effective, traffic control and supply demands.

The deployment area allotted the regiment on the first night was probably one of the worst ever seen, even in action. It was in a wild area overgrown with thick brush and out by a deep ravine. The battery furthest from the road had to push its way about a mile down the winding ravine and then send its mounts up a steep hill onto the plateau above. No wheeled vehicles could make the gradient so that all the petrol for replenishing eight guns and two tanks after a day's travelling had to be slugged by hand up the hill. And that was in the days before the easy-to-handle Jerry can had made its appearance.

The scheme named Exercise Jing, ended on February 13th with a deployment of divisional artillery on the plains of Larkhill and the firing of a barrage, after which the Regiment stayed at the camp for several days to do normal course shooting. The centre line near Larkhill was

jammed with traffic for several miles and nobody thought the artillery would ever get through to deploy. By some wonder (and spurred on by the Brigadier's wrath) we finally got into action.

## **Larkhill**

### **February 1944**

It was during the practice camp that Captain Bob Lucas, given a target to engage 6000 yards from the OP, set up the record of using 40 ranging rounds before going into fire for effect. Discussing it that night in his tent, his GPO said "It was too bad the CORA had to be at the gun position for that shoot". "What do you mean?" asked Captain Lucas, "He was up at the OP for that shoot". "Well, he was certainly down at the command post and asked me if I knew what you were shooting at" answered the GPO. On comparing notes they found that the Brigadier had watched the first part of the shoot from the gun position and had then travelled up by jeep to the OP where he was in time to see about the last ten ranging rounds. It took a long time for Captain Lucas to live down the "Forty Round Wonder" name which Captain Donohue promptly hung on him.

The famous incident whereby L/Bdr Hogan managed to cover all the CO's belongings with thick black soot took place in the tent line after Jing. It seems he left the oil stove burning very high in the CO's tent then went away. When he returned there was soot and coal oil all over the tent, with an extra-special thickness on the CO's white sheepskin jacket. It was quite a race to see if Hogan resigned or got fired first, but the story has it that he got his resignation in about five seconds before the CO fired him. The best part of the incident was Gnr Forrest's classic remark: "That's what comes from putting an NCO in charge".

## **Eastbourne**

### **February 1944**

Back to Eastbourne went the Regiment by road convoy, although the mounts and the tanks went by transporter. The rest of the month turned out to be a period of numerous inspections and speeches by important people. Major-General Worthington, who was leaving the Division, spoke to the Division and introduced his successor Major-General Kitching. For this parade, as for most others, we were formed up in a huge hollow square, on a field just near Pippingford Park. Lieu-General Guy Simmonds, Corps Commander, also inspected the Division there and several days later addressed all the officers in the Division in a theatre in Brighton. On February 29th General Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, C in C, 21st Army Group, and one of the legendary military figures of our time, inspected 4th Division, and finally on March 9th His Majesty, King George VI carried out an inspection.

Towards the end of February, the rumours about a move started circulating again. There's one thing about army rumours, they may be fanciful and far-fetched, and there may be many varied ones floating about at the same time, but it is usually true that when rumours start something at any rate is going to happen.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Pippingford Park**

#### **March 1944**

Pippingford Park in March was a muddy couple of acres, filled with trees and Nissen huts, set out in the middle of nowhere. After the comparative luxury and civilization of Eastbourne it was rather a rude shock. But as better weather came things looked much brighter. Further-more it had the advantage of bringing the Regiment closer together for in Eastbourne life had been lived more on a battery basis with separate battery messes and so on. While there were separate battery messes in Pippingford, regimental messes were set up for the officers and the sergeants. There was a regimental YMCA and NAAFI . Sports on a unit basis were easy to arrange. All in all , it did a lot to develop regimental spirit.

Pippingford park was situated about two miles from Nutley (where there was one pub and part of the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment) fifteen miles from Hayward's Heath (where there was the nearest train to London) twelve miles from East Grinstead (where there was movies, tennis courts and a spot to dance) and about twenty miles from Tunbridge Wells (where there were several movies and an excellent Saturday afternoon tea dance). Within the circle of these four places there was little except uncultivated heath land; excellent for deployment practice, and many small schemes on battery level were held there.

The “Y” Supervisor, Jerry Hadcock, managed to keep plenty of things going at the “Y” Hut and the Regiment for the first time was put on the entertainment circuit for Canadian Army Shows and ENSA performances.

## **Lydd**

### **April 1st – 3rd 1944**

A two-day visit to Lydd ranges in Kent for antitank firing and general training took place on 1 Apr, the unit moving there in convoy and spending two hectic days keeping up with an exacting timetable. In addition to some good anti-tank practice, full use was made of facilities for small arms firing, tank and aircraft recognition, and mines and booby-traps training. Every moment of the day seemed to be accounted for, and during the change-over period it took half a dozen people to ensure that each group got to the correct place for the next phase.

On the trip down and back the convoy was given practice in ack-ack defence when fighter planes “strafed” the column. It was lucky it was only make-believe because the planes were usually well past by the time everyone tumbled out and got Bren Guns sited.

During April one Captain was called for the proceed on a paratroop course with a view to becoming a forward observation officer with the paratroop forces. Captain Bob Hamilton won (?) the toss and left on the four week course. Shortly before he returned two other officers were called for this training. It was to be on a voluntary basis and almost all the lieutenants and captains put up their names. The CO announced in the mess at lunch one day that Captain Jim Kane and Lieutenant Larry Smith would go on the course. Once they had been picked up off the floor and revived, they started to get some condition for the supposedly-rigorous course. A number of signallers also went with the officers to Ringway, Lancs, where the courses were held. Everyone qualified by making the necessary eight jumps from balloons and aircraft with the exception of one signaller who injured his knee on a jump. The all returned to the Regiment

proudly wearing their paratroop wings on their tunics. Captain Hamilton and several of the OR's were eventually called on to join an RA forward observation unit but the others remained with the Regiment.

Towards the end of May the task of waterproofing all of the vehicles and equipment was started. All other training ceased. Invasion was in the air. Unit censorship had come into effect on April 8th. Most of the southern and Eastern coast had been made banned areas and no one knew where 3rd Division, recognized as our assault division, was. By then it was pretty generally accepted that 4th Division would not be in one of the invasion but would probably enter the bridgehead to spearhead a breakthrough.

By now there had been several further changes in officer personnel. Major C R Ostrander took over the 83rd Battery from Major Maxwell who returned to Canada along with Major Skaith. Major R D Telford arrived to take command of the 36th. The 31st was still under the command of Major Robertson, Major G V H Naylor, who later acted as a Battery Commander and 2 IC, was then carried as special increment along with a number of Lieutenants.

Waterproofing proved to be a major job, aggravated by the fact that a number of mounts were replaced after waterproofing had started and the regiment was given a number of half-tracks. Several of the troops got new mounts when the rest of the regiment had finished waterproofing and they had to work night and day to finish the task in the required time. A tremendous amount of metal had to be added to each mount to render it water proof, the sides being heightened by several feet and huge intake and exhaust funnels being fastened onto the rear decks.

GPO's, CPO's, ACPO's and BC's were all equipped with half-tracks during the last month. This move was greeted with joy by all concerned for the half-tracks were armoured vehicles, gave good performance on rough ground, had ample stowage space and in emergencies could be used as command posts. The adjutant's vehicle was also a half-track, supplied by the RCCS troop and equipped with two radios, one on the regimental net and one on the rear link to divisional artillery and other regiments.

Mention of the RCCS troop brings up the subject of two other attached sub-units who have been integral parts of the regiment and have contributed in untold measure to the successful functioning of the 23rd – the Signal Troop and the LAD.

Fox troop of 2 Squadron, 4 Div Signals has been attached to the Regiment since Sussex days. Their responsibility has been the laying and maintenance of the lines to the batteries, and to Div artillery, and the operation of RHQ radio sets. In addition the troop provided DRLS, and has generally been in there pitching when any communication problems came up. The troop was first in charge of Lieutenant N R Rae who went to headquarters while in Eastbourne and was replaced by Lieutenant Harold Whincup. When he was promoted in Belgium and went to another regiment., his place was taken by Lieutenant Norm Scott. At Christmas time he became quite ill in Holland and Lieutenant Stan Steben came from Rear Div to take over the troop and was still with it when "crease fire" was sounded in May.

Another of the Signal troops responsibilities was the operation of the radio sets in the CO's tank and half-track while he worked as CRA's rep at 4 Bde headquarters in action. Two operators and a driver worked constantly with him and went the whole show from Normandy to Germany, hitting plenty of tough spots enroute.

The Light Aid Detachment (LAD) has been responsible for the heavy work of keeping the Regiments vehicles on the road and its guns in action, a big task 'in a war of movement such has been fought in north-west Europe. They worked at any time of night or day to effect repairs or recover vehicles, and it was through their efforts that the regiment was always in running condition and could always count upon having a maximum number of guns in action.

The first LAD officer to take over 104 LAD was Captain Don Eddy who was followed in Sussex by Captain Murry Waley. In Eastbourne Captain Ted Gordon took over the LAD and held that position until the spring of 1945 when, after doing a fine job in action he became LAD officer at div artillery. Lieutenant Roy Paul took cover the job for a short while and when he was promoted Lieutenant Al Clark came to take charge of the detachment.

While at Pippingford Park the regiment participated in a great number of skeleton schemes on a divisional level, as well as many smaller schemes in cooperation with the armoured regiments which we would be supporting in action. Most of these schemes were staged to exercise one particular group or to bring out one special lesson. The CO, Adjutant and three FOOs went on Exercise Jill early in April, a two signal exercise "to practise Div and Bde HQ in operations".

#### **April 1944**

Several days later the whole Regiment was involved in Exercise Step in which we did actual firing over the infantry at Alfriston. Based on a tactical picture which had the Allies holding a firm bridgehead on the south coast, the exercise was designed to practice commanders and staffs in handling of troops (a) in breaking out of a bridgehead, (b) in advancing the div in a single thrust line, (c) in crossing a river obstacle and (d) in the assault of an enemy position using live ammunition. This type of training was absolutely essential in view of our future role in France and proved of immense value.

#### **Pippingford Park**

##### **May 1944**

Several large inspections were held in May, the first being May 16th when Prime Minister King reviewed the whole Division in a mounted march past, and the second on May 29th when the supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, inspected the Division.

##### **June 6th 1944**

On a fine morning in June the men were broken off morning parade and went over to the vehicle park to continue the arduous task of waterproofing. Suddenly all work ceased. Little groups gathered around each mount to hear the great news coming out of the loudspeakers. It was General Eisenhower telling the world that the Allies that morning had landed on the supposedly impregnable beaches of Europe and were at that moment fighting their way inland. The greatest and most powerful assault of all time had been launched that peaceful morning while the birds sang in the sunlit trees of Pippingford Park.

A slight feeling of disappointment at missing the big show was soon offset by the realization that it would be our turn soon. The CO briefed all the officers giving them some details of the



Regiments role in France and announced that the Division would probably go about D plus 25. The warning order for service overseas was read to all ranks by the CO on June 9th.

Meanwhile another diversion appeared to keep our minds occupied. One night a terrific roar was heard over-head, waking everyone but seen by no one. In the daylight the same roar was heard and a plane-shaped object went streaking across the sky at terrific speed, spitting fire from its tail. One of Hitler's promised secret weapons had come true.

The official name finally given to this weapon was the V1, but it was called a variety of names – flying bombs, pilotless planes, buzz-bombs. Pippingford and the surrounding district seemed to be on the main track of the bombs as they streaked from the coast to the metropolis of London. A tremendous amount of ack-ack was moved to the area, barrage balloons were put up to form a big defence belt for London, and speedy fighters hovered around ready to dive on the buzz-bombs and shoot them down. A number of them crashed in the area, coming to earth with a terrific explosion.

### **July 1st 1944**

Towards the end of June it was decided to send the Regiment out into the fields and woods to live under canvas until we embarked for France. Bad weather and tough resistance had slowed up the bridgehead and as a result our entry had been greatly delayed. The three weeks under canvas were excellent for they gave everyone a chance to find out how to be comfortable in the field, and allowed us to perfect our field cooking, sanitation and so on. The batteries were to be harboured in separate areas and were to have no more equipment or canvas than they would under operations conditions. And so on the 1st July the Regiment left the last barracks it was ever to occupy.

## **Chapter Seven Into The Field**

### **July 1st 1944**

The area chosen for the deployment of the Regiment was only about a mile or so from Pippingford Park between Wych Cross and Chelwood Gate. It was raining when we moved in which soaked everything right from the start, but a few hot sunny days fixed that up and on the whole everybody was very comfortable.

There was little doing during those last three weeks. No one knew for sure when the Regiment would leave but word was expected at any time. All the vehicles, radio sets and artillery instruments had been completely waterproofed before we got there. Wading trials in the pool at Maresfield had been successful, although the CO's HUP drowned on its first two attempts to go through the water. Surplus kit had been sent off to kit storage depot. What remained was packed and loaded. Maps for Normandy had been issued. Everything was set.

Sports and a few route marches made up the daytime activities while at night the batteries each ran liberty trucks to East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells. A lot of the men went on 24 hour passes, although travel was restricted to a twenty-mile radius. However by judiciously making out passes to Purley or Polegate, numerous 23rd lads were able to reach London or Eastbourne.

As of July 15th the Regiment was placed on 6 hours notice and it was announced that the move to a marshalling camp in East London would take place on the 18th. The advance party consisting of Major Hogarth, Lieutenant Buchner and Gunner Rockefeller had already departed via Portsmouth.

### **July 18th 1944**

The tracked convoy left at 2300 hours while the wheeled vehicles pulled out four hours later. By noon the regiment was completely in the camp at Wanstead Common, putting final waterproofing touches to the vehicles, with the exception of Captain Monohan's tank obligingly conked out in the middle of London.

## **PART III NORTH WEST EUROPE – THE FINAL PRODUCT**

### **Chapter 1 Across The Channel London July 1944**

With buzz-bombs dropping much too close for comfort the Regiment was quite happy to leave that sun-baked marshalling camp and board the transport ships which were to take us across the channel to France. The huge loading job took sometime, so that two nights were spent in the camp, but finally all the men were checked on board, and one by one the ships eased down the Thames to a point off Gravesend where the convoy formed up.

The hard vehicles were on two LST's (landing ship tank) in charge of Major Telford and Major Robertson, while the soft vehicles were on MT's (motor transport ships) under Lieutenant Col Lander and Major Ostrander. Some were American ships where the men enjoyed the best in rations, coffee, American cigarettes and movies. Those on British ships ate strictly COMPO rations and drank enough tea to wash down the decks twice a day. Sleeping was done in hammocks, each man being issued a hammock and a lifebelt as he went on board. The bent backs after one night's sleep revealed that the army is not adept at slinging hammocks in the approved navy fashion.

After several days at anchor in the Thames estuary the convoy slipped down to the open sea on the evening of July 24th making the dangerous run through the Straits of Dover during blackness. Next afternoon the coast of France, almost blocked off by a mass of ships of all description, came into sight. Barrage balloons hung suspended over the beaches and over the water too, their slender cables fastened to winches on tiny tugs.

### **France July 25th 1944**

Landing was not to commence until the following day and the ships lay about two miles off shore for the night. The display of fireworks that night was magnificent. Search-lights cut the sky in every direction in an effort to pick out the raiders which Jerry kept sending over the highly valuable fleet standing off shore. Tracer from shore and ship guns blazed weird and colourful

patterns across the black night sky. Out on the horizon naval guns from mighty battleships sent salvos crashing across the water to land on some enemy target far inland.

The following morning the unloading and loading began. Little LCT's came along side to receive the vehicles which were slung out of the hold and over the side by huge cranes. The vehicles, suspended in nets in the air, looked like little toys not the instruments which the allied armies were to sweep across Europe. As each LCT was filled a group of men clambered down rope ladders and rode ashore with it.

Ironically after weeks of toil and sweat (if not blood) at the risk of waterproofing, the only thing that got wet were the tyres and the tracks! The skippers ran their craft right up onto the beach or else stopped in ankle-deep water.

Once ashore the vehicles had to keep moving to clear the beach. Those who came off with their vehicles were lucky for the first concentration area was several miles inland near Ranville. After most of the Regiment had been in the area for several hours, had completed de-waterproofing and had enjoyed a wonderful swim and bath in the creek, Lieutenant Jack Blain dragged himself and some thirty weary bodies into the lines. Much to their disgust they had to march all the way from the beach. And it was plenty hot!

## **Meauvaines 27th July 1944**

By night the Regiment moved from that area to a concentration area recce by the advance party near the little town of Meauvaines, not far from the coast. Everyone was in the area by the night of the 27th and there we sat, waiting for the order that would start the fireworks as far as the 23rd was concerned.

## **Chapter 2 Easing into Action**

It didn't take much waiting before the Regiment found itself ordered to go into the line for the first time. The CRA called for recce parties to move up to Caen the afternoon of July 28th to prepare the way for the Regiment to take over from 3rd Division artillery the next day. They left on half an hour's notice and then parked on one of the main streets of southern Caen for an hour while someone started changing plans. Eventually all vehicles were turned around the column returned to Meauvaines

The first move revealed the utter destruction which modern warfare brings and no place showed it more clearly than Caen. Further it pointed out two facts - first, the dust was going to be one of our worst enemies and second, things were going to get "snafued" in action just like they used to be on schemes.

## **Caen July 29th 1944**

During the night word came that the Regiment would relieve one of the 7 British Armoured Division regiments so at the crack of dawn the recce parties started out again. As they reached the gun positions south of Caen and overlooked by enemy held IF's shelling started to get pretty

heavy. From spots of safety under half-tracks and in slit trenches the members of the recce party began to have some doubts about Major General Kitching's famous statement in England that he would "ease us into action". Shelling, when it is your first experience, can be most demoralizing! And though one feels a trifle foolish clawing the earth the first few times, one soon realizes, that it pays to dive for a hole and dive fast!

The apparent nonchalance and casual air of the Desert Rats rather disconcerted the relieving men who were as green as their divisional patch, but by late afternoon the Regiment was in action and starting to get the feel of things. Needless to say, all command posts were dug in and each gun crew had large slit trenches. And we noticed that despite their seeming nonchalance, the veteran Desert Rats had clung to mother Earth just as much as we had when that old "whistle and crump" was heard!

### **Mondeville July 30th 1944**

Next day the Division was ordered to relieve 3rd Division as originally been planned, the regiment took over gun for gun from several batteries of the 13th and 14th Field Regiments south of Caen, with RHQ at Mondeville. OP's were established at Four, Soliers and Grentheville and came in for a heavy pasting from enemy guns and mortars. The gun position got their share of attention too, and for a week everyone lived pretty well underground.

The tactical situation at the time showed the enemy dominating the high ground south of Caen, with plenty of tanks and a strong anti-tank defence screen. His defence line was pinned on Fontenay-le-Marmion, Roquancourt, Tilly-la-Campagne and LaHogue. The cream of the German army, liberally thickened with SS and panzer troops, was holding that Caen anchor. To the west the Americans were breaking fast into Brittany taking advantage of the fact that Monty had the bulk of the crack German divisions lined up near Caen. The German Command realized the necessity of holding the Caen end of their line as a pivot to swing back their entire defensive line which the Yanks were pushing in the west.

The enemy strength in front of us was clearly revealed by a number of abortive attempts to take LaHogue and Tilly during the first weeks we were there. Captain Donohue lost one tank and was almost buried by a mortar within a few days and begin to figure that being in an OP had its drawbacks. A lot of other people agreed with him!

During the static period south of Caen the Regiment polished up its organization, got used to shelling, and became accustomed to working on shifts at half-strength, a point never practiced enough in training. All day and night heavy counter battery and harassing fire tasks were fired, and a number of small fire plans were laid on for probing attacks to determine enemy strength.

On 3rd August Lieutenant Doug Short survey officer, had to survey in the armoured regiments for indirect firing, a task which has been annoying survey officers of the regiment ever since.

### **Chapter Three Caen to Falaise Caen August 7th 1944**

It was recognized by all that this static state of affairs could not last much longer, and on 7th August one of the epic and decisive battles of the European war was launched – the breakout from the Caen perimeter and the push down the broad straight road to Falaise. Route Nationale 158 – where death walked the way once taken by summer tourists. A short 29 kilometres, which was the “last road” for so many who died while the August sun shimmered on the golden wheat fields.

Operation Totalize was the name given to this memorable attack in which the First Canadian Army came into being as a fighting formation. Resources available for the operation consisted of 4th Canadian Armoured Division, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, the Polish Armoured Division, 51st (Highland) Infantry Division, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, 33rd British Armoured Brigade and 2nd and 9th AGRAs. The intention was to smash through the enemy position astride the Caen – Falaise road and capture the high ground north of Falaise.

Phase One called for 2nd Canadian Infantry Division and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade pushing on the right and 51 ( H ) Div and 33 Arm'd Bde on the left to capture a general line through Caillouet, Gaumesnil and the woods south of St Aignan de Crammesnil. Then on Phase Two 4 Cdn Arm'd Div was to pass through 2 Div and capture the high feature formed by hills 180, 195 and 206 south of Brettville-le-Rabet, while the Polish Div passed through on the left and captured the high ground north of Falaise. 3 Div would relieve the force at Falaise.

Air support consisted of RAF Bomber Command on Phase One, with RAF medium bombers on Phase Two, while 83 Group TAF with fighter-bombers and rocket-firing Typhoons were on call constantly and the USAAF was also laid on for a bombing job in the later phases.

With large resources at his command Lieutenant General Simonds executed a further brilliant piece of strategy by mounting the attack at night, employing armour in darkness and sending the infantry through the German defence positions in armoured vehicles.

One half-hour before midnight on a perfect summer evening the curtain went up on one of the most dramatic operations of the war in Europe. Out of the sky from England came the drone of heavy bombers hundreds upon hundreds of them. As they loosed their bombs the earth grumbled and shook and great belches of orange flame shot into the sky ahead.

Then at midnight the guns, which Monty has always use to the full before any attack, opened up a terrific barrage which made speech and even thought almost impossible. From every quarter of the horizon flashes illuminated the scene as the artillery of three division and two AGRA's broke loose. Searchlights were switched on to provide “artificial moonlight” as the great barrage died into silence the infantry and the tanks moved forward. The Canadian Army was on its way down the duty road to Falaise that road where thousands fought and many died in the battle which broke the back of the German Forces in France.

## **Caen August 8th 1944**

The guns of the 23rd had been busier that night than ever before as they did their bit in the fire plan to prepare the way for the men on the ground. An hour or so after the barrage ceased the Regiment was on the road, moving in darkness to a forming up area south of Andre-sur-Orne

and south of IFS where at dawn they would receive deployment orders in accordance with the tactical situation.

After a sleepless night the recce parties moved south in the morning, heading for a deployment area south of Roquancourt. As they inched along the road the first grim scenes of death met their eyes – smashed equipment, battered buildings, sun blackened bodies of German and Canadian and British who would fight no more but now lay side by side in the comradeship of death. No matter how much one prepares for that sight, it still comes as a shock. Luckily the day proved to be so busy and hectic that there was little time to think of it.

The recce party ran into a heap of trouble in the form of a 88 mm gun which had the road well covered. Major Hogarth and Lieutenant Short had to make a fast gallop back to their vehicles after they had gone ahead to look the situation over, and the whole column was backed up to a crossing where we turned east and then south to another area. Progress during the night had not been up to expectations so that the original deployment area could not be occupied without ending up dead or a POW.

### **Verrieres August 8th 1944**

Towards noon the Regiment finally got deployed near Verrieres right in the middle of what seemed the main tank paths for the armoured attack. Red smoke markers were fired for the USAAF, part of whose planes made one of the tragic mistakes of the war and bombed our own lines and rear areas, inflicting substantial casualties. Sgt R. A. Matson of the LAD lost his life in this bombing. It was also learned that Pte. Bob Audette who had been driving a scout car for the infantry on the night attack had also been killed.

### **Roquancourt August 8th 1944**

Progress during the day improved and by night the infantry had captured Gaumesnil, about four miles south of our gun position. The Regiment moved in the late afternoon to a new position just south of Roquancourt where it was learned that Gnr J. B. King had been killed by gunfire.

### **Caillouet August 9th 1944**

Next morning the Regiment pulled a boner. The map lay system of coding and de-coding map references had come into use but no one was too familiar with it. The adjutant de-coded our deployment area incorrectly and the regiment ended up outside the Division boundary on the extreme flank and front of the Allied thrust! The guns were deployed on the high ground overlooking the river Laize near Caillouet. The infantry opened their eyes a little wider as we rolled through them but said nothing. That the Germans had only just departed showed in some of their dugouts where food was still sitting on tables and clocks were still ticking.

This was August 9th. On the previous night the armour had run into heavy opposition as they pushed down to Hill 195, as it turned out later practically the entire 28th Armoured Regiment had been wiped out in an attempt to by-pass Brettville-le-Rabet and reach their objective. Capt. Jack Donohue FOO with the 28th, and his crew were listed as missing, and it had only been due

to trouble with his tank and radio that Major Ostrander as REP had not been with them. During the day out forces consolidated themselves on that feature south of Brettville but were counter-attacked continually. The enemy were still strong in and behind Quesnay Woods and the Regiment was called on for some heavy firing to break up the attacks.

### **Hautmesnil** **August 10th 1944**

On the morning of August 10th the Regiment pulled out of position and moved south east to deploy in front of the quarry at Hautmesnil. Whilst stationary on the road waiting to turn into the area the column was shelled. Bdr W. R. Richmond was killed and A2, the RHQ Office truck, was demolished by fire which destroyed all the records of the unit.

Along with bad news came good. The four members of Capt. Donohue's tank crew, Gnrs Lorna Munce, Joe Chaisson, Tim Reardon and Tim Moule arrived back at the Regiment after a harrowing trip by foot from the area where the 28th had been wiped out. Two of them had been captured for a short while but were freed by our men. They could give little news of Capt. Donohue other than he had stayed behind.

By August 11th, after four days of heavy going, the Regiment had suffered a number of officer and OR casualties. Lt. Col. Lander suffered a bad back injury when he fell from his tank while the brigade was being shelled, so Major Hogarth took over the job of CRA's REP and was subsequently promoted to Lt. Colonel. Major Ostrander became 2 IC and Capt. Jim Kane ran the 83rd for the next little while. Capt. Donohue was still missing, while Major Robertson, Capt. Monhan, Capt. "Doc" Middlebro and Lieut. Doug Cave had all been evacuated with injuries, none of which were of a serious nature. Major G. H. V. Naylor took over the 13th Battery.

### **Robertmesnil** **August 11th- 13th 1944**

During that afternoon 3 Div relieved us and the Regiment moved east of the main road and a mile or so back to a concentration area between St Aignande Crammesnil and Robertmesnil. With the intention of concealing the presence of an armoured division in that sector, camouflage experts visited the Regiment and did their best to hide us. The German gunners still seemed to know we were there, however. There in the hot sun the Regiment spent part of the weekend while on a high level plans for a new attack were being formulated.

The new offensive, first name OP Tallulah and then changed to OP Tractable, was to start on 14th August with the intention of smashing through the anti-tank screen between Quesnay Woods and Potigny along the River Laison, crossing the river to the high ground on the south bank, and striking on to Falaise, at the same time seizing crossings of the Rivers Ante and Dives.

With 3 Division on the right and 4 Division on the left, the plan called for 2 CAB and 4 CAB to crash through in column of squadrons, each followed by two infantry brigades. Support was to consist of a smoke screen on each flank of the attack, a smoke screen with HE concentrations ahead of the armour, and heavy bomber attacks.

Recce and digging parties moved late on the 13th to an area north of Renesmil to prepare for a night occupation in readiness for the next day's attack. That afternoon Gnr C. L. Stitzinger of the 83 Battery was killed by shell fire, making the fourth casualty of the Regiment.

### **Renesmil August 14th 1944**

When morning came everyone was ordered to lie Doggo with no movement and no noise until the start of the fire plan. It was a sunny, peaceful morning with scarcely a sound or sign of war until noon when, without any preparatory bombardment, long columns of tanks came crashing over the hill and down in the valley towards the river, raising huge clouds of dust high in the sky. Then the guns opened up with their smoke screens and the enemy guns came back with some heavy HE, especially in RHQ's area.

About two hours after the attack commenced the recce parties were ordered to move, but when they got as far as Roger battery position they sat for almost an hour awaiting further orders. And from that vantage point (and from slit trenches) they watched another of the tragic episode which almost broke up the new offensive. Wave upon wave of heavy bombers came floating over in the bright afternoon sunlight, beautiful glistening machines which proceeded to dump thousands of bombs far short of their target. Fortunately it was the rear areas which again were subjected to the bombing which went on for what seemed to be more than an hour, despite the frantic efforts of Capt Dick Hughes who flew around in an Air OP Auster trying to stop the bombers. The attacking troops had made such a good advance that they were not effected by the bombing and by late afternoon the armoured brigades reached the river and two of the Infantry brigades had passed through to the high ground on the south bank.

### **Rouvres August 14th 1944**

The Regiment moved to an exposed position on the north bank of the river Laison at Rouvres where the Adjutant's vehicle was hit and Capt John White suffered a severe head wound when struck by shrapnel which pierced his helmet. It was learned here that both Capt Bob Lucas and Capt Sam Pinkerton had been wounded and evacuated, the former, while FOOing with the 22 Armd Regt and the latter while with the 21 Armd Regt.

Just as dusk was falling it was decided to move the Regiment forward again to the far side of the river. The column passed several large groups of prisoners on the way up and the boys began to feel that perhaps this war was getting some place after all. Certainly the first week of this fighting campaign had been as hectic, grim and exhausting as they had ever imagined it would be.

### **Olendon August 15th 1944**

After spending the night in position south of Rouvres the Regiment moved another two miles ahead in the morning, deploying north of the village of Olendon, where they were to stay for several days to give the amour time to refit and reorganize before pressing on. While in position at Olendon some Allied fighters did a nice strafing job and set one of Peter Battery's ammunition trucks ablaze but there were no casualties.



While deployed here, Capt Bill Burgoyne moved from the 36th to take over the heavy job of Adjutant, a position he kept until after "Cease Fire" day.

A new plan was announced with the intention of by-passing Falaise if necessary and advancing south east to seize and hold Trun, thus sealing off the escape route from the large-sized pocket which had now been formed between the Canadians and British on the north and the Americans coming up from the south.

The Regiment, along with the rest of the Division, pushed off on the morning of the 17th August only to get tied up in a huge traffic jam which eventually got sorted out as the armour struck rapidly ahead. By evening the 22 Armoured Regiment along with a company of LSR's had made a great leap forward and were now on the far side of Trun, practically up to the Poles who had got themselves into a stiff little battle and were cut off on the high ground near Chambois. The Rep and FOO with the 22 Arm'd Regiment found the field guns out of range and had to use mediums.

The 23rd deployed on the road to Trun near Les Moutiers-en-Auge and had a great time firing in every direction except to the exact rear. A terrific slaughter was going on in the valley all the way from Falaise to Trun with the guns and Tiffies piling destruction on the ranks of the fleeing and dis-organized Germans. Prisoners streamed in constantly and the enemy showed little fight.

## **Trun**

### **August 19th 1944**

On the 19th the Regiment made a long move up to the area of Le Menil Girard north-east of Trun where RHQ replenished their stationary supplies from a knock out German office truck which had formerly belong to headquarters of 807 German Infantry Division.

It was in this position that Lt-Col Lander came up to see the Regiment for the last time, his back was still troubling him considerably, and after a day or so with the unit he left for England and eventually Canada.

Falaise had fallen and Trun had been taken, with 3 Division relieving our infantry there on 20th August. In a 28 hour period from the 19th to the 20th a total of 47 officers and 2118 ORs passed through the 4 Division PW cage alone. The Caen to Falaise battle was truly finished, the back of the Germans in France had been broken, and the Division was poised to start on the pursuit battle which was to take it well into Belgium.

Discussing the battle of the preceding two weeks Lieut. General Simonds said: "I believe that these achievements will have a decisive influence on the great battles now raging throughout France - We have made a good start and I am certain we have it in our power to make a better finish".

Not to a man in the Regiment will ever forget August 1944, on the road to Falaise.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Mad Dash**

With three good weeks of battle under its belt, the Regiment moved on August 22nd to a new position in a valley east of Trun, ready to start off on the run across France.

There had been a number of officer changes as a result of casualties. Capts Cliff Baker and Don Dunbar arrived to take over the two troops in the 36th Battery. Lieut. Don Aitkens went to Division artillery to work on the CM0 staff and Lieut. Bob Maddock rejoined the Regiment as IO. Capt Kim McIlroy also went to Divartillery as an LO in the brigade Major's Office.

The 19th Field Regiment, our fellow SP unit, went out of the line for awhile to be equipped with 25-pounder Ram SP's, and it wasn't until we reached the Somme that we saw them again.

Major General Harry Foster, took over command of 4 Division on August 22nd.

On the night of the 22nd - one of the blackest and rainiest nights in history - the 31st Battery was sent off on its own to support the engineers who were doing a bridging job across the River La Vie and the River Tougue. In the morning the Regiment set off, picking up the 31st en route, and headed for Rouen and the Seine River. The new thrust line for the Division was Trun - Le Sap Monnai - Broglie - Bernay - Rouen, and it was the intention to drive ahead as fast as possible on the heels of the retreating Germans - for although the massacre in the Falaise gap had been terrific, the Germans had skilfully managed to get a considerable force away before the gap closed, and furthermore, they were picking up more men every day as they fell back through their rear areas.

### **Monnai**

#### **August 23rd 1944**

After a long move which was like a Sunday afternoon drive at home, slight opposition was bumped and Roger Battery was deployed near the cemetery near Monnai. The FOO calling for fire was on the 36th net so their vehicle was wheeled over to Roger battery and the orders were passed that way. That was in the days before Reps and FOO's on the regimental net was inaugurated. The whole Regiment deployed on that spot an hour later and spent the night there, getting onto the road again early in the morning.

Things were still breaking fast and it was necessary to maintain a good pace if pressure was to be kept on. 4 CAB was leading the chase, spearhead by a small task force consisting of an LSR scout platoon and a squadron of tanks, an LSR motor company, and the 83rd Battery. Should opposition be encountered the 83rd would deploy, and if the situation warranted it, the remainder of the Regiment would go into action when it reached the area.

During the phase of the battle the map situation became exceedingly grim and the poor IC who was in charge of maps came in for a lot of undeserved abuse. We were running off our maps in a matter of hours, and new supplies were just not getting up in time. On several occasions the guns were deployed and shooting was done off 1: 250,000 scale maps.

## **Bernay**

### **August 24th 1944**

The flush of victory was on the face of France during those last days of August. Scenes of unrestrained joy met the column at every crossroad and hamlet, while it was often difficult to get through a large town due to the crowds. On the afternoon of August 24th the Regiment moved slowly through Bernay and finally got stopped on the main street. Flowers, tomatoes and eggs were tossed into the vehicles, while cigarettes and chocolate bars (always for papa or Mama! ) were showered among the civilians by slap happy Canadians who were getting the feeling that the war was all over. Bottle after bottle of wine, cognac and cider was offered to the "liberators" and it was amazing that some of the drivers were still able to get their mounts started again.

Here in Bernay a real mob spirit was on the loose as we watched supposed "collaborators" being marched up the street and women who had been friendly with the Germans having their heads shaved clean. One wondered how many of those sorry looking people would still be alive by evening.

However, there was still a war to be won so the Regiment once it had got through Bernay deployed, on the eastern outskirts of an area filled with German underground installations which made excellent pre-fabricated command posts and dugouts.

## **Bout de la Ville**

### **August 25th 1944**

Another early start was made on the following day and after a fair run the Regiment moved into a harbour area for the afternoon near Bout de la Ville. After supper the reces were ordered to move ahead to a new area but when it was found that the proposed position had not been cleared and that American infantry were just starting to go through it, the recce parties returned, much to the bewilderment of the villagers who had cheered wildly as the half-tracks roared through the first time. Now they weren't so sure whether they should be cheering or heading for the cellars.

## **St Pierre les Elbeuf**

### **August 26th 1944**

After a restful night in the harbour area the Regiment deployed on the spot and then made a move of several miles, going into action near St Pierre les Elbeuf. It was here that a battle echelon was formed to move midway between A and F echelons, and to consist of water, cook and petrol trucks. The supply problems involved in the pursuit battle were giving the echelon a terrific headache and lots of work but the boys did a fine job in keeping the supplies following up.

## **Seine**

### **August 27th 1944**

On August 27th the 23rd deployed in a large clearing in the middle of a pine forest on the west bank of the Seine and settled down to give support to 10 CIB which was making an assault crossing. Once across the plan was that the Division would advance as fast as possible, with this in view 2 days rations were loaded onto all vehicles.

## Seine Crossing August 29th 1944

Two days later the regiment moved down to a marshalling area and crossed the river at Criqueboeuf-sur-Seine, just north west of Pont de l'Arche, on ferries operated by the engineers. The crossing and subsequent deployment on the high ground near Ymaro was carried out in a driving rain which turned everything into thick mud.

## August 30th 1944

Next day, on the 30th, an early move to, Le Hamil aux Batiers was made and rumour had it that we were in for a five dayrest. That fond hope was shattered with 2 hours by the order to move again to Grainville-sur-Ry where we went into action and spent the night. Life was becoming just a series of orders of deployments and "prepare to move" orders with little time for eating and sleeping, but if it was going to shorten the war, everyone was quite happy.

## Boissay August 31st 1944

August 31st saw the usual pre-dawn move, this time with 36th Battery up with the leading task force, they were deployed on the Crenon River to provide immediate support for the armour and then the whole regiment moved on and deployed in the rain near Boissay. Here it was firmly believed that the Div was going into corps reserve, involving at least a 48hour rest, but hopes were dashed again when the great "press on" order came. Objective this time was Abbeville across the Somme.

That night Easy troop was sent off to help a small task force take and hold Forges-les-Eaux. About 0400 hours next morning the regiment threaded into brigade column and picked up Easy troop en route at Orival where they had deployed. 10 CIB led until dawn and then 4 CAB passed through and struck out for the Somme. Unfortunately, 4 Div, 7 British Arm'd Div, and 53 Brit Div all seemed to have been given the same centre line for the advance and there was considerable confused jockeying for road space.

## Airaines September 1st 1944

An all-day move was brought to a stop when opposition was encountered at Airaines, while the FOO's reported enemy transport several miles north-west of the town. By moonlight the 22 Arm'd Regiment and the 23rd Field Regt complete set out to by-pass Airaines by moving across country. Up and down the hills and dales, sometimes on paths, most times on fields, the column wound until practically everyone was lost. Major Ostrander knew where we were, however, and about midnight got us deployed in a tight circle on the other side of Airaines. At about 0100 hours the 36th battery, most of whom had crawled into bed, were ordered to move several miles ahead where they deployed near the burning town of Wanel. Their loss of sleep was compensated for next morning when they sent a patrol into Wanel and found a packing case filled with new Lugers, still covered with the grease in which they had been packed and shipped.

## Sorel

September 2nd 1944

The regiment was collected together again on Sept 2nd and went into action near Sorel, just west of the Somme, where some German airburst gave a potent reminder that the enemy still had some equipment left.

Abbeville

September 3rd 1944

Once the infantry had established a bridgehead across the Somme - and they had a far easier job than anticipated - the regiment crossed and deployed on the high ground over looking Abbeville. Then came the long awaited news that the Division would have a 48 hour rest. The guns came out of action and the men devoted themselves to reading, sleeping, and writing letters, getting badly needed baths and doing some equally necessary maintenance.

Several personnel changes took place during that period. Lieut. Larry Smith going to RHQ as IC and Bob Maddock going to the 36th. BSM Redmond left Charlie troop to become RQMS while another old-timer of Charlie troop, Sgt. John Filiatrault, became temporary BQMS of the 36th.

The general war situation was good at this particular moment. There was every excuse for optimism. The British Second Army had captured Brussels and Antwerp in a record push. The Poles were midway between Ypres and Ghent. 2 Cdn Div had entered Dieppe where so many of their comrades had died on the beaches there 2 years previously, and 3 Div was assaulting Boulogne. The GOC told Senior officers that the war virtually was over and no pitched battles would be fought. Home by the end of the year ran from tongue to tongue and at any moment news of Germanys surrender was expected. Perhaps "expected" was too strong a word, but certainly no one would have been surprised at the news. There had been no heavy fighting for almost two weeks. We had seen the carnage and destruction brought upon the German Army in Normandy. We had seen thousands of prisoners stream into our cages. Surely they could persist little longer.

At any rate, whether or not the war was almost won, 4 Div was put on the road again starting off on September 6th with Holland as the objective. This thought staggered us but when we had covered 53 miles by noon people began to wonder.

The Div was moving in battle group formation for this drive and the 23rd formed part of Battle Group Moncel, named after the young commander of 4 Bde. The spearhead, named Keane Force after Lt. Col Bob Keane, CO of the LSR's, consisted of an armoured recce troop, a scout platoon, an armoured squadron and a motor company, engineer recce party, an SP artillery battery plus the regimental recce party, the remainder of the LSR and a section of the light field ambulances.

Wisques

September 6th 1944

During the afternoon the Div came to a forced halt due to an abundance of wrecked bridges over the canal at St Omer. The regiment "mushroomed" for several hours and the deployed near Wisques just this side of St Omer. It was in this spot that a considerable quantity of German wine and Champagne was "liberated", although the Bde. HQ reached the source of supply first!

St Omer  
September 7th 1944

Engineers worked feverishly through an evening downpour to bridge the canal, and just after midnight the regiment made the crossing and went into action at 0345 hrs with everyone soaked to the skin and half of RHQ lost. The Adjutant set out to bring them back to the fold and finally arrived back in time to snooze for an hour before the "Move Now" order came. Total mileage for the previous day had been 76 miles according to the speedometer and the Adjutant control vehicle.

Soex  
September 7th 1944

Again good progress was made during the morning but towards noon on September 7th opposition was reported near Bruges, almost directly south of Dunkirk where the Germans were holding out in some strength. Peter battery was deployed at Soex, while the rest of the regiment "mushroomed" until things got straightened out. It was raining and blowing in gale-like proportions and the heavy coastal guns from Dunkirk started tracing in some big shells. But most of the lads seem to ignore that by getting into houses where the liberation-happy inhabitants filled them with fried eggs and wine.

St Riquiers  
September 7th 1944

It was eventually decided to strike south and by-pass the opposition and by supper time we were off again, crossing the border into Belgium about 1900 hours to receive a wild welcome from the citizens of Leysele. The guns deployed at St Riquiers.

Word came in during the night that div echelon had been badly shelled that afternoon near Soex, and our own battle echelon under Capt Norrie Stavert suffered four fatal casualties and eight men wounded. Those killed were Gnr Frank Langille, Gnr G. S. Fisher, Gnr Jim Reid and Pte. Romeo Landry. A number of the lads, including Bdr. Budway and Gnr W A Smith did heroic work in unloading ammunition from a blazing vehicle, thus preventing further casualties.

Bruges area  
September 8th 1944

On September 8th the regiment moved east again towards Bruges which was reported strongly held by SS troops. Further all bridges on the Canal de Ghent running south from Bruges had been blown and thus our advance was barred. After running for a short while on a beautiful double-width highway reminiscent of the Queen Elizabeth Way, the regiment deployed southwest of Bruges and just west of Den Daelo. With that deployment the fast moving run from Trun came to an end. One phase of the war was over and another phase was starting, a phase which everyone soon realized was to involve heavy fighting. The mad dash was over, then on moves became considerably shorter and much less frequent. Life almost became static.

Chapter Five  
Holding the Leopold

The division now entered that particular phase of our little war which has since always been referred to as "the Leopold" mainly because for some time that narrow canal became our front line.

It was soon apparent that Bruges was not going to be surrendered easily by the German occupants, nor were the Jerries willing to let us cross the Canal de Ghent cutting south from that city. However, on the 9th the Lincs and Winks ( Lincoln and Welland Regiment ) fought their way across at Moerbrugge, running into very heavy opposition.

Meanwhile an intensive propaganda campaign to scare the garrison in Bruges was commenced. Since it was one of the oldest and loveliest cities in Belgium. the people addressed a plea to the Canadian Commander to spare it from destruction if possible. As a result, no artillery was fired into the city but airburst was fired at several bridges and other points around the fringes of the town. in an effort to simulate registration of a fireplan in hopes that the Germans might decide to evacuate. In addition, one of the German Commanders was taken, blindfolded, for a tour of the Canadian area. From time to time the blindfold was taken off, allowing him to see the large concentration of tanks and artillery at our disposal.

Bruges still held, however, and it became apparent that the stubborn resistance by the enemy in this sector was designed to keep open his escape routes up to the Scheldt and across to Flushing.

Den Daelo  
September 9th 1944

One afternoon at Den Daelo, where the regiment had deployed, "Y" Supervisor Jerry Hadcock showed a movie under the viaduct. Belgians crowded around and although they could not understand what was going on, nevertheless, the antics of Abbott and Costello on screen made them laugh as much as we did.

By September 10th the bridgehead across the canal had been well deepened and a bridge had been thrown across. Two days later the regiment crossed and deployed north of Oedelem, just below the east-west highway running from Eecloo to Bruges. By this time Bruges had capitulated, but Eecloo was being held tenaciously.

Syssele  
September 13th 1944

An attempt to cross the Leopold Canal met with dismal failure so the division started to fan east towards the Canal de Derivation de la Lys which branches south from the Leopold at Strouiburg and cuts south-east between Maldegem and Eecloo. To support a possible attack the 23rd moved on the 13th to an area just north of Syssele. Two days later a crossing of the canal was established, we deployed considerably to the south near Cliet, and the infantry fought its way into Eecloo. A bridge was built at Balgerhoek and over that bridge the regiment rumbled on, the 16th to deploy on the outskirts of Eecloo.

Eecloo  
September 16th 1944

By now the situation had become static to a degree, with the enemy holding an extremely strong defensive position along the Leopold Canal, a line which an armoured division with its single infantry brigade could not hope to breach. As it was, the armoured brigade was thinned out along a 29,000 yard front! The only room for further exploitation was to the east and the Terneuzen Canal running north from Ghent to the Scheldt, and from a position near Capryche to which the regiment moved on September 19th artillery support was laid down for an infantry attack in that direction. Progress was fairly rapid and within two days Bouchante, Assenede, Sas van Gent and Philipine had all fallen into our hands.

While FOOing during this period Lieut. Sam Brody found three heavy railway guns which the Germans had destroyed in their retreat.

Major J S Darling arrived from 21 Army Group HQ to take over the 83 battery which had been commanded By Capt. Jim Kane ever since mid August when Major Ostrander became 2 IC.

On September 22nd the regiment moved west under command of 4 CAB and went into action north-west of Maldagem, but within an hour we reverted to command of the CRA and were moved back east to a position near Balgerhoek where we stayed until October 16th.

Balgerhoek  
September 22nd 1944

For the next few weeks there was very little activity on our sector except for patrol strength attacks to gain information and similar counter measures by the enemy. Elsewhere 2Div was fighting on the northern outskirts of Antwerp while farther east the magnificent failure at Arnhem had been written into history.

Several movies and a recreational centre were opened in Eecloo and a number of men went on 24-hour passes to Ghent where they discovered (a) lots of goods in the stores and (b) francs don't go very far! Ammo expenditure was cut to ten rounds per gun per day so that everyone had plenty of time for relaxation and entertainment.

Static warfare will never finish a war, so on October 5th after it was realized an armoured division could not cross the Leopold, the veteran 3 Div was brought in to do the job. Plans called for a single brigade attack on our front at Strouiburg where the two canals branch apart, with a two brigade "back-door" attack across the Savojaards Plaat from Sluiskil. Despite what 4 Div intelligence said about it, 3 Div figured there couldn't be many troops across the canal and counted on clearing right up to the Scheldt within 48 hours.

Operation Switchback, as it was termed, opened on night of October 5th and 6th and ran into heavy opposition right from the start. By 0500 hours the Canadian Scots, with Capt. Graham Brown FOOing for them, had two companies across, and an hour later the Regina Rifles, were also across.

Gnr Norm Kettlewell was killed by shellfire on the 31st Battery position, while Capt. Stavert lost a tank on a mine. He escaped injury but one of his crew, Gnr Andy Trofanenko, was evacuated with wounds.



By nightfall, despite terrific artillery support, which used up more than 200 rounds per gun per day. The attacking forces had penetrated only 200 yards at the deepest point. On the morning of the 7th Capt Bob Brownridge, FOO with the Canadian Scots and Gnr Joe Tendeck, were taken prisoner along with some of the infantry. On the next day the regiment suffered one of its heaviest strokes when Capt Graham Brown, Gnr Bob Black and Gnr Pete Craigen were all killed by a shell which made a direct hit on their carrier.

The “seaborne” landing from the east was successfully carried out on October 9th and after a few days of tough resistance things opened up. When 4 Div was suddenly pulled out on October 16th to move over to the Antwerp area the “seaborne” and the land forces had linked and steady progress was being made. It is interesting to note that the total prisoner bag from that supposedly “troop-less” pocket amounted to 12,812 men.

Chapter Six  
North from Antwerp  
October 16th 1944

The stay at Balgerhoek had been the longest in any one position since the regiment came to France – 24 days. Relieved by 61 Field Regiment RA, the regiment joined a brigade column at Eecloo on October 16th and made the long trip via Ghent to Antwerp and then on out to a residential area north of Schilde where we concentrated and rested for several days.

It was an area of large houses and a few summer hotels, so that everyone was able to be fairly comfortable. A few buzz bombs and V-2s served to give some exciting moments but apart from broken windows and ripped tarpaulins there were no casualties.

Antwerp area  
October 16th – 19th 1944

The possibilities of Antwerp were fully investigated and it was found to be one of the best cities we had yet struck. Using the Century Hotel as a rendezvous and firm base, considerable reconnaissance and exploitation was done in all directions.

With 2 Div starting to push out the narrow neck of land toward South Beveland and Walcheren Islands, it was decided to mount an operation to push directly north from Antwerp, protecting the flank and rear of 2 Div and pushing the Germans slowly back across the Maas. 4 Div was to be employed for this operation.

The division was broken into two brigade groups for Operation Suitcase, with 4 CAB consisting of the 22nd and 28th armoured regiments, the LSR's, and the Argylls. The 21st CAR, Links and Winks, Algonquins and 29th Reconnaissance Regiment would comprise the other brigade group. All artillery was to be under command of the CRA who would also have at his disposal 59 AGRA and two HAA and one LAA regiment.

Putte  
October 19th 1944

In readiness for the thrust northwards, the regiment deployed on October 19th near Putte and spent the day working on the fire plan for the attack the following morning. The fire plan which was to commence at 0730 hours, consisted of a 30-minute counter-battery round up and a huge list of concentrations on call.

Phase one of the operation called for a drive as far as the Roosendaal Canal, where the forces would firm up while Phase Two the capture of Esschen, was accomplished. Kicking off on the morning of the 20th the troops pushed up the axis of the road and railway and by the next day were well past the canal – which proved to be only a fair-sized ditch. Progress by the 4 Bde group on the left was considerably faster than on the right where 10 Bde met stiff opposition in a wooded area.

Pont Heuvel  
October 21st 1944

On the 21st the regiment made a leap-frog move, Roger battery deploying first and then the other batteries moving up, to the area of Pont Heuvel where some very fine houses were obtained for use as command posts. With the coming of dirty weather a recce party's first consideration seemed to become accommodation and the definition of a gun position was "four good houses surrounded by 24 guns".

Wildert  
October 22nd 1944

Excellent progress continued and by noon the 22nd and the Algonquins were into Esschen and the regiment moved up again to Wildert where a few enemy shells were pounded into the area. It was here that we heard the great news that Capt. Jack Donohue, missing since August, was a prisoner-of-war and in good health. That plus the promotion of Lieut. Bill Buchner to Captain called for a celebration, but the sudden stiffening of resistance around Wousche Plantage and the amount of fire support required kept us all too busy.

The axis of the attack was starting to swing west now, centred on Wousche Plantage and Bergen-op-Zoom, with British 49th Div and 104th US div coming up on the right flank of 4 div. The effort to take Wousche Plantage, a small hamlet dominating an important crossroads, proved extremely costly. The country was the worst possible for tanks – low, flat and wet, with the roads elevated on dikes which made every tank a beautiful target. One armoured squadron lost about 10 tanks in a matter of hours.

Our part in the first attack on Wousche Plantage was a huge smoke screen fire on the morning of October 23rd, in preparation for which 2350 rounds had been dumped on our position from 15th Field, 19th Field, 4 div dump and service corps dump. A HE program was fired as well and it was during this that a premature on one of Fox troop's guns killed Gnr McElroy who was laying the gun next to and ahead of it. Lieut. Brody was evacuated when a sniper shot off his fingers while he was acting as a FOO.

Next day another fire plan was laid on to help the attack on Wousche but fighting continued to be very heavy, and the enemy put down a surprising amount of mortars. Capt. Bob Gibson was instantly killed when a mortar bomb which came through the roof of a barn he was using for an

OP, and his signaller, Gnr Lorne Munce, who had already had a number of close escapes, was badly shaken up.

By October 25th , after a two directional assault, our troops got into Wousche and in this operation both Capt. Bob Sharpe and Capt. Cliff Baker did an excellent job as FOO's.

Spillebeek  
October 25th 1944

The regiment moved again that day to Spillebeek where we were fortunate enough to have a mobile bath in operation right onto the gun position, allowing everyone a much needed cleanup.

That evening Major Ostrander called for a Victor target on a suspected railway gun, getting scale three from all the artillery of 4 div, 49 div, 59 AGRA and 74 AA bde. 4 div reported ready first but the 19th Field beat the 23rd by twenty seconds. As one of the FOO's put it: "The thing sounded like an express train coming over". No one quite knows what happened to the railway gun or even if there was one there to start with.

From six o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock at night that day the regiment "brassed off" 3600 rounds, and in the first six hours of the next day we went through another 2400 rounds.

When Dog troop OP was heavily mortared on the 26th, Gnr Charles Hooper, able for Capt. Don Dunbar, was killed, making the third fatal casualty for the regiment in this short offensive.

Heimolen  
October 27th 1944

By the 27th the situation was beginning to break up at last, with 2 div coming up fast along the coast and our own recce elements within a few hundred yards of Bergen-op-Zoom. On the following morning the regiment deployed at Heimolen just south east of Bergen where we did three shoots in moonlight for the air OP. This unusual practice worked out quite well, according to the pilot's report.

Bergen fell to the Canadians on October 29th and long before our troops had cut all the roads leading out of town and were getting beyond artillery range so another move was ordered, this time to Halsteren, several miles north of Bergen. The objective for 4 Bde was Steenberg so the axis swung north east again. Blown bridge slowed up the advance and it was not for four days that our troops were able to take the town. Meanwhile Lieut. Chick Sills had been evacuated with leg wounds received while FOOing.

The LSR's with Major Telford and Capt. Baker along, had swung west out into St Philipaland Peninsula where they managed to sink several small German craft and captured an enemy gunboat. After making an entry into the ship's log to the effect that she was "gersunken" by the Canadians, they scuttled her.

Dinteloord  
November 5th 1944

While the remainder of the div came to rest, their job complete, the artillery was moved up near Dinteloord where they deployed on small patches of ground showing above water and supposedly supported by a 49 British div attack on Willemstad. Numerous vehicles got stuck in this position but the record went to Easy troop whose GPO half-track slid into a shallow canal and "capsized" in several feet of water! The troop was re-christened "Easy Flotilla" and "Admiral Coughtrey", their GPO, took quite a verbal beating from the rest of the regiment.

In 36 hours, the only firing we did was a ten minute fire plan, much to everyone's disgust, and when the town was captured and we moved back to a contraction area at Halsteren expecting a rest but receiving orders to get on the road in the morning and head for s'Hertogenbosch

## Chapter Seven Winter in Holland

The completion of Operation Suitcase on November 7th marked the end of our active fighting for a few months and the start of a dull, boring period "holding the line" along the River Maas and waiting for spring.

### Vught November 8th 1944

The trip from Bergen-op-Zoom through Roosendaal, Breda and Tilburg to another concentration area at Vught was done almost entirely in darkness since daylight started to fade about five o'clock during the winter months. After a day or two in Vught the regiment deployed east of s'Hertogenbosch with Peter Battery at Nulands, Roger at Roamalen, and unlucky Queen in the mud in between. As usual, RHQ managed to find itself, a large-sized house which served as our headquarters off and on until February.

### s'Hertogenbosch November 9th 1944

As a starter, three OPs were deployed with the main purpose of doing a bit of harassing and a lot of observing to build up an information picture concerning the enemy along that front. The three OP's were at Maren, Gewande and Empel and as the weather became worse, some of them had to be occupied by weasel. Ammunition was cut down to 10 rounds per gun per day, only five of which could be used without reference to HQ RCA, so there wasn't much to play around with and the adjutant spent most of his time either curbing enthusiastic OP officers or else juggling ammunition reports so that the higher authorities wouldn't discover that we had splurged over the limit.

A few days after our arrival in the s'Hertogenbosch district the CRA Brig. J N Lane was killed when his Jeep ran over a mine while he was visiting several of the regiment. A great part of the regiment attended the funeral on November 11th to pay a last tribute to this fine soldier and man who had personally guided our destinies since we came to France.

Short leaves to Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent opened up on a fairly liberal scale, along with the promise that privilege leaves to Blighty would soon commence, so that the boredom arising out of a static period was to some measure alleviated. Supervisor Hadcock practically wore his

projection machine out showing movies, and was also instrumental in opening a recreational centre in town where he and Major Ostrander organized a number of regimental tea dances. A very successful evening dance was held in the Casino where a British Army dance band provided the beat.

These were the start of bad days for the paymaster, Capt. Freddie Sprague who almost went crazy changing money from one currency to another. The men were paid in Dutch guilders or "gliders" as they soon came to be called, but on leave in Antwerp or Brussels they had to convert guilders to Belgian francs. It was only a prelude of things to come, however, when we spent some time in Germany and were paid in marks. And then further complications arose when people started going to Paris and England on leave.

About the middle of November Major Ostrander was promoted to the rank of LC. Col and was given command of the 13th Field Regiment a 3 Div "D-Day" unit. Major Telford became 2 IC just in time to receive a concentration area in the vicinity of Boxtel where the regiment was going to enjoy a two week rest.

Boxtel  
November 24th 1944

On November 24th the 79 Field Regiment RA, relieved us and we moved to the new area, everyone being billeted in Boxtel except for Queen battery which had the luxurious (?) village of Germonde to itself. The two-week respite after three and a half months of fighting was filled with resting, training, recreation and a frantic attempt to get the guns calibrated despite horrible weather conditions.

The Padre, H/Capt R L Bacon, held an impressive memorial service on our first Sunday in Boxtel. L/Bdr A H Sims read out the names of the sixteen members of the regiment who had lost their lives in action thus far.

Despite complaints about being billeted in a tiny hamlet, Queen battery found that a hamlet could produce quite a population when they staged a Christmas Party for the children of the village. A total of 410 children came to the party. Santa Claus, in the person of Major J C Btewart, then commanding the battery, was no less surprised than the other officers and men. Nevertheless, he managed to overcome his surprise and stumble through a speech in Dutch which the local schoolmaster had written out for him.

While in Boxtel, news of another promotion in the regiment came, this time taking from us Major Telford who went to command the 19th Field Regiment. Major Darling became 2 IC and Capt. N Stavert was promoted to Major and took over Roger battery.

s'Hertogenbosch  
December 6th 1944

All things must come to an end, and on December 6th the regiment moved back into the line, taking over the same gun positions except for Queen who were situated west of s'Hertogenbosch, thus creating difficult communication problems. An additional OP was deployed at Hedikuizen on the front covered by Queen battery.

During the next week several personnel changes occurred both within the and outside the regiment. Major General Chris Vokes became GOC 4 Div, switching places with Major General Foster who went to Italy to take over 1 Div. Closer to home, Lieut. Bill Cowan and Bill Turner both received their captaincy, the former taking over Easy troop and the latter going to the 15th Field Regiment. Major Stewart left for England to take a staff course.

We were now living once more in a veritable “buzz-bomb alley” as the Germans intensified their efforts to knock out the port of Antwerp and render it useless to the Allies. On one single day one OP reported 25 of the flying vacuum cleaners, roaring past overhead, in the general direction of Antwerp.

Shortly after taking over the division, Major General Vokes carried out an inspection of units individually. There was frantic haste to prepare for the inspection and to get clothes in decent order. Able Troop, searching in vain for irons to press battle dress, came out with the "bright idea of the year" by placing a pair of trousers between two planks and then driving a half-track back and forth over them. Effort: very little! Result: excellent creases!

The peace and quiet of the winter months was rudely shattered by the terrific offensive which von Rundstedt had launched against the American sector in the Ardennes. Gaining a surprise advantage, employing novel disruptive tactics and aided by foggy weather which cut down Allied air activity, he had made great advances and his spearheads were throwing the people of Brussels and even Paris into jitters. In spots his troops ran wild through the rear areas with nothing to stop them; at other places heroic action by American units stopped the Germans cold.

Vught  
December 21st 1944

It was thought that in connection with his southern drive von Rundstedt might attack from the north across the Maas, aiming at Antwerp, or that he might try an airborne invasion, or both, as a precautionary measure 4 div was pulled out of the line, moved to a concentration area in the Vught – Boxtel district, and placed on two hours notice. It was felt that the div would probably go south to stem the Ardennes dive, but it would also be valuable to have the div ready to move quickly to any needed spot in the event of an attack in our area.

The system of area defence was laid on, calling for R/T equipped road patrols and mobile reserve squads ready to meet any emergency. The regiment carried out patrols every night but found little except a lighted skylight in one house “ I forgot the blackout” the man said and a man running out of his house at 4 a.m. clad only in underwear when he heard our patrol moving along the road ( he didn’t have anything to say but he did seem rather surprised to see Canadians and not Germans ).

Breda  
December 24th 1944

Christmas Eve arrived and still nothing had happened, billets were decorated as best as could be and plans for Christmas dinner were well in hand when a sudden order to move came in by phone. Intelligence had got wind of a concentration of troops north of the Maas, ready to attack the following day, so the div was rushed to the Breda area to take up defensive positions. It was

pitch black by the time the regiment pulled into the southern outskirts of Breda where we were to concentrate, luckily, rather than to go into action.

Morning came by no attack materialized. Breathing a sigh of relief, every started to madly find a place where sufficient numbers could sit down at once to have a decent Christmas dinner. Some troops had to eat outside and standing up but the majority were able to use schools or other buildings for the annual feast.

St Philipsland  
December 29th 1944

On December 29th , as a result of information that there might be an attack on St Philipsland Peninsula, 36th battery moved out there in support of 22 CAR, staying for about 10 days. Again nothing happened. A new Battery Commander, Major K. A Toms, formerly Adjutant of the 15th Field Regiment, arrived to take command of Queen battery.

Operation Trojan  
January 5th 1945

The only fighting activity the regiment did while at Breda was a one day deployment north east of the city to take part in Operation Trojan which was to simulate a crossing of the Maas and also to force the enemy to disclose his resources. Our guns were to fire for fifteen minutes, then pause for ten minutes, while all available counter mortar and counter battery equipment attempted to locate the German retaliatory fire. The fire plan went well – but the ten minute pause was crammed with silence. The enemy didn't have anything with which to retaliate, or else he just wasn't in the mood.

s'Hertogenbosch  
January 8th 1945

On January 8th the regiment moved back to s'Hertogenbosch, reoccupied the same positions and billets except for Queen battery which was east of the town and settled down to a humdrum existence again. A week later Operation Schultz was mounted with the intention of getting prisoners from the other side of the river. The LSR's were given the job, the 15th Field, 68th Medium and three tank regiments joined in with us on artillery support. Crossing the river from Gewande in company strength, the Lake Superior Regiment executed a nice daylight raid which, although it stirred up opposition, went off very smoothly. The first boats touched down on the other side at 1232 hours and by 1440 hours everyone was back – including three frightened Germans, the LSR's suffered one fatal casualty and three wounded.

A week later came Kappelsche Veer! The infantry of 4 div will probably remember that episode as one of the deadliest, costliest, most miserable five days of the war.

Kappelsche Veer  
January 25th – 31st 1945

Kappelsche Veer was a narrow island formed on the south bank of the Maas by a small canal. Somehow the Germans had slipped back across the river and now had control of the island. To push them back – or kill them off – someone had dreamed up Operation Elephant.

Original plans called for a ten hour show, using the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, and employing a mass of artillery. The original ammunition allotment, including mortar, 75 and 155 mm, 25 pounder, and 5.5 and 7.2 inch totalled 87,220 rounds - which is a lot of ammunition in any man's language and more particularly in the language of the men who had to haul and dump it.

On January 25th the regiment moved to an area near Sprang, north east of Tilburg, and deployed in sub zero weather. Our part in the plan was the firing of a huge smoke screen, an intricate but well-planned thing which included three screens, each of three densities, so that the smoke situation could be varied quickly on call. The first round was fired at 0725 hrs on the 26th, and within a very short while it was realized that the battle was going to become static. The Germans had well prepared defensive positions, behind dikes, from which they could cover every approach and mow down the infantry trying to come up across the flat, frozen terrain.

The smoke was eventually stopped and we started firing HE on call continually. In the afternoon a big HE fire plan was issued for which we required 1500 time fuzes. We got them alright – ten minutes after the fire plan was finished.

The next day the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were tossed into the fray for the Links had suffered heavy casualties and it was apparently decided that having made such a big and expensive start, the thing had better be carried through to a finish. We were ordered to deploy two OP's. To keep them fully manned it was necessary to change personnel every eight hours because the cold made it impossible to stay any longer and remain efficient. The unfortunate Infantry had to stay longer because it was obviously impractical for them to work in shifts.

Unsuccessful attacks continued day after day until late on the afternoon of January 30th when at 1812 hours the objective a bit of high ground with a house on it, was cleared out. Around midnight patrols from the Argylls on the right and the Links on the left made contact and the island was ours. Our forces suffered heavy losses, but all reports from the island showed that the Germans fared far worse.

s'Hertogenbosch  
January 31st 1945

That job done, the regiment returned to old stamping grounds at s'Hertogenbosch, although that "independent" group known as Queen battery was deployed right on the northern fringe of the city where the personnel enjoyed the best in living and recreational facilities. "Just making up for Gemonde" they used to say.

Hockey had been booming during the past month and our hockey team, coached by Major. Stavert, scored considerable success. Their crowning triumph, however, was in February when they deployed permanently in Antwerp, apparently attached for all purposes to the arena, the Century Hotel, and all points between. The fact that they didn't win many games once they were SOS to Antwerp didn't matter much.

Meanwhile the outside world was boiling with big events. The Russians had been eating up the space between them and Berlin at an amazing pace. The Americans were closing up to the Rhine on the south, and Monty had launched a big push on February 8th to clear the Reichwald



Forest as a prelude to sweeping to the Rhine. In the area various deceptive measures had been employed to make the enemy think that a major crossing of the Maas was to be attempted. Piles of bridging equipment, truckloads of assault boats, dummy gun positions, recorded noises – all of these were part of the big plan.

Operation Veritable, the name given to the Reichwald attack, went extremely well and about the middle of February the news arrived that we were to have a part in the next operation which would bring the forces of 21 Army Group to the banks of the Rhine – and possibly win the war then and there, for Eisenhower had publically said he hoped to fight the major and decisive battle of the West on this side of the Rhine. However, just in case the armies would have to fight on the east of the Rhine, one of his armies had brilliantly seized the bridge at Remagen and already a solid little bridgehead had been established.

Chapter Eight  
Sweeping to the Rhine  
Vught  
February 19th 1945

With a feeling of spring in the air, the regiment spent several days out of action in Vught before pushing off for “der faderland” on February 22nd. The recce party had left the previous day.

In brilliant sunshine the column moved along the “Maple Leaf Up” through Oss, across the Grave Bridge, down through battered Grosbeek into Germany to our concentration area in the woods near Hau, south of Cleve.

Reichwald  
February 22nd 1945

Tough resistance was predicted in this battle to the Rhine - and tough resistance was certainly encountered. The Germans were fighting stubbornly and courageously - some say fanatically, but that usually is just another way of saying that your opponent is determined and courageous - to delay our advance to the vital waterway.

To break his resistance, Operation Blockbuster was planned, employing four divisions and divided into four phases. In phase One, 2 and 3 Infantry Divs were to clear a start line for 4 Div by advancing south through Calcar and Louisendorf to within about 2 miles of Keppeln. Then on Phases Two - 4 Div would pass through to a line running directly east from Keppeln while 3 Div took the town. Phase Three called for a difficult armoured push south by 4 Div, breaking out onto the high ground east of Udem. Once 4 Div was on that feature, 3 Div and 11 British Arm'd Div- were to take Udem. Phase Four looked like the toughest part of all, with 4 Div thrusting through the gap between the Hochwald Forest and the Balberger Forest, while 11 British Div kept up the pace to protect the right flank.

The whole plan was to have been achieved. By the night of February 27th. As it turned out, Phase Three was executed by then but penetration of the Hochwald itself and the famous gap met with heavy resistance.

Louisendorf  
February 24th 1945

In preparation for the attack the regiment left the concentration area on the night of the 24th and moved south to deploy near Louisendorf. The roads were in terrible condition, and the heavy volume of traffic which had to roll over them ceaselessly only made matters worse. On the first deployment most of the soft vehicles were left in concentration areas back along the road, partly due to bad traffic conditions and partly due to enemy shelling in the more forward areas.

The huge fire plan, which in sound and intensity reminded one of the Caen breakout, opened at 0430 hours, February 26th, and despite heavy going in the mud good progress was made. By the next day 3 Div had taken Keppeln and Udem and overlooking the Hochwald. However, it had only been through exceptionally fine artillery – armour cooperation that they ever reached the objective. The push to the high ground was made at night and it was impossible to see a thing. Capt.'s Bill Cowan and Cliff Baker both made use of the newcoloured flare shell, or indicator shell as it was called.

This shell bursting, between 200 and 300 feet in the air, dropped three red flares to the ground where they burned for about ten seconds. By ordering a round at a certain map reference the FOO could orient himself, and both Capt. Baker and Capt. Cowan reported that during this ground burning period features were sharply outlined so one could actually mapread. By firing the shells far enough ahead, the attacking force was not itself illuminated.

Two motor companies with supporting tanks were put into the objective in this manner at separate times with no casualties. One FOO said that the force would definitely have veered off in a wrong direction had it not been for the marker shells. There was some confusion at first because everyone was expecting a white flare. Capt. Cowan got quite annoyed because we were not firing the indicator shells and complained of enemy red flares on his position. He was finally convinced that the red flares were what he had been calling for during the past half hour.

Keppeln  
February 27th 1945

On the 27th the regiment made another move, going into action just east of Keppeln. There had been a lot of rain during the past few days, turning the side roads into quagmires. Practically every house had been knocked down or was on fire, and dead livestock was all over the place. It was a dirty dismal picture and a dismal campaign. However, it was the one phase of the war in which the troops ate like kings and the German livestock that wasn't killed by shellfire met the same fate at the hands of amateur butchers. One of the results of this was to make paper the most precious commodity a man could have.

For the next few days the forward troops made a number of unsuccessful attempts to push through the Hochwald gap and also into the forest itself, but they met a strong German defence and had to beat off many counter-attacks. On the night of March 1st – 2nd a force of Algonquins, LSR's and tanks pushed through almost to the end of the gap in an attack which resulted in heavy casualties. However by 0442 hours, on the 2nd Capt. Baker reported that his force was on the objective, and within a few minutes Capt. Buchner's group had also firmed up there. At 0520 hours they saw Capt. Cowan's tank go by, leading some tanks and Kangaroos. He went on ahead to a point where some LSR's and Algonquins, with tanks, had consolidated and it was the last seen or heard of him. Later that day it was reported that that force had been entirely wiped out or captured.

Meanwhile two FOO's, on the primary objective were having a busy day, beating off counter-attacks from every direction. Casualties were heavy. Capt. Buchner was hit twice in the head and temporarily lost sight in one eye, but would not be evacuated. He stayed up with the force and continued to bring down much needed fire all day, working in close liaison with Capt. Baker who had a close escape when his tank was hit and set on fire. He and his crew were able to extinguish the blaze and carry on until nightfall when the gallant force was relieved. The efforts of these FOO's was instrumental in allowing our troops to hold their position through the Hochwald gap, and from that springboard further attacks which finally wound up the battle were launched.

Both Capt. Baker and Capt. Buchner were awarded the Military Cross for their work.

Hochwald  
March 3rd 1945

On March 3rd the regiment moved by night to a position near Udemerbruch, just west of the Hochwald gap. It was in that position that Capt. Cowan's tank was found up ahead, along with the body of Bdr. Doug Trumpter who had been killed when his tank was hit. The tank had been hit three times, it was discovered. No traces of Capt. Cowan, Bdr. Johnson or Gnr. Bowerman could be found.

From then on things started to move fairly fast, although in no way as fast as the American surge in the south. They had crossed the Roer and fanned out in all directions to the Rhine, and their spearheads were fast approaching us.

Sonsbeck  
March 7th 1945

Veen became the next objective for 4 div, and to support this attack the regiment moved on the 7th – again at night – into action east of Sonsbeck which used to be a town, but was just a rubble heap when we passed through. The 43rd British Division pushed down along the Rhine and took Xanten, while the Guards Armoured Division came up on our right and pushed north east. As for 4 div, the Infantry ran into stubborn resistance again around Veen and Winnenthal, especially where several hundred “do or die” boys held out to the end.

By the 8th the three regiments in div artillery had fired 79,000 rounds in Operation Blockbuster, and the steady supply of ammunition over the terrific roads was a feat little short of miraculous.

The division was “squeezed out” of the battle on March 10th having taken Veen and Winnenthal. The other divs had cut us out and were mopping up rapidly to the Rhine, so the “stand down” order for 4 dDv gave everybody a rest.

Gnr. Jim Harwood of Fox troop was tragically kill on March 9th when his motorcycle struck a mine practically on the gun position. Capt. Buchner whom we thought had been seriously wounded, arrived back at the regiment after getting a release from the hospital and hitch-hiking the whole way from Louvain near Brussels.

At 0100 hours on March 12th the regiment pulled out and headed for Tilburg and a rest period. No one could understand why an entire armoured division was being sent on that long road trip just to rest, but no one bothered asking questions. They were just happy to be leaving that shattered part of Germany and returning to Holland.

Tilburg  
March 12th 1945

The mud and rain had made this Hochwald offensive one of the worst we had been in. Vehicles were getting stuck continually and the fact that most of the moves were made at night had made things more difficult. Gnr. Johnny Lacheur, Q's battery's irrepressible DR, solved the problem best by discarding his Norton and using a tired old German nag for his DR runs.

Chapter Nine  
Over the Rhine

Tilburg proved to be a pleasant interlude between battles, for it was obvious that the campaign west of the Rhine, smashing victory that it was, had not been decisive. A major crossing of the big river had to be made, followed up by a battle into the heart of the Reich.

The weather had turned really spring-like and Tilburg was teeming with youngsters, all of whom seemed eager to help us wash the Hochwald mud off the vehicles. There were children scrubbing, and scrapping under every vehicle. Queen battery showed great initiative in getting their equipment cleaned by drafting a squad from the local PW cage.

It was in Tilburg that the regiment finally got six GPO command vehicles, built along the lines suggestion made several years before in New Brunswick. The vehicle was taken into use immediately by all GPO's and proved quite satisfactory as a permanent command post, eliminating the need for packing and unpacking for each move .

Rhine  
March 22nd 1945

Within ten days the regiment was on the move again, making the long hop back to Germany where we deployed behind an artificial fog screen near Huibsberden, practically on the Rhine. The gun detachments and ammunition drivers worked over time to dump and camouflage 700 rounds per gun on the gun positions in preparation for the barrage which would pave the way for the Rhine crossing.

There was suspense in the air which reminded one of the pre D-Day months back in England. Everyone knew that the big attack would be starting soon, but very few knew when. The roar of planes filled the air constantly as bombers and fighters ranged wide over the Reich, in perfect flying weather, to soften up defences and cripple transport and supply channels.

Operation Plunder, which this final battle was termed, started off at 1900 hours on March 23rd with a heavy 72 - minute artillery bombardment on the area north of Rees where the 21st Army Group crossing was to be made. Surprisingly, there was very little enemy retaliatory fire

although we were fairly certain they had our positions taped. The crossing went well and by 2200 hours 30th British Corps had eight companies across fanning out to a 2500 yard front.

Next morning we took part in a fire plan to simulate a crossing in the Emmerich area, so that the enemy would be unable to deploy his forces properly to meet the main threat at Rees. By now the whole Rhine front was aflame. The Remagen bridgehead was being exploited to the full, Patton had sent his Third Army storming across the river near Mainz, far to the south, the ninth U.S. Army had fifteen battalions across the river south of Wesel, the 15th Scottish Div was across in strength opposite Xanten.

In conjunction with these numerous ground assaults, a beautifully executed airborne landing was made in the late morning of March 24th. Long lines of tow-planes and gliders streamed over in the warm sunlight, dropping the 6th British and 17th U.S. Airborne divs on inland objectives.

By evening two Canadian battalions from 3 Div had entered the Rees bridgehead and were pushing along the far bank towards Emmerich. As usual, the Canadians seemed to draw the toughest assignment for while other forces struck inland where defences were weaker, they had to fight their way north along the river where there was a succession of defensive positions.

That night enemy aircraft made a number of attacks on the gun position, one of them wounding BSM. Quinlan who was peacefully sleeping in a slit trench. As compensation, the AA shot down the plane practically on top of Peter's guns. On the following day Lieut. T.M.F. Brisbin and Bdr. G.V Allen were both wounded by enemy shellfire on the same gun position.

By the 27th the Americans had really broken loose to the south and were running wild, liberating stalags and setting free thousands of Allied soldiers and foreign slave workers. The ground and airborne forces had linked up and made great progress inland. The Canadians were still slowly grinding their way up to Emmerich, and most of our support was directed to them.

Emmerich finally blossomed with white flags on March 30th and 4 div was warned to move across the Rhine the following night to a concentration area in the fields north of Rees near Millingen. At that time the 2 IC and the Adjutant were both in England on courses, so Major Naylor came into RHQ as 2 IC and Lieut. Bernie McLellan came in to lend a hand.

Rhine Crossing  
March 1st 1945

The regiment started to move shortly after midnight on Easter Sunday morning, crossing the long bridge over the river as dawn started to break. It rained and blew all day while we waited for orders which would start us on what we hoped would be the last campaign of the war.

The original plan called for 4 div to go as fast as possible to the Ruurlo - Lochem area, seize control of the Twente Canal, and strike north east to Delden. 10 Bde group was to lead as far as the canal and then 4 bde was to push through up to Delden and Borne, with our centre line running through Ruurlo, Borculoe, Diepenheim, Delden and Borne.

The regiment lined up to move at 0600 hours on April 2nd but it was two hours later before the head of the column could get onto the road behind the Grenadier Guards. Order of march was 36th Battery, regimental recce party, and the remainder of the regiment. We had a Rep and two FOO's with each of the 22nd and 28th Armoured Regiments and one with the LSR's.

We crossed into "friendly Holland" and at mid-morning concentrated off the road. An hour later we moved on again and at noon moved into another concentration area, this time in a side road looping off the main road. Then plans changed and we had to extricate the recce parties from the centre of the column and send them on ahead to prepare a gun position. The rest of the regiment was told to follow the Grenadier Guards, but we had no idea where we were supposed to be going.

Gelselaar  
April 2nd 1945

Good progress was made but unfortunately the Provost at Ruurlo routed us the wrong way. As a consequence Capt. Bob Lucas who was leading the column, found himself up near Lochem in the embarrassing position of running into a canal over which there was only a Class 9 bridge. That is disastrous when the bulk of your vehicles need a Class 40 bridge. After considerable effort the regiment was turned around, headed back through Borculo and then north east to Gelselaar and finally deployed at dusk between Gelselaar and Diepenheim. The road was in terrible condition and many vehicles, including several mounts, bogged right down when the road verges gave way.

Wegdam  
April 3rd 1945

The Div was taking over from a British Arm'd Bde and was given the task of assaulting across the Twente Canal, so to support the attack, a short move in the morning was made over the Wegdam. Snipers were still loose in the area and small detachments were being shot up in all sorts of strange places. One of the service corps DR's was killed by a sniper, and several of our water trucks were knocked out when they blithely sailed up the main road to the canal to get water, not realizing the enemy held the far side of the canal.

Delden  
April 4th 1945

A successful crossing by the Links and Winks and the LSR's was made by midnight, and on April 4th the regiment crossed the canal and deployed north of Delden. Tanks and infantry had exploited as far as Borne and Almelo. Next day a "swanning" effort was to start 4 Bde fanning out north and east as fast as possible 2 and 3 Divs were to come up on our left in echelon, clearing the River IJssel and crossing it.

The regiment was placed under command of 4 Bde for this new phase of what was turning into a "pursuit" battle, and on April 5th we started out. A terrific traffic jam developed between Borne and Zenderen, and once more the regiment was taken off the road to a concentration area and then had to turn around again on a narrow muddy track. Late in the afternoon the traffic got sorted out and a rapid move north got underway. The column crossed back into Germany where

white flags fluttered in front of every house. After a good run the guns got deployed in darkness on high, hilly ground near Wilsum.

Wilsum  
April 5th 1945

During the night a change of plan came through, and the recce party was ordered to get to the Meppen area as fast as possible so the regiment could move in at dawn to support the LSR's and 28 CAR there. Under Major Naylor they reached Ruhle, just short of Meppen, at first light and were greeted, not by Canadians, but by several dozen Germans who came streaming out of houses for morning parade. The Germans seemed indisposed to fight long, so the recce party ended up killing several and taking about 25 prisoners.

Coevorden  
April 6th 1945

It seems that the plans had changed in the meantime, and a second recce party had to be sent north to Emmlicheim. A DR was sent to recall the first recce party, and the regiment moved up to deploy just south of the Dutch border near Coevorden. By this time 4 Bde was spread thinly over a large area miles ahead of the remainder of the Div who were still encountering opposition along part of the Twente Canal which we had crossed four days previously. We were out of R/T communication with Div Artillery, and an entry in the Div artillery war diary for April 6th sums up the situation well: "23rd Cdn Fd Regt SP presently under command of 4 CAB is moving far and often".

We had one lone Air OP flying along with us, piloted by Capt. "Bubbles" Pursall, and on each recce a landing ground had to be found for him. In that low boggy ground it was not always an easy job but we managed to find a fairly safe spot for him each time. He had been flying with our Div Artillery since the Leopold Canal.

Ruhle  
April 7th 1945

On April 7th the regiment moved directly east to the area reccied the previous day at Ruhle and the remainder of the Div rejoined us there and got ready for the assault across the Dortmund – Ems Canal into Meppen. With Tiffies doing a terrific job and aided by a large artillery plan, the Argylls got four companies across by early morning on the 8th and by evening Meppen was completely ours, while infantry and tanks had already started to fan out past the town.

Sogel  
April 9th 1945

At the crack of dawn on April 9th the regiment was on the road again, but had to spend two hours sitting on the road before crossing the canal into Meppen and striking north along the canal to Lathen. Then the axis of the advance swung east until we reached Sogel and were ordered to deploy one battery immediately. Roger battery crashed into action in fast time, and about an hour later the entire regiment was ordered to take up position there.

For the past week the battle had been extremely fluid, with the flanks of our spearhead constantly exposed to danger. Snipers and isolated groups of Germans were still being mopped up far to the rear. The artillery was being deployed most aggressively, and this war was never better demonstrated than at Sogel when the armour and infantry sent in their DF for the night. Half of them were either right on our gun position or at a range of 500 yards or less. Hardly the kind of thing to engender confidence in the situation.

Sogel  
April 10th 1945

Next morning, with the area shrouded in heavy mist, the 36th battery bore the brunt of a determined counter-attack launched against the town by several hundred German paratroopers aided by snipers within the town itself.

The regiment was getting packed in anticipation of another move when small arms fired began to whistle around the area. Queen battery reported that both troops were being fired on and that a truck had been set ablaze. No enemy had yet been sighted and orders were given to hold fire until some identification had been made; because due to the fluid nature of the fighting, we didn't know where our own forces were. Then mortars started dropping in to the area and reports of casualties came in. Doubt as to the origins of the firing was rapidly dispelled. It was a counter-attack and there didn't appear to be any infantry in front of us.

A half-track tried to pick up wounded in Dog troop but a Jerry machine gun at the front edge of the woods a hundred yards away made this operation rather ticklish until Sgt. Walsh wheeled his mount over and swept the woods with his Browning machine gun. Charlie troop command post and troop kitchen went up in flames and they reported being fired on from the rear.

So Lieut. Harry Smith grabbed an OP tank with L/Bdr Bruse MacArthur manning the Brownings and set out to control the situation. They blasted the enemy in front of Dog troop and then dealt with the Charlie troop opposition. Then Charlie troop started blazing away over open sights at more enemy in front of them. This finally convinced the Paratroop boys that the 36th packed too much punch.

Every man in the battery did an excellent job in beating off this first major counter-attack ever suffered by the unit. But although it was successfully repelled, three men paid the supreme sacrifice. They were Lieut. Doug Denton who was wounded as he lifted a casualty into a half-track and died next day, Gnr. George Buchanan who died later that day, and Gnr. Vic Hubacheck who was instantly killed by a ricochet bullet. Four or five other lads were wounded.

The MO, Capt. Glen Bell, and his staff, L/Bdr. Nixon, Gnr. Reichart and Gnr. Fallis, did a wonderful piece of work in treating the casualties and evacuating them speedily to hospital. The little RAP was crowded to overflowing with wounded men, but they worked calmly, quickly and efficiently to take care of them all.

By noon the excitement had died down and the regiment stayed in that position until the next day. During the night the LSR's cleared out the big woods which lay ahead of us. For this operation they asked for fifty targets on call, each of which had to be worked out and kept up to date, involving a huge volume of work for the command post staffs. Next day the woods had



been cleared and not a single one of the pre-arranged targets had been called for. All in a night's work.

Werlte  
April 11th 1945

On April 11th the regiment moved on east to Werlte, deploying overnight while the armour made rapid progress north and east. Next morning a ten mile move to the east of Lorup was made, where a lot of Jerries in the woods watched us deploy and they decided to surrender, despite the fact they all had automatic rifles, we had only been in the position an hour when the second move was ordered, taking us to Neuvres, from which position we supported the attack on Friesoythe.

Friesoythe  
April 14th 1945

The battle for Friesoythe had been a bitter one and by the time the regiment deployed on the northern fringe of this town on the afternoon of April 14th, the whole place was blazing. Guards were doubled to prevent the fire spreading in to our building, but unfortunately a Peter battery truck, loaded with kit, caught fire and was demolished.

The rapid progress made by 4 Div to date came to an abrupt halt as we hit the Kusten Canal. On the 16th the regiment deployed in a field south of the canal and the toughness of the battle to cross it is shown in the fact that we spent six days there before moving. The Algonquins made the assault but suffered heavily in counter-attacks and for the next few days there was heavy fighting as our forces tried to exploit beyond the small bridgehead. German mortaring and shelling reached its heaviest intensity at this time, and the 23rd was used almost constantly to fire bombardments on enemy gun and mortar locations. In one eight hour period on the 19th we fired 51 rounds per gun on separate bombards.

Kusten Canal  
April 22nd 1945

On April 22nd, after the infantry had pushed several miles north of the canal, the regiment deployed in probably its strangest position of the war. It was impossible to get off the roads due to the peat bogs so the regiment was deployed practically in a line on the road running along the north side of the Kusten Canal. Right behind us the 15th Fd Rgt, was strung out along the south bank. To the right and left flanks the enemy still held the bank of the canal, so that our arc of fire was about 120 degrees right and left of north; and the mounts had a bad time slewing on the narrow road. It is a miracle no mounts disappeared into the canal.

To the west the FDL's were on the left edge of Roger battery position and as local protection a tank and several machine guns were placed there and constantly manned. To the east the LSR's were making a twin push along each side of the canal so that we had no worry there. They ran into stiff resistance the whole way, and Capt. Charlie O'Hara and Lieut. Charlie Conquest, both FOO's with the LRS had a busy time of it for several days.

Our immediate objective was now Bad Zwischenahn and the lake to the north. After that we would go to either Oldenburg or Wilhelmshaven. 2 Div was approaching Oldenburg from the

south on our right, so that it was felt that we might possibly strike east to cut the escape routes from Oldenburg to Wilhelmshaven.

Edewecht  
April 27th 1945

While FOOing with the force pushing up the right hand axis towards Bad Zwischenahn, Lieut. Ken Heans carrier was knocked out by shell fire. He was wounded and Gnr. Dick Mills, his driver, was killed. Later that same day, after the regiment had deployed near Edewecht L/Cpl Taylor of the RCCS troop was killed on a line recce. He had only gone about three quarters of a mile from RHQ towards the east when he ran into a German out post.

In that position the gun areas were shelled quite heavily, even from the right rear where there were Germans still "unmopped".

Progress improved and within three days there was a force on each side of the lake and Bad Zwischenahn was surrounded. The town capitulated after the following message had been addressed to the authorities by the GoC.

1. Your town is completely surrounded by Canadian armour and infantry. Strong artillery forces are deployed within range. Aircraft are available on immediate call.
2. The shattered remnants of 7 Para Div in your town are completely inadequate to defend it or break out of it.
3. The Canadian Commander offers you the following alternatives – un conditional surrender or annihilation.
4. No German forces are available to attempt a relief.

The town chose the wiser of the two alternatives, and on May 1st the regiment deployed on its western outskirts, in view of the lake.

Bad Zwischenahn  
May 1st 1945

News of the reported death of Hitler and the actual death of Mussolini was received and to everyone it looked as though surely the end must be at hand. The Americans and British had penetrated deep into the Reich, the Russians had linked up with the Yanks, Berlin and Hamburg had fallen, thousands of prisoners had been liberated, including the six officers and men of this regiment who had been taken captive. Morale was high. But continued German shelling and mortaring in our area served to remind everyone that we were still fighting a war on this little front.

Rorbeck  
May 3rd 1945

On May 3rd the battle cracked wide open and 4 Div set out in rapid pursuit of the fleeing enemy. We were on the road most of the time, unable to make any contact with the Germans. During

the late afternoon a deployment was ordered near Rorbeck but there was nothing to fire at and soon we hit the road again. The infantry and armour had passed Rastede and had cut the road and railway running north from Oldenburg. That city had capitulated during the day to 2 Div.

Rastede  
May 3rd 1945

As dusk was falling the regiment pulled into what turned out to be its last gun position of the war, midway between Nutte and Rastede. Some opposition had now been encountered and we proceeded to plaster the entire area with gunfire all night along and throughout most of the following day.

## Chapter Ten "Cease Fire"

Rumours of peace were rife all day on May 4th, but people had been fooled so many times that it was put down to optimism and wishful thinking.

Rastede  
May 4th 1945

Then during the evening the BIG NEWS was heard over the radio and was later confirmed as official when we telephoned HQ RCA. All Germans forces in north west Germany, Denmark and Holland had surrendered to 21 Army Group. The Fighting was over for the British and Canadians. Cease Fire would officially be proclaimed in the morning. Meanwhile, we were to do no more firing and were to ensure all guns were emptied.

The concrete fact that the war was over was hard to believe. People were happy, but a trifle bewildered and even sceptical too. Some expected to wake in the morning and find it was all a grand dream. One felt rather lost with nothing to do.

May 5th 1945

But all doubts vanished at 0800 hours on May 5th when the magic words came crackling over the rear link radio and over the telephone "Cease Fire! Cease Fire! Cease Fire!".

The War was over

The 23rd had reached the end of a long, long trail and had fired its last round. The guns and the men who manned the guns had written the final chapter in their three year history and now their book was slowly closed.

## Appendix One COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lt-Col. J. A. Robertson, Montreal April 1942 to January 1943  
Lt-Col. G. W. Wishart, Toronto January to March, 1943  
Lt-Col. K. N. Lander, Toronto March 1943 to August 1944  
Lt-Col. R. E. Hogarth, Timmins August 1944 to Cease Fire.

## Appendix Two

### WHERE AND WHEN

#### July 1944

27th conc. Meavaines  
29th action South of Caen near Ifs  
30th action Mondeville

#### August 1944

8th conc. East of St. Andre-sur-Orne  
8th action Verrieres  
8th action Roquancourt  
9th action Caicullet  
10th action Hautmesnil  
11th action & conc. St. Aignon de Crammesnil  
13th action Renemesnil  
14th action Rouvres  
14th action south of Rouvres  
15th action Olenden  
17th conc. Perrieres  
17th action Les Moutiers-en-Auge  
19th action Le Menil Girard ( near Trun )  
22nd action Coudehard  
22nd P.Bty action Crossing of River La Vie  
23rd action Monnai  
24th action Bernay  
25th action Bout de la Ville  
26th action St. Pierre Les Elbeuf  
27th action Seine pine woods  
29th action Ymaro north of Seine  
30th action Le Hamil aux Batiers  
30th action Grainville-sur-Ry  
31st action Boissay  
31st Easy trp action Forges-Les-Eaux

#### September 1944

1st action Airaines  
1st Q.Bty action Wanel  
2nd action Sorel  
3rd action Abbeville  
6th action Wisques  
7th action St. Omer  
7th P.Bty action Soex  
7th action St. Riquies  
8th action west of Den Daelo  
9th action Den Daelo  
12th action Oedelem

13th action Syssele  
15th action Cliet  
16th action Eecloo  
19th action Caprycke  
22nd action west of Maldegem  
22nd action Balgerhoek

#### October 1944

16th conc. Schilde north east of Antwerp  
19th action Putte  
21st action Punt Heuvek  
22nd action Wildert near Roosendaal Canal  
25th action Spillebeek  
28th action Heimolen  
30th action Halsteren

#### November 1944

5th action Dinteloord  
7th conc. Halsteren  
8th conc. Vught  
9th action s'Hertogenbosch area  
24th rest area Boxtel and Gemonde

#### December 1944

6th action s'Hertogenbosch  
21st conc. Vught  
24th conc. Breda  
29th Q. Bty action St. Philipsland

#### January 1945

5th action Op. Trojan  
8th action s'Hertogenbosch  
25th action Sprang  
31st action s'Hertogenbosch

#### February

19th conc. Vught  
22nd conc. Hau ( near Cleve )  
24th action Louisendorf  
27th action Keppeln

#### March

3rd action Udermerbruch ( Hochwald )  
7th action Sonsbeck  
12th rest area Tilburg  
22nd action Hulbsberden ( Rhine )

#### April

1st conc. Millengen ( across Rhine )

2nd action Gelselaar area  
3rd action Wegdam  
4th action Delden  
5th action near Wilsum  
6th action Emmlicheim  
7th action Ruhle  
9th action Sogel  
11th action Wertle  
12th action Lorup  
12th action Neuvrees  
14th action Friesoythe  
16th action north of Friesoythe  
22nd action Kusten Canal  
27th action Edeweicht

May

1st action Bad Zwischenahn  
3rd action Rorbeck  
3rd action near Rastede

Cease Fire

Appendix Three

#### CASUALTIES KILLED IN ACTION

Capt. Robert Finlay Gibson Wousche Plantage 24th October 1944  
Capt. William Graham Brown Leopold Canal 8th October 1944  
Lieut. Douglas T. Denton Sogel 11th April 1945  
Bdr. Douglas G. Trumper Hochwald 2nd March 1945  
Bdr. William G. Richmond Hautmesnil 10th August 1944  
Gnr. Robert J. Black Leopold Canal 8th October 1944  
Gnr. George A. Buchanan Sogel 10th April 1945  
Gnr. Frank Camolese Werlte 11th April 1945  
Gnr. Peter J. Craigen Leopold Canal 8th October 1944  
Gnr. George E. Climo Kusten Canal 25th April 1945  
Gnr. George S. Fisher Soex 8th September 1944  
Gnr. James E. Harwood Sonsbeck 9th March 1945  
Gnr. Charles W. Hooper Wousche Plantage 26th October 1944  
Gnr. Victor Hubacheck Sogel 10th April 1945  
Gnr. Norman Kettlewell Leopold Canal 6th October 1944  
Gnr. James B. King Roquancourt 8th August 1944  
Gnr. Frank H. Langille Soex 8th September 1944  
Gnr. George McElroy Wildert 23rd October 1944  
Gnr. Richard B. Mills Kusten Canal 26th April 1945  
Gnr. James A. Reid Soex 8th September 1944  
Gnr. Clifford L. Stitzinger Renemesnil 13th August 1944  
Sgt. R. A. Matson 104 LAD (CREME) Caen 8th August 1944  
L/Cpl, E. R. Taylor (RCCS) Edeweicht 27th April 1945  
Pte. Robert Audette 104 LAD (CREME) Caen 8th August 1944

Pte. Romeo Landry (RCASC) Soex 8th September 1944

addition to Appendix 3

## WOUNDED

Lt-Col. Kenneth N. Lander 11 Aug 44  
Major Frank A. Robertson 11 Aug 44  
Capt. Robert S. Lucas 14 Aug 44  
Capt. John W. Monahan 9 Aug 44  
Capt. Samuel M. Pinkerton 14 Aug 44  
Capt. Robert A. Sharpe 9 Aug 44  
Capt. John White 15 Aug 44  
Capt. William R. Buchner 3 Mar 45  
Lieut. Thomas M. F. Brisbin 25 Mar 45  
Lieut. Samuel Brody 23 Oct 44  
Lieut. Douglas Cave 9 Aug 44  
Lieut. Kenneth W. Heans 27 Apr 45  
Lieut. Walter E. Sills 31 Oct 44

Gnr. Francis P. Abercrombie 8 Sep 44  
Bdr. Gordon Victor Allen 25 Mar 45  
Gnr. Leonard S. Allen 15 Aug 44  
Gnr. Howard Anderson 8 Aug 44  
Gnr. Walter H. Banham 23 Oct 44  
Gnr. Neil L Bell 20 Aug 44  
Gnr. Maurice Bogo 8 Sep 44  
Gnr. Raymond E. Bowen 1 Mar 45  
Gnr. John C. Callaghan 3 Apr 45  
Gnr. David H. Campbell 8 Sep 44  
Bdr. Leo C. Coveney 3 Sep 44  
Gnr. James R. DeLong 24 Apr 45  
Gnr. Douglas W. Dewar 9 Sep 44  
Gnr. Robert W. Eakin 9 Aug 44  
Gnr. Andrew Gallo 6 Oct 44  
Gnr. Ralph E. Gardner 2 Mar 45  
Gnr. Nelson F. Gibbons 8 Oct 44  
Sgt. Gordon W. Graham 15 Aug 44  
Gnr. Clarence V. Griffin 15 Apr 45  
Bdr. George E. Hammond 27 Aug 44  
Sgt. Kenneth H. Hanger 10 Aug 44  
Gnr. Philip B. Hennessy 8 Sep 44  
Gnr. Charles H. Hoselton 20 Aug 44  
Bdr. Ralph A. Johnson 9 Aug 44  
Gnr. Courtney J. Kelley 15 Aug 44

L/Bdr. Walter F. Kritz 4 May 45  
Gnr. Robert E. Lee 10 Apr 45  
BQMS Clark H. Lowe 15 Aug 44

Gnr. Robert Bruce MacArthur 14 Aug 44  
Gnr. Roddie F. McDonald 10 Apr 45  
Gnr. Wesley R. McEwen 8 Sep 44  
Gnr. William M. MacGillivray 8 Aug 44  
Gnr. Donald J. Matheson 8 Aug 44  
Gnr. John Mayich 28 Apr 45  
Gnr. Joseph Novak  
BSM. Albert E. Quinlan 25 Mar 45  
Gnr. J. P. Quinn 10 Oct 44  
Gnr. Thomas Reed 28 Aug 44  
Gnr. Joseph A. Rivier 10 Apr 45  
Gnr. Stanley Y. Robertson 14 Aug 44  
Gnr. Joseph W. Sheehan 13 Apr 45  
Gnr. Edward E. Sigouin 1 Mar 45  
Gnr. Harry Taylor 27 Apr 45  
CpL W. H. Taylor 8 Sep 44  
Gnr. Andrew W. Trofanenko 6 Oct 44  
Gnr. John E. Vold 2 Aug 44  
Bdr. Kenneth J. West 8 Aug 44  
Bdr. Clayton P. White 8 Aug 44  
Bdr. John B. Wilkes 12 Mar 45  
Gnr. Earle J. Wilson 28 Aug 44  
Gnr. Wilfred J. Woods 2 Sep 44

#### PRISONERS OF WAR

Capt. William A. Cowan-missing 2 Mar 45 in Hochwald. Liberated by Americans. Safe in UK 8 Apr 45.  
Capt. Robert Brownridge - missing 7 Oct 44, Leopold. Reported PW, safe in Allied hands 14 Apr 45.  
Capt. John M. Donohue - missing 10 Aug. Normandy. Reported PW Oct 44. Safe in Allied hands Apr 45  
Bdr. Robert H. Johnson - missing 2 Mar 45, Hochwald. Reported safe Apr 45.  
Gnr. Bruce R. Bowerman - missing 8 Mar 45, Hochwald. Safe in UK 8 Apr 45.  
Gnr. Joseph Tendeck - missing 7 Oct 44, Leopold. Safe in UK 21 Apr 45.

#### Appendix Four

##### HONORS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Service Order  
Lt.-Col. R. E. Hogarth

Military Cross  
Capt. Clifford Roy Baker  
Capt. William Rolland Buchner  
Lieut. Charles Harold Conquest

Croix de Guerre avec Palme



Lt-Col. R. E. Hogarth

Croix de Guerre avec Bronze Star  
L/Bdr. Lorne Munce

American Bronze Star  
Capt. W. A. Cowan

Member of the British Empire  
RSM. E. R. James

Mention-in-Despatches  
Capt. W. R. Buchner  
BSM. T. P. Rimmer  
Sgt. E. A. Betteridge  
Bdr. J. W. Budway  
Bdr. C. P. H. White  
Gnr. P. B. Hennessy  
Gnr. W. A. Smith  
Gnr. E. J. Wilson

Commander-in-Chief's Certificate  
Capt. J. White  
Capt. W. R. Buchner  
BSM. F. T. Bignell  
Sgt. D. H. Beatty  
L/Bdr. Lorne Munce  
L/Bdr. C. G. Kelly  
Gnr. H. F. Kane  
Gnr. R. E. Gardner  
Gnr. D. W. McDermott

The Military Cross was awarded to Lieut. W. H. Q. Cameron for gallant action in the Hochwald about two weeks after he was promoted to captain and left the 23rd to go to the 14th Field Regiment.

#### Appendix Five FACTS AND FIGURES

Through training in Canada and England and through action in north-west Europe, the regiment handled a total of 105 tanks, self-propelled mounts and GPO command mounts.

Sixteen of the SP mounts brought from England were still in action at "Cease Fire." However, there had been new mounts received at Pippingford Park in June, so that only ten of the original 24 mounts taken on strength in Eastbourne were still going at the end of the war.

Not a single mount or gun was damaged by enemy action. There were no casualties from enemy shellfire to personnel inside a mount, although there were casualties on the gun position

and one man was killed in a mount due to a premature from the gun behind his. One man was killed by small arms fire inside a mount due to a ricochet bullet.

At cease fire there were only three of the original gun barrels left. It is estimated that an average of 12,000 rounds was fired by each gun during action.

The average mileage recorded by an SP mount on the continent was 1550 miles, while the OP tank average was about 1700 miles. Some of the mounts put on a total of 2800 miles counting the period in England as well as that in Europe.

Only one OP tank, TLE, lasted until the end of the war and it finally conked out on the 'Farewell to the Guns' parade, although the driver got it started again and finished the march past! Three 31st battery mounts, however, were still going in the middle of April but were replaced at Sogel.

Six OP tanks were lost through enemy action, and another had to be BLR'd after it had been hit by enemy fire although it was able to return from the OP under its own power.

Of the 38 Officers who left Canada with the regiment in July, 1943, only twelve were left at "Cease Fire," and only six of those had been with the regiment in Petawawa in June, 1942.

Other known WD census numbers and names.

Ram OP's  
CT202117, CT205144, CT205151

Sherman V OP's  
T147252, T148457, T288695

Sexton GPO's  
Mk I  
T204815 DARLING  
Mk II  
S233647, S233651, S234673, S234690, S234749

Sexton SP  
Mk I  
CS204799, CS204802, CS204813  
Mk II  
S233771, S233853, S233918, S233926, S233992, S234076, S234083, S234097, S234132, S234159, S234161

Names  
AGATHA A troop 31st Battery no. 3 gun  
ARLENE A troop 31st Battery no. 4 gun  
MISS TORONTO 31st Battery  
ROGER

COLLEEN C troop 36th Battery no. 2 gun  
CORREEN II C troop 36th Battery no. 3 gun  
MISS COBURG C troop 36th Battery  
DOFFIE D troop 36th Battery

CT205144 is a known Ram OP belonging to 23rd Field Regiment. ( photo from [ramtank.ca](http://ramtank.ca) )

T204815 DARLING is known Sexton GPO belonging to 23rd Field Regiment. The WD number prefix is unusual as it would normally be either S or CS ( this maybe because the gun has been removed ). ( photo from [ramtank.ca](http://ramtank.ca) )