

THE LOYAL EDMONTON REGIMENT

REPORT ON OPS

BATTLE FOR BAGNACAVALLIO

DECEMBER 1944

On 11 Dec 44, the LER had concentrated WEST of the LAMONE at TRAVERSERA, MR 430378.

A fairly quiet day was spent on 12 Dec but on the morning of the 13th Dec, the CO was ordered to 1 Cdn Inf Bde HQ. Here he learned that the bn was under cmd of 1 Cdn Inf Bde from 1100 hrs and was to re-est the brhead over the NAVIGLIO CANALE where the CYR were desperately fighting to retain a foothold over the obstacle. The CO went to CYR and HPER Tac HQ to get the gen situation firsthand and returned to 1 Cdn Inf Bde HQ at 1200 hrs to make a plan. The Bde Comd offered all available sp and 'C' Sqn BCD Comd was at hand to give assistance. The plan called for arty, 4.2 mortar and MMG sp with smoke to sp an attack on a two coy front commencing at 1600 hrs, each fwd coy being supported by one tp of tks.

B Coy on the right, C Coy on the left, were in the FUP WEST of NEPTUNE, MR 408399, at 1530 hrs and although subjected to hy arty fire, crossed the SL (the canal) at H hr. B Coy's objective, rd from NEPTUNE to MR 410403, and one tp of tks pushed quickly along the rd on the WEST side of the canal and by 1640 hrs were in contact with the enemy at 408401. C Coy were at NEON, MR 400398, at 1620 hrs but the supporting tks were held up by a knocked out enemy tk at MR 403397. At 1635 hrs D Coy was sent through C Coy to take DAZE, MR 403406. Enemy tks and SP guns were moving on both C and B coy fronts but inf opposn was quickly cleared up without many cas to us. At 1900 hrs we reverted to Comd of 2 Bde. Sp from tks, MMG, mortars and arty was excellent and by midnight A Coy was ordered fwd to firm up in area MR 405402. Posns by first lt 14 Dec were: Tac HQ 410397, A Coy 405402, B Coy 408401, C Coy 400398, and D Coy 403406. All coys had tks, MMGs and 'Littlejohns'. 5 Cdn Armd Div passed up the rd through B Coy at 1200 hrs. At 1245 hrs D Coy were very heavily shelled and at 1315 hrs reported enemy tks on the rd to the NORTH. These were at once engaged by predicted med fire. At 1340 hrs it was very evident that D Coy posn at MR 403406 was being heavily counter attacked and our 3" mortars fired SOS task, MMGs harrassed, 4.2 mortars firing in depth r'ng arty, both med and fl. An order was sent to A Coy to be immediately available to restore the situation at D Coy if necessary. Counter attack continued until 1540 hrs but by this time A Coy had been ordered to reinforce D Coy who had suffered hy cas. At 1910 hrs locns as follows: Tac HQ 410397, A Coy 402406, B Coy 409401, C Coy 405398, and D Coy 404406. The night of 14 Dec was fairly quiet but at 0810 hrs 15 Dec an enemy tk was reported in our minefd at MR 403407. D Coy immediately attacked with PIATS and the tk comd was taken prisoner. The tk was a PANTHER and in good working order except for a blown track. At 1700 hrs D Coy reported increased enemy activity

at MAROON, MR 403409. At 2000 hrs, under 1st arty and mortar sp, C Coy attacked MAROON. Lt E.M.K. MacGregor, OC C Coy, although fired at frontally and from both flanks by MGs and faustpatronen, made a grand charge and was on his objective at 2105 hrs. Pns removed our minefd and a tp of tks moved up to help consolidate C Coy's area. Wasps were ordered fwd to assist C Coy to hold against considerable enemy strength to their NORTH. C Coy were bothered considerably during the night but beat off all attempts of the enemy to infiltrate. At 0755 hrs 16 Dec, two enemy tks appeared at MR 402411 but our 'Littlejohns' were unable to engage. During the day the enemy remained active but no serious threat developed. By 0145 hrs 17 Dec, the cmd of the area passed to the R22R and at 0255 hrs BnHQ opened at MR 434385. PsW taken totalled 91. Enemy estimated wounded or killed, 40. Own cas were 12 killed and 38 wounded.

The bn came into bde res and had a day's rest before preparing for the next phase of the op.

At the Bde 'O' Gp on 18 Dec, the LER were ordered to pass through the WESTMR area and seize COLERIDGE, MR 388415, thus securing the NW flank of Bde objective.

At 1845 hrs 19 Dec, Tac HQ opened at MR 417416, the fwd coys, A and B, were in the FUP by 1930 hrs and at 2000 hrs crossed the SL, FOSSETT. 2, MR Sq 4141, without incident. A Coy pushed quickly to their objective, C TASSELLI, MR 408420 and at 2135 hrs were mopping up that area.

B Coy on the left were less fortunate, by DF mortar and arty together with by MG fire from C ARGELLI disorganized the coy to a certain extent and made progress very slow. A Coy reported several cas from shelling and that their str was down. However, by midnight A Coy were firm on their objectives with several PsW. B Coy were still closely engaged in the open fds around C ARGELLI.

Shortly after midnight, enemy SP fire again weakened B Coy and their str was reported as approx 25 effective men.

Continuing their fight in the area C ARGELLI until 0330 hrs 20 Dec, B Coy was finally forced to consolidate in that area. At 0100 hrs, C Coy was ordered to by-pass C ARGELLI to the SOUTH and seize the rd junc MR 400417. At 0200 hrs C Coy came under very hy fire and were forced to halt and re-org for their attack. A new H hr was set for this coy show and an extensive fire program was laid on to sp it. At 0215 hrs A Coy was threatened with an attempt to surround them but accurate 3" mortar and arty DF stopped enemy activity and resulted in several PsW being taken. The situation on the flanks was equally critical. The PPCLI on the left had one coy in the area MR 403412 who had been heavily counter attacked and were trying to firm up in that area. On the right, PERTH Regt had successfully crossed the FOSBO MARIO, MR 413424, had been counter attacked and forced to withdraw to the EAST side of the canal.



C Coy's attack on COLERIDGE, MR 400417, was successful at 0530 hrs and they proceeded to mop up buildings in the area. At 0700 hrs 20 Dec, C Coy reported their objective firm and dispatched a pl to attempt to contact the PPCLI at MR 403412 to allow our tks and pns to join them. The patrol reported that at least one enemy tk, with approx one pl of inf, was holding firm along the rd between C Coy and the PPCLI. At 0900 hrs a clearer situation of the left flank was obtained, C and B Coys joined forces and occupied a HQ at MR 403418, C Coy pls 403417, 401418, 401417, B Coy Pls at 404419 and 403419. The PPCLI had two coys at MR 403412. The enemy had two SP guns with inf at 398417 and one tk with inf at 400416. Enemy tks were also reported in the area 393413 so the Pnr Pl was sent to mine the rds leading into our area. En-route they captured 12 PsW who were still holding C ARGELLI, MR 407417. A Coy at 0930 hrs patrolled towards COLERIDGE, became involved in a fight and captured 13 PsW on the route between A and C Coys. At 1100 hrs the enemy counter attacked COLERIDGE. Enemy SP guns systematically shot up the houses and forced C Coy to withdraw to the fds NW of COLERIDGE. The attack continued for an hr, causing both C and B Coys some cas. Hy mortar fire was brought down on German inf and SPs. The enemy, convinced his counter attack was successful, stopped his arty and mortar fire, so C Coy was ordered to attack again and by 1425 hrs had their original posn. At 1500 hrs the situation seemed well in hand with locns, A Coy C TASS-ELLI, MR 406420, B Coy MR 404419, C Coy MR 401418, D Coy res with Tac HQ.

The CO then went to Bue to discuss the gen situation and as a result, at 1600 hrs, half of D Coy and 1 tp of tks were ordered to clear the rd from MAROON, MR 403412 to COLERIDGE. The left flank was very heavily smoked with HE conc in depth and by 1650 hrs, notwithstanding a battle at MR 400416 in which this small gp took 25 PsW, COLERIDGE was reached and the area firmed up. MMGs and A tk guns were immediately sent fwd and the situation was quite happy.

At 2000 hrs, D Coy were ordered fwd to seize MACRAE, MR 388415. PPCLI had captured MOOR, MR 397413, making D Coys job relatively simple. At 0130 hrs 21 Dec, D Coy were within 300 yds of their objective and made contact with the enemy. At 0350 hrs Tac HQ opened at MR 390415. All evidence in the area pointed to a very hasty withdrawal by the enemy and by 0600 hrs the bn was firmed up as follows: Tac HQ 309415, A Coy 384416, B Coy 393415, C Coy 392421 and D Coy 388415.

Bn cas were 1 offr and 11 ORs killed and 4 offr and 51 ORs wounded.

Prisoners taken were 86 plus 13 through med channels.

### LESSONS LEARNED

1. Time spent in proper preparations is not wasted. The time between 1200 hrs, when orders were received and 1600 hrs when SL was crossed, allowed for all arms to be coord and sent the attack off to a good start.
2. FUI was heavily shelled prior to H hr but wide dispersion of tas kept cas to a minimum and no panicking took place.
3. Bold tk crews are half the inf-cum-tk battle.
4. One gun per tp in initial fire plan used smoke. During the daylight attack it gave every opportunity for concealed approaches.
5. Consolidation away from buildings was very definitely necessary. Flimsy brick houses quickly collapsed under tk fire.
6. Use of a tk mines for quick consolidation, especially if no immediate gun sp is available. Mines should, however, be lifted by unit laying them.
7. DF should be in depth. 4.2 mortars are excellent for gaining depth in DF plan, MMG for denying rd approaches. Med Arty should be on call to break up armed attacks.
8. With the enemy in a much more offensive mood than ever before, all posns must be consolidated according to the book of words with each cmd in a unit with its own area of responsibility.
9. Chief lesson from our second phase of the op was centered on the advisability of whether or not to commit the tactical res. D Coy were being held for a definite role in the break-out from the MAROON - COLERIDGE line towards MACRAE but it was considered necessary to commit at least part of them to clear up the rd situation between MAROON and COLERIDGE so as to allow sp arms to get fwd. The success of this show which committed half of the coy in action rather proved that the decision was a wise one. It was possible to re-organize D Coy later and send them fwd in their original role.
10. Once again, smoke in a daylight attack proved its worth. The left flank of D Coy axis to COLERIDGE was definitely under fire from enemy SF guns but with the extensive use of arty smoke on that flank, the coy were on their objective with no cas and a bag of 25 PsW.