

PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY

REPORT ON OPS

1 Dec 44

-

5 Jan 45

BATTLE FOR BIGNACAVALLLO

PHASE I - - Defence of NAVIGLIO CANAL Brhead.

PHASE II - - Attack to the SENIO.

CAPTURE OF GRANAROLA

1. During the evening of 1 Dec 44 FPCLI moved to a conc area at 574208 where they arrived at 2400 hrs; in this area cam was stressed with a view to defeating enemy air int. On 3 Dec at 1530 hrs the Bn took over area 461225 from RCR. The following day at 1700 hrs another move took place, this time to an area in square 4229; we remained there until 9 Dec. This period of 8 days passed with few incidents of importance; considerable Allied air activity was noted, but enemy air activity was limited to one report of aircraft at 1710 hrs 2 Dec.

2. On 8 Dec a recce was made of two fwd coy posns of SEAF of C which were to be taken over by two of our coys on 9 Dec. Following an 'O' Gp at Bde HQ at 0930 hrs 9 Dec, A and B Coys were detailed for this task. Tac HQ moved to 402326 in SEAF of C area at 1615 hrs to complete take-over arrangements; the Rifle Coys moved at 1730 hrs, A Coy on the right at 392335 and B Coy on the left at 389322. The remainder of the Bn stayed in present locations.

3. Ops during the night 9/10 Dec were confined to patrol activity: a recce patrol from A Coy to the river at 394341 to investigate a ford and conditions of the river bank; a standing patrol to 394338. B Coy recce patrol to rly br at 390330 and standing patrol to 389324. Scouts and Snipers recce patrol to rd br at 393331; this patrol was halted by enemy disposns on the nearby rly embankment. Enemy shelling became very hy during the early hrs of 10 Dec. At 0700 hrs a German fighting patrol of 10 - 12 men attacked A Coy: the patrol was beaten back, an enemy Cpl being killed. As this NCO wore no badges and carried no papers it was impossible to make an identification.

4. An 'O' Gp was called at Bde HQ at 1500 hrs 10 Dec. It was learned that plans outlined on an earlier occasion were to be put into effect, SEAF of C making the river crossing and FPCLI passing through. Bn disposns were, however, to remain the same during the night 10/11 Dec. Throughout the night seven patrols were made; as a result of the patrols it was discovered that no ford existed at 3943402 and that the rly br at 390330 was passable to inf. On the morning of 11 Dec infm was received that further changes in plan were to be effected, following which at 1715 hrs all plans were cancelled. That evening A and B coys were relieved by the RCDs and moved back to old area with C and D Coys. Tac HQ remained at 402315 for the night.



5. The following day (12 Dec) the bn took up posns around area 403362 (CHRISTIE); disposns were complete by 1430 hrs. Enemy shelling was lt. Due to reported leakage of infm the entire Bde area was cleared of civs, each bn being allotted an area of responsibility. During the evening orders were received that the bn would cross the LAMONE and move to area TRAVERSEPA. Coys started to move at 1000 hrs 13 Dec and crossed on a raft bar; as bns were impassable due to rapid changes in the river level, vehs followed later in the day. At midnight 13 Dec the bn was placed on one hrs notice.

6. By 0915 hrs 14 Dec the bn was concentrated in the area 408387. Enemy mortaring throughout this area was extremely hy; one Sherman tk receiving a direct hit and brewed-up. At 1415 hrs the CO called an HQ Gp and issued orders for the attack. The bn objectives were defined as area 395394 - 394393 - 395385 - 397390. H hr was 1630 at which time B Coy attacked objective 397390; this posn was reached, without meeting enemy opposn, at 1800 hrs. A Coy then passed through B Coy and attacked objective 395394 where relatively lt resistance was met; the Coy reached it's objective at 2012 hrs after taking a few prisoners. On the success of A Coy, D Coy adv through them and deployed in front of objective 393392. A patrol under Lt Harrington completed a recce of the objective and discovered that it was held by inf and a Panther tk; during this patrol Lt Harrington knocked out the tk with a PIAT, 2 enemy were killed and the tk crew of 5 were brought back as prisoners. The coy attack was then launched at 2100 hrs and the objective captured at 2345 hrs. A further 5 enemy were killed and 11 more prisoners captured.

7. In the meantime C Coy had been moved up and was detailed to attack objective 395385. This posn was captured at 0230 hrs after meeting little opposn; 5 prisoners were taken. Tac HQ had been est with B Coy at 0120 hrs. The success of the bn attack appeared to cause considerable enemy activity; mov of tks and other vehs was heard throughout the night but the expected counter attacks failed to materialize; DF tasks were called down on a number of occasions.

8. On the morning of 15 Dec it was decided to exploit as far as 391391 (FINGLASS) with a view to seizing a gp of bldgs there. A patrol, of pl str, was sent out from B Coy under Lt V.S. Allan. Before reaching FINGLASS enemy were encountered; the Fl Comd disposed 2 sections to provide covering fire and led the remaining section in the aslt. Hy enemy cross-fire was met, Lt Allan was killed and 4 men were lost. Lt Allan and 2 of the missing men were buried by the enemy, their graves being found in a later adv. During the afternoon of this day A Coy exploited to area 396396. A recce patrol was dispatched to investigate the suspected presence of an SP gun and found that the posn was held by inf only. A Coy attack was mounted and after a very successful action the objective was reached, a number of prisoners being taken. This posn was in extremely close contact with the enemy whose every mov could be seen. Throughout the remainder of the day enemy shelling and mortaring was hy, and his tks were frequently heard moving in the neighbourhood. At about 2000 hrs DF tasks were called down,

3.

but the expected counter attack did not develop. Our ops were confined to a number of contact and recce patrols as a result of which enemy were reported at 396385.

9. At 0250 hrs on the morning of the 16 Dec, A Coy was again detailed to attack, this time to area 391395. After patrolling to the objective it was reported that the enemy was disposed ahead of and in bldgs on the objective. An arty fire plan was laid on and with this sp the Coy attacked and consolidated the objective.

10. Orders were received at 1230 hrs on that day that the CYR would relieve us and we would take over a sector of the front EAST of BAGNACAVALLLO presently held by three Coys R22R and one Coy WNSR. The CYR take-over was completed at 2100 hrs; we reached the new posns by 0210 hrs 17 Dec. The bn was disposed in this area with 3 Coys up, on the right A Coy 402379, in the centre C Coy in the brick factory astride rd at 399378, on the left B Coy near rly embankment at 398374, and in res D Coy at 404371. Tac HQ was est at 409373. Enemy mortaring, shelling and MG HF was moderately hy in this area, but with the exception of B Coy we were not in close contact. B Coy's posn however was really a "hot" spot. The enemy was dug in along the rly embankment, in some instances a bare 150 yds away and small arms fire was exchanged continuously day and night. However the Coy wpns were so disposed that the "fire fight" was soon won and the area dominated; LMGs, mortars, and PIATS were brigaded; it was estimated that for every round the Hun had the temerity to fire, B Coy replied with ten. One PW, a deserter, was taken. During the night 17/18 Dec the bn provided diversionary activities in sp of 1 Cdn Inf Bde attack on our left. The only other enemy activity of importance was the attempt of a strong enemy fighting patrol to infiltrate A Coy area; this patrol was beaten back. This sector was held until 18 Dec when relief by the RCDs commenced at 2000 hrs. The bn arrived in area 4240 at 0030 hrs 19 Dec for a few hrs rest and cleaning up in preparation for another attack role.

11. The CO called an 'O' Gp at 1230 hrs 19 Dec and outlined his plan:

- (a) Move to the FUP 412414.
- (b) The attack - est of firm base around MAROON (402412)
- (c) Exploitation SOUTH to outskirts of BAGNACAVALLLO.

At 1730 hrs the coys moved off to the FUP; shelling enroute was intermittent. At 2000 hrs C Coy was launched into the attack on MAROON; almost as soon as the attack started the coy came under intense enemy MG fire from the right. At the same time shelling and mortaring was extremely hy and sustained, indicating that the enemy was bringing down his DF. Numerous MG posts were wiped out one by one on the way to the objective and after a very hard fight the coy was on MAROON by 2145 hrs and coy HQ est in a farmhouse. Within the next 15 mins an enemy SP gun fired eight HE rounds through Coy HQ bldg. The Coy Comd, Major R.W. Potts, was



wounded, and Lt Roach took immediate comd. At the same time the Coy No 18 set was knocked out necessitating comn by runner with BnHQ. Almost immediately the enemy counter attacked the posn in str, but after a long and stiff fight this counter attack was beaten off, the enemy leaving many killed and wounded behind him, in addition to a large number of prisoners. It was not until 0430 hrs 20 Dec that the posn could be reported as secure. Another counter attack was defeated at 0700 hrs. In the meantime D and A Coys had been moved up behind MAROON, and B Coy was held in res in the FUP.

12. At 0500 hrs A Coy was ordered to adv through C Coy and attack MOOR (397412). On reaching a pt about 50 yds this side of MOOR the coy was met by conc MG fire and direct fire from a SP gun. Under cover of our own arty fire they were withdrawn to the vicinity of MAROON. Throughout the remainder of the morning the disposns were held under almost continuous shelling, mortaring and direct fire from MG and SP guns. The str of the enemy in this vicinity necessitated a change in the CO's plans. It was later learned through a PW that the enemy was himself planning an attack in this vicinity and that ours had forestalled his by a mere hr or two.

13. Under cover of smoke to screen MOOR, D Coy was launched at 1430 hrs in an attack on LILAC (394407). In this instance the enemy appeared to have planned an ambush; the leading pl under Lt Harrington was allowed to adv right into the enemy's posn and was virtually surrounded before the enemy opened fire with MG and tks. It was with some difficulty that this pl was extricated and the coy conc in area 402405. Lt Harrington and seven men failed to return to the coy. However, Lt Harrington rejoined his coy early the following morning having been in a posn from which he could not move; two of the missing men were, in a subsequent attack, found wounded in a house where the enemy had left them. At 2100 hrs A Coy with strong arty sp, again attacked MOOR and secured it after a brief fight capturing an SP gun intact. When the posn was consolidated two tks were sent fwd in case of counter attack. On the success of A Coy, B Coy adv through them to bldgs at 390407. This posn was reached at about 0200 hrs 21 Dec without encountering any enemy.

14. D Coy then dispatched a recce patrol to LILAC and on receiving a report that it was clear of enemy, adv through B Coy and attacked SYRUP (387408). On nearing SYRUP leading elts were met by MG fire but after calling for sp from our own arty the coy was successful at 0700 hrs in clearing a number of houses in this area. Tks were immediately called fwd and by 0730 hrs all houses in the vicinity were clear. Six prisoners were taken. In the meantime C Coy had been moved to the vicinity of LILAC and at 1030 hrs adv to X rds at NOISE (383392) without meeting any opposn; concurrently B Coy adv to area of cemetery 385392 also without opposn.

5.

15. The enemy now appeared to have completely lost the initiative and these posns were held without incident except for sporadic shelling until the morning of 24 Dec by which time the bn had been relieved by the RCDs. By 1030 hrs all coys were settled in billets EAST of BAGNACAVALLLO where preparations for Christmas Day were soon under way.

16. The following is a list of enemy eqpt and PsW taken:

(a) Enemy eqpt captured or overrun:

1 PANTHER tk

(b) PsW:

ORs - 108.

17. PPCLI own cas were as follows:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Total</u>
Offrs	2	2	4
ORs	16	57	73
Since Died		7	7
Missing		3	3
	<hr/> 18	<hr/> 69	<hr/> 87



The PPCLI had just finished eight days rest, EAST of BAGNACAVALLLO. Here the whole bn had a very excellent Christmas and New Years, and spirits were indeed high.

On New Year's Day the Bde Comd, Lt Col M.P. Bogert, DSO, held an 'O' Gp and we received the new Bde intention, that of crossing the NAVIGLIO CANAL SOUTH of GRANAROLO. The task of PPCLI would be to force a crossing and est a firm brhead to allow the SEAF of C to pass through and swing right to the rear of the town of GRANAROLO. When this was completed the LER were to come in from the EAST and clear the town itself.

The Bn moved to a conc area EAST of the LAMONE R in area 3829 and 3929 on the morning of 2 Jan, and remained here until the afternoon of 3 Jan.

In the meantime offr from each coy had been fwd to the bn area of the 6 CHESHIREs (56 Lon Div), and had made a complete recce of the coy FUPs and had an opportunity to see the ground over which the attack would pass.

The CO, Lt Col R.P. Clark, held his 'O' Gp at noon on 3 Jan and detailed his plan to the Coy Comds. A and C coys were to attack together, A Coy right and C Coy left. B Coy would then follow through when A and C Coys reported success. D Coy to be held in res and to be used for carrying parties if necessary to maintain the brhead.

H hr was set for 1900 hrs; by 1730 hrs all coys were on their way to the FUP, and were ready to go in by 1845 hrs.

The arty **conos** started on the dot at 1900 hrs. A and C Coys worked fwd under the barrage and at 1930 hrs the leading coys were ready to cross the NAVIGLIO CANAL. The arty barrage was excellent and on the next lift the coys were able to dart across the canal and secure the far bank. Both coys followed the barrage closely, leaning on it all the way, and met little opposition from SA fire. A Coy were first on their objective, found the enemy mainly in the houses, and had no trouble rounding up a tidy lot of 21 prisoners, one of whom was an offr.

C Coy were not far behind and with little opposn soon had their objective secure and a total of 33 prisoners - plus one badly wounded offr who later died.

The 44 RECCE (56 Lon Div) close to our left, rendered invaluable assistance in evac and caring for our wounded, and also in taking C Coy's prisoners into custody, thereby relieving us of quite a load.

B Coy would now go through and at 2130 hrs were on the way. They were soon moving through A Coy to their objective. Lt opposn was encountered, 5 PSW, a HORNET SP, and a Staff Car being captured.

2.

The rd being used as our axis of adv was heavily mined, D Coy, our own pnrs, and the engrs worked steadily to make this rd passable for vehs. Teller mines were frozen in solid and could not be pulled. They finally had to be blown.

B Coy were having a spot of trouble, being counter attacked twice during the night. Both attacks were driven off but only after we had suffered several cas.

A party from D Coy worked with the A Tk Pl and man-handled two 2 prs across the fds. They did an excellent job in getting the guns across the canal, and finally to B Coy after carefully negotiating a mined rd.

By 0030 hrs the SEAF of C were on the way and had pushed along the canal on our right.

Work on the rd was progressing well even under very adverse conditions, and by 0730 hrs it was open. Sp poured through to the coys in the form of tks and SP guns. The brhead posn was now very secure.

The Bde brhead was now est. FPCLI were secure in area 3431, and the SEAF of C were secure behind the town of GRANAROLO. The LER were on their way to clean up the town itself.

On our left the 56 Div were driving ahead and at 1115 hrs the first contact with them was made. The day was fairly quiet until approx 1500 hrs when a counter attack was reported coming in on the SEAF of C. This was successfully driven off.

The bn remained in posn that night and sent out two contact patrols - one to SEAF of C at Codename AUSTIN (br 349325), and one to the 9 RF at JUDAH (339323).

The night was very quiet and uneventful. The next morning, 5 Jan, the bn moved to it's original conc area EAST of the LAMONE R.

The following is a list of enemy eqpt and PsW taken:

(a) Enemy eqpt captured or overrun:

1 SP 88 mm (HORNET)  
1 SP 75 mm  
1 Staff Car

(b) PsW:

Offrs - 1  
ORs - 55

FPCLI own cas were as follows:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Total</u>
Offrs	1	1	2
ORs	3	17	20
Wounded but remained on duty		3	3
	<u>4</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>25</u>