

THE LOYAL EDMONTON REGIMENT

REPORT ON OPERATIONS

from

GRANAROLO

GRANAROLO

to

THE END OF THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

Ref Maps - ITALY

Sheet 89 III SW 1/25000

Sheet 89 III NW 1/25000

Sheet 88 II SE 1/25000

Sheet 88 II NE 1/25000

Sheet 89 IV SE 1/25000

Sheet 89 IV NE 1/25000

On night 3/4 Jan 45 the operation to capture GRANAROLO was put into effect and it proceeded as planned. PPCLI crossed the CANALE NAVIGLIO and SEAF of G passed through and secured the area to the right rear of the town. LER coys arrived in the FUP by 0245 hours and G coy crossed the SL in area 367314 at 0530 hours. GRANAROLO had been abandoned by the enemy and coy objectives were occupied without casualties. By 0900 hours the bn was consolidated and in contact with the Seaf of C. Bn Tac HQ opened in GRANAROLO at 355119 shortly after 0900 hours 4 Jan 45. All round defences were prepared.

On 5 Jan 45 B coy LER took over PPCLI area and held GRANAROLO without incident, except for spasmodic shelling, until night of 6 Jan 45 when the bn was relieved and moved back preparatory to taking over from the RCDs in front of BAGNACAVALLLO. Bn Tac HQ opened at 1915 hours at 391297 and coys were in posn by 2030 hours.

By 2100 hours 7 Jan 45 the LER had relieved the RCDs without sustaining casualties. Locns were Bn Tac HQ - 386404, A - 367415, B - 303419, C - 367407, D - 378407. The following day B coy moved up on the near bank of the Senio relieving a coy of the LRSR. This became the right fwd coy posn and here the enemy were within grenade range of our posns. The other two fwd coys were not at the dyke bank but held well-wired posns some 250 yards back from the river line centered on houses. Stand-to posns were dug well away from the house and area def was kept wide of the buildings. Wire, trip flares and mine fds provided the coys with killing areas.

The days were much alike here. Any enemy movement drew fire. The bn Snipers accounted for many Germans seen digging along the dyke top. The Arty FOO and all mortar FOOs engaged small targets regularly. In the right fwd posn PIATs and 36 Grenades and 2" Mortar bombs were used effectively. Contact patrols were frequent and wire was extended and improved. Movement by day at the fwd pls was avoided. Enemy harassing fire with mortars and guns was regular.

A sharp action took place on the night of 15 Jan 45. It had been decided to wire the foot of the dyke bank, well in front of the left and centre coys for 800 yards, to prevent enemy patrols entering the area easily by night. The plan involved a covering force of 2 pls occupying the near bank of the Senio. Sp coy provided 6 wiring parties. The 2 pls of D coy got onto the bank easily in a silent adv and took 2 prisoners. The dumps of barb and concertina wire were carried up and spaced below the bank at 2030 hours but by 2200 hours the German reaction was considerable. Rifle grenades showered the near face of the dyke and a MG to the left of the covering force opened up on the main wire dump. A Hun patrol came into the left fwd coy at 2220 hours but was driven off. At the same time B coy's pl on the bank at the right of the bn sector reported an effective German counter measure. Four enemy carrying explosive popped up over the dyke bank, ran to the house where the fwd section was in posn and blew a large explosive charge. This put the section temporarily out of action and was followed by a small attack to clear the covering party from that area of the dyke. The wiring was proving unduly costly for 10 casualties had been inflicted on the bn by 2300 hours. The plan was therefore abandoned and the D coy and Sp coy men returned.

For the balance of the tour in this static area the bn activity was confined to ambush patrols, harassing fire, improvement of wire and the laying of a large AP mine fd between the centre and right fwd coys. The enemy learned not to move on the dyke bank and made no effective patrols or raids across the river. The LER was relieved by the WNSR on night 19 Jan 45 and moved into Corps Reserve south of RUSSI with Bn Tac HQ 404316.

After 48 hours in res, during which troops cleaned up and the officers recce'd stop lines and switch lines to deal with any major German counter-attack across the Senio the bn returned to the line, the bde relieved 1/21 Cremona Battle Gp with LER right fwd and Seaf of C left fwd. The LER relief was completed at 2230 hours 22 Jan 45. The new area was not unlike the bn posns in front of BAGNACAVALLLO. Locns were Bn Tac HQ - 490478, A - 490494, B - 496492, C - 483477, D - 484486. Again the front was wide. Three coys were fwd in dug-in posns centering around farm buildings. Again the enemy was looking down from a canal bank, this time the FOSSA VECCHIO, into flat ground occupied by the bn.

At midnight 23 Jan the enemy shelled and mortared the bn area inflicting 7 casualties on A coy which was the right fwd coy - D coy. Behind an intense mortar conc the enemy rushed at the main house at A coys fwd pl. The return fire drove the enemy off but not before they had taken two men from a weapon pit fifty yards from the house. The attack on D coy was repulsed without loss. Our mortar and arty DFs proved most effective but small arms also turned the enemy away.

On 24 Jan the LER made use of a Wasp for the first time. Twenty Germans were reported to have filed into a house 300 yards fwd of D coy. A recce patrol went out and confirmed their presence in a ruin at 481490. At 1945 hours, with a pl following, the Wasp worked up within 30 yards of the ruin and put light hot-shots into it. The fire was completely satisfactory. The Wasp withdrew when through firing, and mortar smoke was put down to avoid silhouetting our tps as they closed in against the burning building. Unfortunately the enemy had withdrawn from the posn.

At 0530 hours 26 Jan 45 1 offr and 14 ORs made a smash and grab attack on Casa Morini (485496) and returned with a prisoner. Another German was killed in the clash. The prisoner gave an identification which higher formations had required and confirmed that the two men missing from A coy on night 23 Jan 45 were PsW.

Much movement had been observed at Casa Baronio (488501) and it was decided to raid this house and use Wasps on the op. To this end at 0100 hours 27 Jan C coy sent a recce patrol to find a mine free route to the house. This patrol bumped a strong German patrol while on the way to Casa Baronio and in the fire fight sustained 2 casualties. Enemy arty and mortar fire was heavy for sometime hereafter. On this same night two Italian civilians were caught in our lines. They proved to be German agents sent over the canal and later stood trial for their lives.

Casa Baronio was raided by B coy at 0600 hours 28 Jan. Under cover of a short intense conc by arty and mortars 2 pls rushed the 2 houses clearing one and shooting up the other with PIATs and grenades. As the pls withdrew one was caught in MG fire from the dyke and suffered casualties. In daylight a party returned to the house and found a 6 man German stretcher party there for the German casualties. Between them the stretcher bearers arranged an hours truce for evac of casualties. The



Germans carried out six stretcher cases and had 3 walking wounded. B coy had 2 killed, 5 wounded and 3 taken prisoner. This was the last action on the FOSSA VECCHIO for the bn went into bde res and soon the bde moved into res at RUSSI.

On night 9 Feb the bn marched into def posns North of BAGNACAVALLLO in what proved to be the units final tour of battle duty in Italy. The LER relieved the WNSR between 1800 and 2130 hours taking up the same coy areas as the bn had occupied from 7th to 19th Jan 45 with Bn Tac HQ at 386404. All coys set about subduing the enemy and within 2 days little movement was to be observed along the Senio bank. Honey tks of 12 PTR in sp assisted in this smartening-up process by shooting into any weapon post we could locate on the bank.

At 1800 hours 14 Feb an enemy SP commenced a heavy shelling of 14 pl C coy which was dug in on the Senio bank at the extreme right of the bn posn. At 1900 hours heavy mortaring commenced in that area and a German fighting patrol attacked the pl posn. It was engaged with SAA and 2" Mortar and close in 3" Mortar DFs were fired. The remnants of the patrol withdrew leaving 5 dead. Our casualties were 3 slightly wounded. Next morning German stretcher bearers requested an hours truce to recover their dead and were granted 15 minutes to remove the dead.

Always the hot-spot of the bn area, the right fwd pl of the bn was attacked at 2230 hours 21 Feb 45 by means of a mine or barrel of explosive rolled over the dyke into the pl posn. This caused three casualties, one of them serious.

On 24 Feb a serious attack developed at this posn then manned by 18 pl of D coy. SP fire on the area began at 1740 hours. Direct hits were made on buildings immediately behind the bank but 17 pl was dug in entirely on the reverse slope and only 3 casualties resulted. The shelling broke the double line comm to 17 pl and the 38 sets failed to operate. The D coy line to bn was blown out also but by air it was learned that 17 pl had reported enemy in strength over the bank and behind their posn before their 38 set failed. All DFs of arty, mortar and MG was brought down and the Seaf of C coy on the right which was also being attacked, covered in the bn flank with their DF tasks. At 1920 hours with 17 pl still out of touch and enemy shelling and mortaring continuing the CC went to D coy HQ. Infm gradually came in and the situation by 2100 hours was that 17 pl had not budged from their posn and had beaten off the enemy who were either dead, wounded or in process of withdrawal. The pl brens were almost out of amm and any buildings in the pl area were rubble heaps. Prisoners numbered six, and two dead were buried inside our wire. Others who had rushed an unoccupied house that had been booby-trapped were left lying. German wounded were cleared out by German stretcher parties which could be heard talking and working throughout the night. Our casualties were 4 killed and 10 wounded though many of the wounded were slight. From the PsW it was learned that this attack was not a raid but an op by which the Germans planned to seize and occupy a stretch of our flank of the Senio dyke. 2 coy of the 362 Fus Bn had been practised in rear areas for the assault on the 17 pl area. 5 coy of either the 956 or 1059 Regt had made a more dispersed effort at seizing the dyke on our left held by three coys of the Seaf of C. The PsW paid fervent tribute to the effectiveness of the bns DF. This was the final action of the regiment in Italy for on 25 Feb the LER turned over the bn area to the 1/15 Punjabs of the 8th Indian Div and moved to a concentration area in the first of a series of moves which were to ultimately take us to Belgium.

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APPENDIX "A"  
LESSONS LEARNED

1. Even when the enemy has the advantage of good observation of the bn FDLs it is possible by aggressive use of Snipers and FOOs from arty and unit mortars and by constant submission of mortar and shell reps by pls to deny the enemy infm or freedom of action.

2. By siting weapon pits well away from buildings and reinforcing the few necessary buildings with timber and sandbags a bn gains comparative immunity from routine hostile arty and mortar fire. This must be coupled with a policy of minimum movement by day in fwd posns.

3. The wide spacing of pls in a large bn def area will not weaken the def providing wire is well laid and covered by coy weapons. When in addition mines are employed in ground that is difficult to see into by night and trip flares are set along probable lines of approach a relatively small force can stand off a sharp attack by use of DFs and small arms.

4. A thorough DF plan with particular emphasis on close in DF by 3" mortars, MMGs and 2" mortars is essential.

5. It is good policy to let the enemy come to you when the static area has been given a thorough all round def. This policy does NOT result in a Maginot Line type of thinking if every opportunity is seized to harass any movement seen or heard on the bn front.

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