

**War Chronicles
1939-1945
Three Rivers Regiment (Tank)
by
Charles Prieur**



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**Biography
of
Charles Prieur
Veteran to 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment
(Three Rivers Regiment (Tank))**

Charles Prieur was born on the 7th of August 1921, in Winnipeg Manitoba, to an English mother and a French father. When he was two years of age his parents moved the family East, settling in St. Vincent de Paul, Quebec. Coming from a large family, Charles was the oldest of eleven children.

During his early education Charles attended *L'école Groulx* where he quickly learned to speak French, before continuing his education at the *College l'Assomption*.

With the Second World War brewing on the horizon, Charles enlisted in the *Chateauguay Regiment*. Following the disbandment of the *Chateauguay Regiment* he returned home to Canada. However, Charles soon re-enlisted, joining the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) and remained with that regiment until he was demobilized at the end of the European conflict.

In 1941 Charles left with his regiment for the United Kingdom where he remained for the next two years and where he was fortunate enough to meet a young lady named Peggy Young, a woman he would later marry.

The next two years saw the Three Rivers Regiment fighting in the Italian Campaign and finally in both Belgium and Holland. Corporal Prieur's medals include: the 39/45 Star, the Italian Star, the Northwest Europe Star, the Volunteer Medal with crossbar, and the War Medal.

Upon his return to Canada, Charles was employed by an advertising agency as junior copywriter working for several different companies in Montreal, and finally as Creative Director. During this period his three children, two daughters and a son, were born. At the age of 50, Charles decided to begin his own company and continued in the advertising field until he retired at the age of 72.

Retirement finally allowed him to devote more time to his personal interests, such as the Veterans Association and their newsletter. Over the next few years, he spent much of his time culling, collating, and editing the Chronicles of the Three Rivers Regiment(Tank) at war. He collected anecdotes shared with him by fellow veterans and

added them to his work, thus helping the Chronicles to tell a more complete story.

Charles was a man of unwavering faith and strong convictions concerning injustice. It was this unwavering faith that helped him to cope with his life and his final illness. After having recently completed his Chronicles, he passed away at the age of 79, in the year of Two Thousand and One.

Battle Honours of the Regiment from 1939 to 1945

Italy		1943 - 1945
Sicily	July & August	1943
Sicily Landing	July	1943
Grammichele	July	1943
Piazza Armerina	July	1943
Valguarnera	July	1943
Agira	July	1943
Adrano	August	1943
Troina Valley	August	1943
Termoli	October	1943
Le Ravin	December	1943
Ortona	December	1943
Cassino II	April	1944
Liri Valley	MAY	1944
Gustav Line	May	1944
Hitler Line	May	1944
Trasimeno Line	June	1944
Arezzo	July	1944
Florence Advance	July-August	1944
Monte La Pieve	October	1944
Monte Spaduro	October	1944
Apeldoorn	April	1945
North West Europe		1945

Acknowledgments

It would be terribly remiss of me not to mention the invaluable technical, patient and unremunerated assistance of my guru/programmer nephew, Pierre Blanchard, over more years that I want to remember or remind him of. And I've recently also become greatly indebted to another nephew, Pierre's brother Paul, for saving these War Chronicles from the cyber abyss through his professional word processing and book formatting skills.

Editor's Note

To avoid confusion during the reading of these chronicles, it should be pointed out that the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) is variously referred to as the Regiment, or the Unit, or the 12th or the TRR; or as the 12 C.T.R; that is, the 12th Canadian Tank Regiment. Later, we were officially renamed the 12 C.A.R.; that is, the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR).

Foreword

Nothing in the preconception of the Three Rivers Regiment would have lead one to believe that the regiment would make such a substantial contribution to the annals of history as it did during the Second World War. However, opportune action, destiny, luck, and an uncommonly long and intense training period forged a sense of camaraderie that rivalled even the sense of loyalty the men felt towards their country. Perhaps even more important, the stimulating mix of Canadians of different origins, possessing different ideas and interpretations, allowed for the development of a form of leadership, a sense of initiative and a sense of esprit de corps of exceptional quality. In brief, all of these ingredients combined to form a magic recipe for success for the infernal test that is combat.

The official history of Canada's participation in the Second World War explicitly confirms that the Three Rivers Regiment spent the more time in combat then all of the other field units found in the Canadian Army.

The 1st Canadian Armour Brigade was in combat for 532 out of a possible total of 668 days and the Three Rivers Regiment was in combat for almost the entire duration of that period. Our unit also saw the longest continual period of combat, being from the 21st of June 1944 to the 21st of February 1945. This period of sustained combat was also immediately followed by the Regiment's decisive participation in the break through of the formidable defences of the Gustav and Hitler lines. Further, our Regiment was involved in 164 important engagements and sustained 114 casualties. One must also underline that numerous members of the Regiment were injured during these engagements. Unfortunately, the names of the injured men were not recorded.

Our unit was also the only unit to serve with all the allied armies that saw combat in both Sicily and Italy. Considering this fact, our regiment was awarded no less than twenty-three battle honours on our guidon, which was more than twice the amount of any other Canadian armoured regiment. Be that as it may, in the words of our Commanding officer, LCol Fernand L. Caron, our greatest source of pride remains that: "the Three Rivers Regiment never gave up a single inch of ground to the enemy" [translation].

Here is what others have said about the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade and in particular about the Three Rivers Regiment:

Marshall Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, KCB, DSO (earned during the battles of Sangro and Ortona): "**If you want the job done, entrust it to the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade.**" [translation]

General Sir Oliver Leese, BT, KCB, CBE, DSO (earned during the battle of Liri Valley): **“The 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade is the best armoured formation with the greatest shock effect that I have had the pleasure to command. I consider the 1st Brigade to be the finest armoured formation in the Mediterranean theatre.”** [translation]

LGen S.C. Kirkham, CB, CBE, MC (earned during the battle of Trasimène): **“Everything that my formation (the XIII British Corps) knows about how to fight in concert with armoured forces, it learned from the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade”** [translation]

But still, the ultimate praise for the Canadians was to come from the press : **“It happened on or close to Foggia Air Force Base”, wrote the Jewish Canadian veteran Ralph Charad of the *Montreal Post*. “It must have been in 1944. I was flying with a RAF squadron, but I wore my Canadian shoulder flashes. One young man (who couldn’t have weighed more than 100 pounds if he was soaking wet from head to toe with lead ingots in his pockets) left a group of Americans and came over to me vigorously pointing his finger and saying: ‘You! Canadian! You tell your whole Three Rivers Tank Regiment that me and my buddies would go to war anywhere, anytime and against anyone as long as you guys have our flanks!’ and then he left.”** [translation]

The significance of the regimental numbers

More than two thousand soldiers made up the effective strength of our Regiment between 1939 and 1945. The first letter of their regimental numbers signified their place of enrolment. For example, as I was enrolled in Montreal my regimental number, D-51156, begins with the letter D. The following table presents a list in alphabetical order of places of enrollment and their corresponding number:

Military District number

A	London, Ont. No.	1
B	Toronto, Ont. No.	2
C	Ottawa, Ont. No	3
D	Montréal, Qué. No.	4
E	Québec, Qué. No.	5
F	Halifax, NS. No.	6
G	Fredericton, NB. No.	7
H	Winnipeg, Man. No.	8
K	Vancouver, BC. No.	9
L	Regina, Sask. No.	10
M	Edmonton, Alb. No.	11

Further, the following letters found within the regimental numbers signify:

P The person was already a member of the Canadian Permanent Forces;

U The person was enrolled in United Kingdom.

Why is it called a Tank and not a Combat Vehicle...?

During the First World War, when the English began construction of their own tanks (the tank was originally a French invention), they were initially built in a factory that until that point had constructed water tanks and reservoirs. In order to maintain secrecy of the operation the factory employees were instructed that should someone inquire as to what the factory was manufacturing that they were to respond that they were building "tanks". Thus the name "tank" was adopted and has remained unchanged.

In addition, because of the fact that the responsibility for the construction of these tanks was initially entrusted to the Admiralty, the parts of an armoured vehicle were named using naval

terminology: the flat surface behind the turret was called the “back deck”; the upper part of the vehicle that contains the main armament was called the turret; the doors were called “hatches”; the chassis was called a “hull”; and the sides of the vehicles were called “sponsons”. For the same reasons, armoured regiments inherited the terms “squadron” and “crew” and tanks were parked in “harbours”.

War Chronicles 1939

JANUARY 1

Number of hours per day Jews in Germany are allowed to shop for food since November 1938: 1 hour in Berlin; 30 minutes in Leipzig
Number of hours a day (German) Jews are required to perform conscript labour: 10.

JANUARY 30

Hitler announces his intention to exterminate the Jews in Eu

AUGUST 19

In Germany, a "submarine officers' reunion" was scheduled -- the code telling the U-boats to take up war stations around Britain.

Source: American "Chronicle of Second World War"

AUGUST 23

Paving the way for World War II, Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet foreign minister, and Joachim von Ribbentrop, German foreign minister, sign the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, assuring the Germans would not have to fight a war on two fronts, and leaving the way open for Hitler to attack Poland.

Source: National Post, Canada

SEPTEMBER 1

German tanks thundered across the Polish border at precisely 0445 hours today, supported by Junkers Ju87 ("Stuka") dive-bombers. The bombing raids on Warsaw are designed to terrorize, while refugees clogging the roads are being mercilessly machine-gunned by the Stukas. Tanks crush everything under their steel treads. There are no non-combatants in this war.

Source: American "Chronicle of Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 1

Building on a nucleus of officers and men from the militia regiment, the TRR – officially designated, since December 15, 1936, the “Three Rivers Regiment (Tank)” -- is mobilized in the City of Trois-Rivières, and attached to the First Canadian Division, C.A.S.F.

Historical background

The Regiment actually traces its origins to the colonial French era when, in 1651, Pierre Boucher called to arms the first militiamen. From the beginning, the region of Trois-Rivières provided volunteers to fight first the Iroquois, then the English, and finally the Americans.

The 1868 Militia Act of the new Canadian Confederation authorized, on March 24th, 1871, the regrouping of four rural companies into the the Three Rivers Provisional Battalion of Infantry. With the addition of two more companies, the unit lost its “provisional” status and became, in June 1871, the 86th Three Rivers Battalion of Infantry. Regimental status was obtained on May 8th, 1900, under the name: 86th Three Rivers Regiment.

Though the Regiment did not mobilize during WWI, it did contribute to the overseas mobilization of the 178e Bataillon canadien-français, sub-units of which (serving as reinforcements) earned at Amiens the first battle colour on our regimental flag (guidon).

SEPTEMBER 3

For most Britons, the news came this sunny Sunday morning through the wireless and the somber voice of Neville Chamberlain, the prime minister, who had sought to appease Herr Hitler’s territorial demands. Berlin has been warned, he said, that if Germany does not stop all aggressive action against Poland and begin to withdraw from Polish territory by 11 a.m., Britain and Germany will be at war. At 11:15 a.m., Mr. Chamberlain announced in his radio broadcast that, “no such undertaking has been received and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.”

Source: American “Chronicle of Second World War”

SEPTEMBER 4

At 1800 hrs, today, Premier Daladier told the French House Deputies that he had no recourse but to declare that a state of war existed between France and Germany.

SEPTEMBER 4

Recruiting begins at the Armoury in Trois-Rivières. Slowly. War is still limited to far-distant Poland.

SEPTEMBER 4

One hundred and twelve passengers and crew of the liner SS Athenia perished last night, the first victims of German submarine warfare.

Source: American "Chronicle of Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 5

Germans enter Piotrkow in Poland and set fire to the Jewish district.

Source: American "Chronicle of Second World War"

Editor's Note

Some 3,000,000 Jews lived in Poland; 90% were exterminated by 1945.

SEPTEMBER 7

A total of 45 officers and other ranks are taken on strength today.

SEPTEMBER 10

Canada declares war on Germany.

SEPTEMBER 12-15

Forty-nine more officers and other ranks are taken on strength. Recruiting is being confined to the St. Maurice Valley and immediate vicinity of Trois-Rivières.

SEPTEMBER 15

The first British transatlantic convoy sets sail from Halifax.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 16

On the eve of the Jewish New Year, Luftwaffe planes dive-bomb the Jewish quarter in Warsaw. Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 16

Editor's Note

The pre-war state of unpreparedness of the whole Canadian Armed Forces is best exemplified by the following excerpt from the book *Maple Leaf Against the Axis* by Calgary historian David J. Bercuson: "In 1939, the Army had only 23 Bren guns." Even that, according to an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 6, 2000, is a quadruple exaggeration. To quote:

"In the run-up to World War II, our army had (we are not making this up) five mortars, six Bren guns, two light tanks, and enough ammunition for a firefight lasting nearly an hour (we did however have lots of horse harnesses)." Compare our 'no underwear' state of unpreparedness also with the following: During World War I, the clothing issue to a man joining the ranks was a) tuniques - 2 h) underpants - 2 pairs b) trousers - 2 i) undervests - 2 c) hat - 1 j) socks - 2 pairs d) shirts, flannel - 2 k) great coat - 1 e) cardigan jacket - 1 i) boot shining equip. - 1 set f) puttees - 1 pair m) "house-wife" (knife, fork, g) boots - 2 pairs spoon, razor, shaving-brush, needle, thread, and first aid kit.)

(6 days, that is, since Canada declared war on Germany.) There is a clothing shortage and men are being outfitted as supplies come through. No boots have been received. Neither is there underwear for the men. And puttees (later: gaiters) and berets are almost as scarce.

SEPTEMBER 17

Stalin has stabbed the Poles in the back. Just before dawn this morning, the Red Army invaded Poland along the 800-mile length of the border.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 18-19

Twenty-seven men join the Regiment today.

SEPTEMBER 19

The Russian and German armies joined up at Brest-Litovsk in Poland.

SEPTEMBER 19

The present qualifications for enlistment are: Minimum height: 5'4". Minimum weight: 130 lbs. Eyesight must be at least 20/40. Widowers or single men are preferred. But married men, who have families of not more than three children, are also being accepted.

Editor's Note

As all training publications, and other written material, are only in English, and, as virtually all instructions and communications are also in English only, many unilingual French-Canadian volunteers are being shunted to the Sherbrooke and La Chaudière Regiments.

SEPTEMBER 20

Twelve men enlisted in the Regiment today.

SEPTEMBER 21

A clipping from the "Montreal Daily Star" is our first intimation that the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) is to be honoured by inclusion in the 1st division to be sent overseas. These are the early days of the war, and the mother country is not in any immediate need of manpower (or so says the Press). Our guess is that we will go overseas early next spring. Four more men are taken on strength today.

SEPTEMBER 22

Thirteen other ranks are taken on strength today. The first minor offences were dealt with in the Orderly Room. A few of the men are not taking to their soldiering, and forget to report for morning parade.

SEPTEMBER 23

The Nazi jackboot is crushing Poland with a brutality which is even drawing protests from German army officers, horrified at the conduct of the SS and the Gestapo in the occupied territories.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 24

First divine services are held for all ranks. The R.C.s attend Mass in the Armoury; the Protestants, in the Anglican Church.

In order to 'lick the unit into shape', an enormous amount of work will need to be done. With this in mind, all Officers, W.O.s and N.C.O.s will parade to the Armoury three nights a week for lectures and drill.

Recruiting was suspended today, on orders from National Defence Headquarters.

SEPTEMBER 26

There are persistent rumours that we may be quartered at the Exhibition Grounds for training this winter.

Present strength of the Regiment is 216. Our objective is: 513 officers and other ranks, with a further 72 officers and other ranks as an initial reserve, for a total of 585.

Still no tanks available for training.

OCTOBER 1

The last Polish soldiers in action, at the Hel naval base, surrender.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

OCTOBER 2

TRR ranks swell to 500 with the addition of 167 members of the disbanded Victoria Rifles.

An armoured car is loaned to our Unit. Much excitement.

OCTOBER 2

The ex-Victoria Riflemen, now effectively 'A' Squadron, are moved holus-bolus to Ste. Helen's Island in Montreal. Here, they occupy the old barracks and begin their training on the Vickers machine gun, and in Morse code.

OCTOBER 3

The German Tenth Army pulls out of Poland and heads for the Western front.

OCTOBER 3

The 1st Corps of the British Expeditionary Force moves into position on the border with Belgium.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

OCTOBER 3

By command of Military District No.4, Sgt. Maj. Instructor Métivier (Montreal) and Sgt. Instructor LeBlanc (Camp Borden) are instructing Officers and N.C.O.s; and also supervising the training of the other ranks. This soon results in a decided overall improvement.

OCTOBER 5

The Nazi anti-Semitic weekly, Der Sturmer, publishes a 'Hymn of Hate' calling England the "curse of the world."

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

OCTOBER 6

More than 60,000 Polish servicemen died fighting the Nazi Blitzkrieg.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

OCTOBER 7

The first batch of men to be promoted from the ranks is posted in Part 2 Orders.

OCTOBER 9

Hitler issues war directive No.6, ordering preparations for “Plan Yellow” -- an attack on Holland, Belgium and France.

Source: American “Chronicle of the Second World War”

OCTOBER 9

The last of 13 RAF Squadrons flies to France, in moves begun September 4 to strengthen the British Expeditionary Force.

Source: American “Chronicle of the Second World War”

OCTOBER 11

Albert Einstein and other U.S. scientists inform Franklin D. Roosevelt, U.S. President at the time, of the possibilities of developing an atomic bomb.

Source: National Post, Canada

OCTOBER 12

Four British army divisions, 158,000 men with 25,000 vehicles, have crossed the Channel to France. But the British Expeditionary Force is still seriously short of equipment.

Source: American “Chronicle of the Second World War”

OCTOBER 12

Eichman begins deporting Jews from Austria and Czechoslovakia into Poland.

Source: American “Chronicle of the Second World War”

OCTOBER 15

With the city band leading, the Regiment paraded through town to martial music and old wartime songs. By common agreement, it was a good showing; and the first time the Regiment marched in a body.

OCTOBER 20

A meeting was held today in the Officers' Mess. The C.O. (Lt.Col. H.J. Keating) announces the slate of officers for the Active Service Force of the Regiment.

NOVEMBER 1

The Nazi Regime orders German Jews to wear the yellow star.

NOVEMBER 2

British first hear of Dachau concentration camp.

NOVEMBER 4

First inoculations of all ranks: anti-typhoid and anti-enteric. Inoculations are made in the chest. Only a few suffer fever.

NOVEMBER 7

Details of a planned German offensive against the Low Countries and France on November 12 are leaked to the Czech government in exile. But plans are postponed by rain.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

NOVEMBER 13

Maj. Atkinson, Capt. Spénard and Lt. J. Walker, accompanied by Sgts. Finlay and Chapman, leave for Ste. Helen's Island in Montreal to supervise training of the 144 other ranks of the Victoria Rifles of Canada now integrated into our Regiment.

NOVEMBER 14

First Vickers machine gun 'range practice' today.

DECEMBER 13

Change of Command of the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank), C.A.S.F.: At a special meeting of officers in the Mess tonight, Lt. Col. E.D. Keating informs the gathering that the authorities have decided to replace him as O.C. of the Regiment, because he is so close to the age limit. Lt. Col. G.E.A. Dupuis, a former

commander of the Royal 22nd Regt., is introduced as our new C.O.

DECEMBER 19

Arrival in England of the first contingent of Canadian troops -- more than 7,500 volunteers.

DECEMBER 25

Since early this year, and until 1942, the German authorities are confiscating radios, telephones, all electric appliances, records, typewriters, bicycles, cameras, microscopes, etc., from Jewish homes.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

War Chronicles 1940

JANUARY 1

As of today, Jews in Germany are forbidden to purchase: textiles, shoes, leather goods, fish, meat, coffee, alcohol, sweets, tobacco, eggs, fresh milk, ice cream, or cut flowers.

JANUARY 4

Our Medical Officer, Col. C.E. Cross, leaves us today to organize a new hospital unit for overseas service. Capt. Malone, M.D., of the local Medical Board, will replace Col. Cross.

JANUARY 10

Some of our men are issued the new British Army khaki battle dress (no more buttons to clean!) – the first time for anyone in the Regiment.

anecdote

I was then a 2nd Lieutenant, and assistant to the Adjutant, Capt. Jean Allard. In other words: I was a sitting duck for the job of finding accommodations for all these men (mostly from the Victoria Rifles) who had just been transferred to Trois-Rivières from the M.A.A. Grounds in Montreal. And I couldn't duck.

At that time, all those enlistees who lived in town or close by, slept and ate at home. The others were billeted in private homes. Certainly, the Armoury couldn't begin to accommodate the sudden big influx from Montreal. To make the task even thornier, I had to find people willing to board and feed (3 meals a day) for exactly \$5.95 per week per man.

However, the Big Depression was not yet over. So I was able to place quite a number in Manoir Laviolette (near where the Auberge des Gouverneurs is now). Another group ended up in the Victoria Hotel on the waterfront. The rest were variously distributed in rooming houses and private homes (some crammed four to a room); others were living in splendid isolation, depending on the size of the rooms.

But the chores of lieutenants and housewives are never done: I also had to pay that \$5.95 per week per head at the end of every week (and the billets were scattered all over town!). And did so till we were finally all moved into the Exhibition Grounds. If only the weekly subsistence allowance per capita could have been a flat \$6. Damn those nickels!

Source: Frank Johnson

JANUARY 14

The Montreal detachment of the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank), numbering 171 of all ranks, leaves the Westmount (Montreal) M.A.A. barracks this morning, and entrains for Trois-Rivières under the command of Major F.T. Atkinson.

JANUARY 20

Record snowfalls and plunging temperatures freeze war plans in Europe.

JANUARY 25

Controversy over the state of our war preparedness forces the dissolution of the Canadian parliament.

FEBRUARY 1

Inspector General T.L. Tremblay, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D., A.D.C., inspects our Regiment today.

FEBRUARY 11

The colours of the Three Rivers Regiment (two flags: one belonging to the old 86th Regiment, the other flown by the present Three Rivers Regiment) were deposited in the Anglican Cathedral today at 1500 hrs.

FEBRUARY 11

We are all shocked to learn today of the death of our popular Governor-General, Lord Tweedsmuir. The Regiment goes into mourning forthwith for a period of seven days.

FEBRUARY 12

The Advance Party of the Regiment is to be transferred to the Trois-Rivières Exhibition Grounds tomorrow. The balance of the Regiment will follow the next day. The Regiment is to be concentrated as a Unit, instead of being billeted hither and yon.

FEBRUARY 25

The Queen Elizabeth, the world's largest ocean liner, sails secretly and solo from Liverpool -- on its first crossing to New York.

MARCH 26

Still at only 80% of its effective strength, the TRR moves to Westmount's M.A.A. (Montreal Athletic Association) Grounds on Montreal Island.

MARCH 26

Mackenzie King is re-elected Prime Minister of Canada with his promise of "No conscription."

MARCH 28

Tank training begins without tanks. Drill features troops of men marching to semaphore signals. A Rypa simulator, with an electric motor, is also used to simulate a tank in motion. Courses multiply as able instructors are found with expertise in Vickers machine guns, radio transmission, electricity, mechanics, and Morse code.

APRIL 9

German troops moved into Denmark and Norway in the early hours of this morning.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

APRIL 17

C.O., Lt. Col. Dupuis is leaving us today to command the 2nd Infantry Holding Unit in Quebec City. Major G.J.E. Trépanier is to be in temporary command of the Unit.

MAY 10

Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain.

MAY 10

German armed forces invade Holland, breaking another treaty.

MAY 20

The British assemble a fleet of small boats off the English coast -- to rescue some of the British forces, should they be cut off when the army pushes south into France.

Editor's Note

That particular push never happened, but the small boats were now luckily on hand for the unexpected Dunkirk saga.

MAY 22

Advance party of 2 Officers and 24 O.R.s leave for Camp Borden -- to prepare for the reception of main body of Regiment, scheduled to be there on the morning of May 26. (Some real tank training may at last be in the offing!)

MAY 22

German tanks are within 15 kilometres of Dunkirk, the only port still open to the British to make their escape.

Source: National Post, Canada

MAY 24

Advance party is working in a downpour to prepare tents, marquees, etc. for the main body's arrival.

MAY 25

Camp Borden: Guides under the direction of Capt. Spénard leave to meet main body at train stop. None arrives: our first intimation that the move to Camp Borden has been cancelled.

MAY 26

Operation Dynamo begins in an effort to evacuate about 380,000 British, French and Belgian soldiers from the port of Dunkirk, where they had been pushed by the Nazi blitzkrieg.

MAY 26

Dunkirk: "The little boats -- tugs, barges, yachts, private pleasure craft, London fireboats -- chug across the channel...to rescue more than 45,000 troops before the Germans (close) the trap."

Source: Ray Moseley, Chicago Tribune

Editor's Note

In fact, only 28,000 were saved during the first 2 days.

Recollection

Harking back to our Camp Borden days with happy flash-backs, but less than total recall, Bill remembers:

I can recall going by train and cleaning up the cars under Fritz's supervision. Came back from Xmas leave and saw a group of guys marching off to the hoosegow. I think they had been crimed for pooling all their booze of various kinds, mixing it all in one of the red fire buckets, then cooling the lethal lot with icicles hanging from the 'distillery' hut... I remember ye ol' Renault tanks, circa WW1, being used to clear the land opposite the hospital... We thought the 'Calgaries' were to go under canvas. Guess who did? And remember when they had us out early in the morning, and the dew was as heavy as our eyelids, and we shaved in icy water, after defogging our steel mirrors... And the time we had word 'A' Squadron was going to attack us. So we put our steel helmets on and, armed with tent mallets, waited for the onslaught that never materialized. So we used our trusty old mallets to knock out all the stakes holding up Lt. Spielman's tent. (Ed.: Presumably, he was the officer who had sounded the alarm.) source?

MAY 26

Camp Borden: Advance party takes down and returns tents and stores to depots, and entrains for Montreal at 2000 hrs.

MAY 27

There's a rumour making the rounds that we are not to be a Tank Unit after all.

MAY 28

Thank God it was just a rumour. The Acting C.O. informs other ranks that our Unit will retain its identity, which is some consolation in view of recent developments.

MAY 30

Dunkirk: The small boats have so far managed to evacuate some 126,000 troops -- in spite of incessant enemy air attacks.

Source: Ray Moseley, Chicago Tribune

JUNE 2

Dunkirk: By midnight (today) "the valiant civilians, who carried out most of the evacuations, (have) saved 224,000 British troops and 95,000 other Allied forces, mainly French".

Source: Ray Moseley, Chicago Tribune

JUNE 3

Dunkirk: Tonight "another 19,000 French troops (are) rescued..." During the evacuation period from May 26 to June 3, "About 2,000 of the British failed to make it home. They went down with ships sunk by German planes..." The latter, in fact, "sank six British destroyers, eight troop ships, and 243 of the 861 small boats involved in the rescue operation."

Source: Ray Moseley, Chicago Tribune

Baroud d'honneur? (The honour-bound last battle in a lost cause!)

Editor's Note

In his 'Memoires', Winston Churchill wrote (this is a rough translation): These French ... had, during four critical days, held up no fewer than seven German divisions who could have joined the attack on the Dunkirk perimetre. These troops made a splendid contribution to the fate of their luckier comrades and the British Expeditionary Corps.

His opinion was shared by Gen. von Brauchitsch, commander of the German land forces. So why have most historians played down this last heroic and hopeless French effort to stop the German blitz, by inanely wondering what stayed Hitler's order to break through to the beach?

JUNE 11

Italy having entered the war on Germany's side, a roundup is made in Montreal, and potential troublemakers are sent to St. Jean, Quebec. The Three Rivers Regiment provides a guard of 1 officer and 26 other ranks to look after the interned Italians.

Editor's Note

Not all Italo-Canadians arrested were potential troublemakers, as evidenced by the following anecdote.

anecdote

Economics forced me to hitchhike to Borden, and back, on my weekend passes to Montreal. But I was picky about the car I favoured with my custom: only a Mercury of the year would do.

One such suddenly hove into view and duly stopped. The driver proved to be of Italian origin and very friendly. He explained that he had been mistaken for a local Fascist of the same name, arrested, and guarded by men of the T.R.R. However, he'd been so well treated by 'you black berets' that he wanted to return the kindness. Hence the lift...

As he let me out at a convenient corner from which to thumb my next ride, he slipped something into my hand and drove off before I could thank him. It was a 10-dollar bill, a princely sum to a trooper whose pay was \$1.10 a day. Source: Charles Desbiens

JUNE 13

Effective this date, "Trooper" will replace the formerly designated rank of "Private" in all Canadian tank units.

JUNE 14

The federal cabinet declares 16 Nazi, Fascist and communist organizations illegal, under wartime emergency legislation.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 14

The German army enters ... Paris. In Oswecim, Poland, the Nazis open the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 18

Military service becomes mandatory for all Canadian bachelors and widowers without children. Wedding bells are heard throughout the land.

JUNE 18

The German army occupies Paris.

JUNE 19

Britain organizes the evacuation of children to Canada to escape the German Blitz.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 22

Gen. Charles Huntziger of France signs the terms of surrender with ... Hitler and the German government at Compiègne, France.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 23

The Three Rivers Regiment moves to Mount Bruno today. We take over already set-up tents, marquees, etc. in the Camp, which has just been vacated by McGill University's C.O.T.C.

JUNE 25

General Training is scheduled to start tomorrow. There's a 1000-yard range here we are hoping to use. So even the cool, showery weather can't dampen our good spirits.

JUNE 26

We no sooner read the Camp Standing Orders that we hear that our Unit has to move again. Which means no training again.

JUNE 27

The Regiment, less 'A' Squadron, moves to Coteau Barracks, Trois-Rivières. 'A' Squadron is told to be ready to move to St. Helen's Island in Montreal -- to guard shortly expected Prisoners of War.

JUNE 28

'Fatigues' are the order of the day: cleaning up, erecting barbed wire entanglements, machine gun towers, etc.

JULY 2

'A' Squadron returns from St. Helen's Island: 8 officers and 131 other ranks, on a few hours notice; after only a little over three days on the Island, spent preparing to receive the "guests".

JULY 2

Canada takes in the first British children evacuees, as well as the first contingent of German POWs; the number of the latter soon exceeds 8,000.

JULY 3

The Advance Party, supplied by 'B' Squadron, and commanded by Capt. M. Barnard, proceeds on command to Quebec City. Our Unit is now derisively called: The Three Rivers Rapid Transit Squadron.

JULY 4

Guard duty is now being shared by our own 'A', 'B' and 'C' squadrons, and a detachment of the Ontario Regiment (Tank) is at present stationed with us. Regiment H.Q. is now providing the pickets around the outer edge of the Exhibition Grounds. 8 other ranks are serving as Special Police within the prisoners' compound.

Editor's Note

We were also ordered to play our radios low at all times, so that prisoners will not hear the news broadcasts.

JULY 8

32 other ranks are shown in today's orders as A.W.O.L. (Absent Without Leave). Two-thirds are from 'A' Squadron, which came from St. Helen's Island a week ago. It is perhaps their reaction to the fact that there have been very few (and very short) leaves. There is also the powerful disappointment of not yet doing adequate tank training after almost a year.

JULY 8

Capt. A.J. Barlow-Hébert reported for duty as Medical Officer.

JULY 10

Guard and picket duties are taken over today by our Battalion H.Q. and the detachment from the Ontario Regiment (Tank), C.A.S.F.

JULY 11

Capt. J. Dalcourt, our popular padre, leaves us today.

JULY 13

This is a particularly strenuous period for the few men left in Trois-Rivières -- to guard the 400 odd prisoners of war. Most of our men have been on duty since the Ontario Regiment left three days ago, and will be till the main body of 'A' Company arrives on the 15th. The Medical Officer, cooks and orderly room staff, are all taking their tours of duty.

JULY 15

The main body of 'A' Squadron has arrived ... with some 700 internees, in large part Jewish refugees. Our Nazi prisoners consist almost exclusively of captured members of the Luftwaffe, merchant navy, submarine corps, and paratroop units.

Editor's Note

Many of the 300 or so German prisoners are sunning, tanning and strutting their physiques, while some 900 Jews (all men, of all ages, many with long gray beards, all in heavy dark clothes), huddle in the farthest corner of the compound, unseparated from their enemies. Worse still, the Germans run the kitchen and dole out the food, which, you can bet, is not kosher.

anecdote

Being young and very naive, most of us did not realize we were effectively serving as guards at a concentration camp. We had the high barbed wire fences, the machine gun towers, the scanning floodlights, and the pacing guards. All that was missing was German shepherds and orders from above to brutalize those in our charge.

On this day, it was my turn to fetch the food for two German prisoners held, for some infraction, in the cell within our guardhouse. I was first duly disarmed in case some prisoners decided to jump me. Feeling naked and vulnerable, I strode into their mess hall and headed for the kitchen's serving counter. On the wall behind was a neat array of carving knives, cleavers, and sundry other cooking utensils. This I found gut-tightening, but more so the prisoner who had decided to lock step with me from the rear. He was just short of touching me, but I could feel his breath on the back of my neck. I sensed that the worst thing I could do was acknowledge him. The cooks and every other German face in my peripheral vision were grinning.

When I stopped at the counter, so did he. The next move was mine; had to be, and I played it. I had metal half-moons on my boot heels, and I kicked back and hard at his shin, and connected. He gave a yelp of pain and hobbled off, to loud laughter.

But I refrained from looking around. One of the cooks filled the two mess tins I was carrying. I turned the other way from the joker and headed for the door, not too fast but not too slow either. One of the prisoners opened the door for me and I was out in the daylight, unscathed.

Damned if I wasn't picked to run the gauntlet again, for the evening meal. But, when I walked into the mess hall this time, I was greeted with smiles and waves.

Source: Bob Parker

JULY 16

Lt. Col. J.G. Vining is taken on strength to command the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank). He also commanded this Unit from 1931 to 1935. Captain Hébert succeeds Major J.R. Lockhead today as Medical Officer.

anecdote

One night, about 20 minutes after the witching hour, some rifle shots shocked the whole camp awake, guards and prisoners. Seems a pair of long johns, hung to dry by a prisoner, began walking the breeze and startled the nodding guard.

He yelled: Who goes there? The long johns refused to identify themselves. The guard's reflex was true; his aim not; his embarrassment acute. The camp slowly sank back into a twitchy sleep.

Source: Jack Davy

JULY 20

Following the departure of Capt. F.T. Atkinson, Capt. C.H. Neroutsos is appointed Acting Adjutant.

JULY 28

Today is to be our last day of guard duty at Three-Rivers. No.4 Company of the Veterans Home Guard has arrived to take over.

JULY 30

Capt. A.G. Phelan and Lt. Frank Johnson are proceeding to Camp Borden. There is keen anticipation amongst the men.

JULY 31

Total strength of Unit as of today is 514. Battalion H.Q. and 'A' squadron are really on their way to Camp Borden, to be rejoined there later by 'B' and 'C' Squadrons still on Command to Cove Field Barracks, Quebec.

AUGUST 1

Editor's Note

There's a reference (now in Jack Wallace's possession) to the effect that the TRR, at this time, has been declared unfit to be a tank battalion. We'll show'em!

AUGUST 3

New orders are cut for the whole regiment to move to Camp Borden for actual tank training. The first arrivals (H.Q. and 'A' Squadron) found the Unit's new commander waiting to take over: Col. J.G. ('Jake') Vining.

Editor's Note

While the Unit's new quarters are still unfinished (interiors have not been prepared for winter yet, and only the outsides are completed), there's a general exhilaration among all ranks. This promises very successful training, if adequate facilities are accorded. The 'training' tanks in place prove to be 15 World War I Renaults. With room only for a crew of two, and hatches that could 'guillotine' unwary fingers. And did! The midget 6-tonners burn-up the road at a vertiginous 5 m.p.h. However, they require 24 hours of maintenance and repairs -- for every hour of operation, which is good training in itself.

Recollections

They were 'made in U.S.A.', most of them like new in spite of their advanced age, and because of their heavy coating of grease. And, though all were prone to frequent breakdowns, they helped to hone our mechanics' talents.

Source: Brig. Gen. Fernand Caron, then lieutenant

Though all the Renaults were in remarkably good condition, a couple had been used at some time for target practice, with the bullet holes to prove it.

Source: Bill Alderson

One thing we had to do, and did: we replaced all the magnetos in the de-greased Renaults with brand-new Bosch ones. For one thing, they gave in more quickly to our gut-wrenching hand cranking. Thank the Lord.

Source: Vern Dowie

The new daily routine is published in Part 1 Orders:

Reveille?	0600 hrs.
Breakfast	0700 hrs.
Morning Parade	0800 hrs.
Dinner	1200 hrs.
Afternoon Parade	1330 hrs.
Supper	1730 hrs.
Retreat:	
First Post	2130 hrs.
Last Post	2200 hrs.
Lights out	2215 hrs.

anecdote

Food rations in Camp Borden left a lot to be desired. There was also a fellow named Dion who slept so soundly, nothing but nothing would wake him -- short of a bucket of cold water. So, one day, a few of his 'friends', finding him dead asleep, placed him on a stretcher smack in the middle of the parade ground with a card on his chest which read: "Died for want of butter."

Source: Vern Dowie

AUGUST

A second unit of the Three Rivers Regiment is formed, commanded by Col. Raoul Pellerin, a veteran with over 50 years of military service. Its mandate: to defend the Canadian territory and provide reinforcements for the fighting units. By 1945, it will enroll more than a thousand men from the St. Maurice region, who will go on to serve with various units both in Canada and overseas.

AUGUST 7

We note in Part 1 Orders that the Coach "Furlough" railway fare to Montreal is \$11.85, and to Trois-Rivières is \$14.40. This creates a problem for any Trooper, for example, when his pay is only \$39.00 or so a month; particularly if he is married and half of his pay is assigned.

AUGUST 8

The Battle of Britain begins in earnest, with German Luftwaffe attacks on British fighter airfields and radar stations.

Source: National Post, Canada

AUGUST 13

General Headquarters creates the Canadian Armoured Corps.

AUGUST 13

Our Padre is a Jesuit and an inveterate bridge player: Father James McGivern.

AUGUST 15

The Battle of Britain is at its peak.

AUGUST 15

A newer tank, a 5-ton Mark VIB light tank, said to be designed for a parachute drop, is now looking down its longer British nose at the old French Renaults in our tank park.

anecdote

Captain Bashaw lowered his vast bulk into the unvast turret, and got stuck. So stuck that he, tank and all, were unceremoniously (but not inconspicuously) hauled to Armoured Corps HQ for his extirpation. A sort of cork-popping, so to speak. When everybody ran out of ideas, Col. (soon to be Major General) Worthington ordered two sergeant-majors to “pour oil over the bugger and get him the hell out of there.” It worked. Eventually. Leaving more than a little of Captain Bashaw behind. Source?

Editor's Note

I did NOT write: “Capt. Bashaw’s behind.” One of the sergeant-majors, incidentally, was Lt. Jack Wallace’s father: soon-to-be Major Jack Wallace, O.C., ‘A’ Squadron.

Source: Fritz Prevost with some dotting of the i’s by Jack Wallace, son.

AUGUST 17

A new syllabus of training has been drawn up to go into effect on the 19th instant. Major J. V. Allard is in charge. Personnel of the Unit are required to undergo instruction in all phases of Tank Training, then tested and classified as A., B. or C., or as a failure.

AUGUST 19

Rev. J.L. Wilhelm is appointed R.C. chaplain at Camp Borden.

anecdote

I served Father Wilhelm's first Mass in a CAFUS hut. But I didn't know the Latin responses, so I mumbled my way through. But not expertly enough to fool the Padre. I was soon after replaced by a fellow from an Irish Regiment nearby.

Source and culprit: Jack Wallace

AUGUST 19

Today, the new training scheme is in action: intense activity is evident. We have few machine guns, little motor transport, and not nearly enough instruction booklets for a Unit of our size, but it would appear that no obstacle is insuperable for the Three Rivers Regiment.

AUGUST 26

First parade of the First Armoured Brigade was held today. Col. F.F.Worthington, the Commander, outlined his future plans and hopes. He emphasized the difficulties of the task, and called on every man to become more than equal to them or leave the Brigade at once.

AUGUST 31

The Strength Return of the Unit today shows an increase of 104 in the total strength of the Unit for the month:

Detail	Strength	Attached
Lt.Col.	1	1
Majors	3	3
Captains	10	10
Lieutenants	16	16
R.S.M. (W.O.1.)	1	1
R.Q.M.S.	1	1
S.S.M. (W.O.2.)	3	3
S.Q.M.S.	3	3
Sergeants	37	1
Corporals	39	39
Lance/Corporals	39	39
Troopers 1	467	467
Total	620	584

SEPTEMBER 1

The United States introduces compulsory military service.

SEPTEMBER 10

One officer and three sergeants are detailed to attend the Camp Grenade School. All ranks are being issued with 'New Style' ground sheets. The "Old Style" was simply an oblong sheet of rubber. The new one is actually designed to serve also as a rain cape.

SEPTEMBER 11

During the past few days, practically the whole unit has been medically reboarded. This will result in some transfers and some discharges.

SEPTEMBER 13

The luxury liner S.S. City of Benares leaves port carrying British children to Canada to escape German air raids over Britain. The ship is torpedoed by a German U-boat during the night 1,000 kilometres out to sea, killing more than 70 children.

Source: National Post, Canada

SEPTEMBER 14

Examination results fill most of today's Part 1 Orders, tangible evidence of the success of the Regimental Training Plan.

SEPTEMBER 16

A bugle band is being formed; regular practice starts today.

SEPTEMBER 22

A tactical scheme was held today in defence of Camp Borden. The attackers' victory, in spite of our noble effort, is not unanimously conceded.

SEPTEMBER 27

Germany, Italy and Japan sign a 10-year formal alliance called the Axis. Source: National Post, Canada

OCTOBER 10

Order No.1 of the 1st Canadian Armoured Corps appears today: The First Canadian Armoured Brigade is formed in Camp Borden, under the command of Col. F.F. Worthington – the founder and commandant of the Tank School. The Brigade initially includes the following regiments: the First Hussars, the Fort Garry Horse, the Ontario, and the Three Rivers.

Editor's Note

Before the Brigade embarked for the British Isles, the Calgary Regiment was substituted for the First Hussars and the Fort Garry Horse. 'Worthy' (Brig Gen Worthington) later told Lt. Jack Wallace (TRR) that he had asked the Fort Garry Horse to be part of his Brigade. "No, we are cavalrymen, not tankers" they had replied.

INTRODUCTION TO AN INDEPENDENT ARMoured BRIGADE

By Lt. Col. Cyril H. Neroutsos DSO

The 1st Armoured Brigade (independent) grew out of the Armoured Fighting Vehicle School, a permanent force school headed by Major Frank Worthington at Camp Borden, Ontario. It was assembled at Camp Borden in 1940-41, and consisted (just before going overseas) of three Army Tank Battalions:

- ? 11th Army Tank Battalion (The Ontario Regiment)
- ? 12th Army Tank Battalion (The Three Rivers Regiment)
- ? 14th Army Tank Battalion (The Calgary Regiment)

An independent armoured brigade is designed to come under the direction of the Army Commander, who allots it to Corps as the situation demands. However, it can be readily shifted from Corps to Corps, without administrative or supply problems: as it has its own supporting line of supply and ancillary units, e.g.

- ? Field Ambulance, Dressing Station
- ? Ordnance Workshop -- Recovery Unit
- ? R.C. Signals Unit
- ? Line of Communications R.C.A.S.C., with vehicles capable of going right back to Corps Supply Units for ammo, petrol & rations

The allocation of the Brigade (or of individual Armoured Regiments) to a Corps (or to individual Infantry Divisions) varies with the tactical situation and size of operational demands, during the course of an operation.

Editor's Note

Lt. Col. C.H. Neurotsos, at the time he wrote this, was C.O. of the Calgary Regiment. He had been serving as 2 i/c of the Three Rivers Regiment, when promoted and transferred to the Calgary Regiment.

OCTOBER 19

An exceptionally large number of examination results appear in today's orders. Training is discovering many very good men.

OCTOBER 27

The Empress of Britain is sunk off the coast of Ireland.

NOVEMBER 1

The Germans issue a decree banning Jews from all civil service positions, including all academic posts, in Holland.

NOVEMBER 6

An ever-increasing number of personnel are being detailed to Brigade courses in all the various technical subjects. The Brigade is fast becoming a practical reality in the life of our Regiment.

NOVEMBER 11

The first Regimental Smoker was held in one of the Men's Messes this evening. The program included songs by a quintet, a trombone solo, a piano solo, a few impromptu songs, and an excellent presentation of French music and songs by some of the French-Canadian members of the Unit. Community singing was organized by the men themselves.

It was a thorough success and revealed some remarkable talent. There is no doubt this sort of effort adds to our ever-growing 'esprit de corps'.

NOVEMBER 15

An epidemic of measles has broken out in Camp Borden. Some 70 cases already reported.

NOVEMBER 15

Nearly 400,000 Jews are trapped in the Warsaw Ghetto.

NOVEMBER 17

There is unfortunately a considerable percentage of men taken on strength who do not prove suitable for the task faced by a tank unit. The requirements for this kind of work are of an exceptionally high standard. So there is a constant stream of men struck off strength as either "unlikely to become efficient soldiers," or "physically unfit for active service under existing standards."

NOVEMBER 22

Remarkable moving pictures of the German invasion of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Norway and France were shown in the Salvation Army Auditorium to members of the Brigade. It brought home the point that success in modern warfare depends a great deal on accuracy, speed and -- most of all -- determination.

DECEMBER 9

The British Army begins its offensive in North Africa.

DECEMBER 12

Today, Italy and Germany declared war on the United States; the U.S. Congress, in turn, declared war on both.

Source: National Post, Canada

Recollections

In the winter of 1940-41, our first 4-wheel, war-issue vehicles began to arrive. Till then, we had had to make do with such commercial vehicles as Dodge Fargo pickup trucks; as well as a number of Indian 500cc motorcycles, some with sidecars, on which to train dispatch riders (D.R.s for short).

When our quota of Ford and Chevrolet 4-wheel-drive trucks was finally delivered, (8cwt and 15cwt, 3-tonners, and gun-tractors), the vehicles came fresh from the assembly lines, untested and unproven. The testing was left to us.

So 24 hours a day for several months, driven by three alternating crews per 8-hour shift, the new vehicles were kept racing and rolling on paved and unpaved roads; as well as grinding and 'bulling' in mud, over rocks and through sand off road. They passed this grueling test with flying colours. So did the drivers.

Source: Vern Dowie

DECEMBER 25

'Merry Christmas' again in Canada. May the next one be overseas. There is a midnight Mass for Catholics, followed by a turkey dinner, free beer and free cigarettes for all. Traditionally, officers and sergeants will serve the men.

War Chronicles 1941

JANUARY 1

Number of hours per day Jews in Germany are allowed to shop for food since November 1938: 1 hour in Berlin; 30 minutes in Leipzig ...
Number of hours per day (German) Jews are required to perform conscript labour: 10.

JANUARY 3

Major G.E. Russell, of the British 13/18th Hussars, R.A.C., is temporarily attached to our Unit. He is an exceptionally capable officer, and took part with his regiment in the fighting in France and at Dunkirk.

He will be taking a prominent part in Brigade and Regimental R/T Procedure & Tactical Schemes, giving lectures to officers and other ranks, and serving as chairman of the Camp Boxing Committee.

JANUARY 15

Our Regiment is adjudged the most efficiently operating unit in Camp Borden.

JANUARY 21

Penicillin is first tested on humans.

JANUARY 23

An inter-Brigade gunnery shoot was held this evening.

FEBRUARY 7

Major G.E. Russell, Lt. F.W. Johnson and 14 other ranks are proceeding On Command to take part in Parade and Service in Montreal on Quebec's Day of Prayer for Victory this coming Sunday. They are taking four tanks along.

FEBRUARY 9

Churchill reviews the progress of the war in a broadcast heard in Canada and the U.S.

FEBRUARY 10

Brig. Worthington spoke on the reorganization of the Canadian Armoured Corps. The Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) (A.F.) is to become a Battalion of the Army Tank Brigade, together with the Ontario Regiment and one other unit yet to be named.

FEBRUARY 24

The Unit is being inspected in all its phases by the Inspector General Maj. Gen. T.V. Anderson, C.M.G., D.S.O.

FEBRUARY 27

Title of “Twelfth Army Tank Battalion (T.R.R.) A.F.” is used at head of Part 1 Orders for the first time today.

.MARCH

Around this time, our Unit formed a ski team. Fritz Prevost, George Meredith and “Chris” Christofferson and I were on it. We went to Huntsville to compete against members of the Norwegian Air Force. In those days, Norwegians were reputed to be the best in the world. But they skied on snow, not ice.

anecdote

Halfway down the ski run, there was a sharp turn at a large tree. Fritz and I flattened out and hit the tree side-ways to manage the turn. That maneuver proved too much for the Norwegians (and for our George Meredith who somehow contrived to hit the tree, bite his tongue and nibble on one of his ski poles. With the result that he needed three stitches in his tongue and three more in his lip). Fritz and I won!

Source: Pat Mills

MARCH 13

The advance party of the third unit of our Brigade, the Fourteenth Army Tank Battalion (C.H.) (A.F.), arrived in Camp today: The Calgary Regiment (Tank).

APRIL 1

The Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) is officially designated the “12th Army Tank Battalion”, effective March 1.

APRIL 4

Lt.-Col. J.G. Vining, Capt. W. Piché and Lt. J.R. Walker, with seven other ranks, proceed on command OVERSEAS.

APRIL 5

Major J.V. Allard assumes command of the 12th Army Tank Battalion.

APRIL 18

In Greece, the Nazi flag flies over the Acropolis.

MAY 2

Hon. Capt. J.L. Wilhelm, chaplain, is attached to Regiment from H.Q., Canadian Army Tank Brigade.

MAY 15

The 1st Canadian Army tank Brigade, including its H.Q., the 11th Army Tank Battalion w/No.59 L.A.D., the 12th Army Tank Battalion w/No.60 L.A.D., the 14th Army Tank Battalion w/No.61 L.A.D., the 1st Can. Army Tank Brigade Signals, the 1st Can. Army Tank Brigade RCASC Coy, and the 2nd Light Field Ambulance departed from unit lines at 0600 hrs May 15, for a tactical exercise to be held May 15, 16 and 17.

MAY 20

Major C.H. Neroutsos assumes command today of the 12th Army Tank Battalion.

MAY 22

Canada's first assault tank is built in Montreal's Angus workshops.

MAY 29

Authority to grant EMBARKATION LEAVES received.

MAY 31

244 Other Ranks granted Embarkation Leaves.

JUNE 5

Returning from leave, Major J.V. Allard re-assumes command of the 12th Army Tank Battalion. Major Neroutsos returns to duties of 2nd in Command. 126 more Other Ranks are granted Embarkation Leave.

JUNE 13

Final inspection is held today, by the Canadian Armoured Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. Samson.

JUNE 16

The Overseas Advance Party leaves Camp Borden today, and is scheduled to arrive in Halifax on June 18, when it will board the S.S. "Britannic."

JUNE 17

The Regiment, minus the Overseas Advance Party, is scheduled to leave Camp Borden today, detrain in Quebec City tomorrow -- for a march through the outskirts of Limoilou, and arrive in Halifax on June 18.

JUNE 19

The Regiment reaches Halifax and boards the S.S. "Windsor Castle."

JUNE 21

At 1200 hrs, the convoy sails for the United Kingdom, escorted by the battleship "Ramillies", the battle cruiser "Repulse" and six British destroyers.

Editor's Note

Both the "Ramillies" and the "Repulse" were subsequently sunk in the Pacific by Japanese bombers, and the "Windsor Castle" was also sunk later off Gibraltar by a German radio-guided bomb.



JUNE 22

Germany invades the U.S.S.R.

JUNE 23

The Regiment's crossing proved uneventful, except for one alert at 1720 hrs, when one of our escorting destroyers dropped several depth charges.

JUNE 29

At 0900 hrs, today Sunday, we get our first view of the British Isles.

JUNE 30

At 0800 hrs, both the "Britannic" and the "Windsor Castle" drop anchor in the Clyde River near Gourock, Scotland.

JULY 1

The Regiment is officially welcomed to the United Kingdom today (Dominion Day) by the Dominion's Under Secretary (appropriately named Geoffrey Shakespeare), by our Brigade Commander, and by Mr. G.B. Johnson, Canadian Trade Commissioner for Scotland.

The First Armoured Tank Brigade and three Canadian infantry divisions are now regrouped under the command of Lt. Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton.

(Note from Jack Wallace: This was unusual because newly arrived units came under CMHQ in London. But the Brigade was placed immediately in the Order of Battle under Lt. Gen. McNaughton.)

The Regiment entrains at Gourock Station at 2000 hrs and travels through the night southwards to Lavington Downs.

JULY 1

Wartime rationing begins in Canada with gas coupons. And the first Canadian field gun is produced in Sorel, Quebec.

JULY 2

1st Cdn Armd Bde concentrates in Salisbury Plains.

anecdote

One evening, soon after arrival in Salisbury Plains, we had a very bad fire. Sixteen officers lost all their belongings. In no time, everything was ashes, except the clothes we were wearing.

We all went to London to contact our banks: the Royal Bank of Canada and the Bank of Montreal. But we were refused credit. Moss Bros., a London Tailor, gave us all we needed, no questions asked. Source: then Capt. Pat Mills

JULY 4

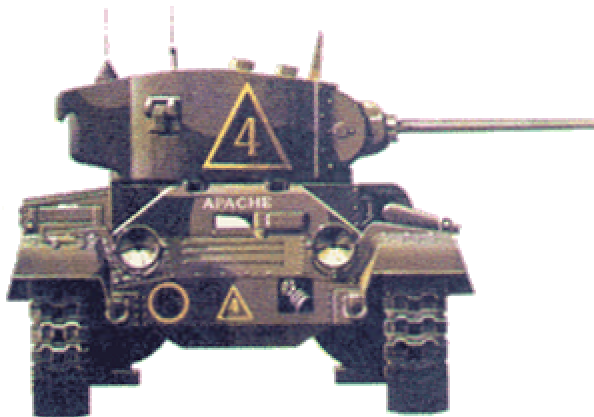
Regiment will soon and gradually be equipped with the Canadian-built Matildas. While they're not state of the art, they're at least designed for the right war. But their 2-pounders look like peashooters in the massive turrets, and are certainly no match for the 75 MMs we've seen on German tanks in the newsreels.

JULY 8

Start work on air raid trenches today.

JULY 10

Regiment receiving its first tanks today: six (6) Infantry Tanks Mark II (Matilda). Their armament consists of one 2-pounder and one Light BESA Machine-Gun. The crew of four comprises: the Commander, Loader, Gunner, and Driver.



Valentine Mark II

anecdote

Stationed on Salisbury Plains in 1941, the Regiment was equipped with "Matilda" tanks. Cpl. J. Gallagher's Loader-Operator lost some fingers courtesy of the turret hatch.

'A' Squadron O.C., Major Jack Wallace, a professional soldier with an explosive temper and a loud roar, was fondly referred to as "The Bull of the Woods." A heavy smoker, he always had half-empty packages of Sweet Caps lying about. So, while cleaning up the mess in the tank, Cpl. Gallagher retrieved the severed fingers and, during lunch break, sneaked into the Squadron H.Q. tent, and slipped them into a package of the Major's Sweet Caps. Everyone waited for the explosion ... "Who's the S.O.B. who did this?" bellowed The Bull of the Woods, erupting from the H.Q. tent into a moonscape: utter silence and nary a soul in sight.

Many years later, at a T.R.R. reunion, Major Wallace finally was told the name of the culprit. But, much mellowed by the passage of time, "The Bull of the Woods" roared with laughter instead.

Source: E.R.M. 'Tojo' Griffiths

JULY 19

At 2028 hrs, our C.O., Lt. Col. J.G. Vining was refused exit from camp by a sentry of his own Unit. He had issued orders that, that particular road was not to be used by motor vehicles under any circumstances and, to the sentry on duty, that meant "just that..."

JULY 23

Unit strength: 41 officers, 573 other ranks.

anecdote

July 24 – We were very short of meat of any sort. Our C.O and 2 i/c hunted pheasant and did themselves proud. I walked by our kitchen one night, peered through the screen, and spied six of the birds hanging there very invitingly. So I returned after midnight with a large sharp knife, waited for the guard to pass by, then made a fast grab and ran off with five of them. With enough cooking time before reveillee, and a few close friends in tow, I took them to Jack Caroline's van up on the hill. Boy, did those birds hit the spot. Col. Vining always suspected but couldn't prove who had done the dastardly deed. But every Christmas before he died long after the war, he sent me a card featuring a pheasant or two.

Source: Pat Mills

JULY 25

Camp inspected today by Gen. McNaughton again. This time with Gen. Sir John G. Dill, K.C.D., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief of Imperial General Staff.

anecdote

Gen. Sir John Dill was so impressed by the smooth, expert way our Corp. Tom Ellis drove him around in his Bren Gun Carrier, that he gave him his kid gloves. "Best bit of driving I've ever experienced in a track vehicle," he said.

Source: Charlie Lines

JULY 25

First Canadian Mail arrives: a dozen fat mailbags. The perfect tonic after two weeks of hard training.

JULY 25

A course in Cipher is being held today at Brigade H.Q. Starting Monday, messages in Cipher will be exchanged between Brigade and Bn. H.Q.s -- to foster speed and accuracy in Cipher communications.

AUGUST 2

At 1900 hrs, the 12th Army Tank Battalion conducts a Field Exercise "attack against an airborne enemy battalion landed on the Downs." The object of the exercise is to test the defensive positions of the Camp. It is the first exercise held by the Regiment with tanks. And a success.

AUGUST 2

A C.B.C. Recording Truck is visiting our Camp today. A number of men from our Unit will be given the opportunity to broadcast a personal message to their families in Canada.

AUGUST 7

'B' Squadron holds dance in Salisbury at the Empire Club. Music provided by the 12th Army Tank Battalion Orchestra. Other Squadrons to hold theirs during the next weeks.

AUGUST 14

Churchill and Roosevelt sign the Atlantic Charter in Newfoundland.

AUGUST 16

Brigade conducted a Tactical Scheme against “Enemy parachutists landed on the Downs.” Scheme demonstrated vital importance of good communications.

AUGUST 17

Exercise today: Firing on the range from moving tanks, while using powered traverse .

AUGUST 20

Firing on the range by ‘C’ Squadron. ‘A’ Squadron conducted a Tactical Exercise in conjunction with above firing. Objective: an attack by infantry supported by tanks against paratroops.

AUGUST 23-26

Courses on Weapons Training, Anti-Gas, Camouflage proceed apace. And instructions received on training and employment of Mobile Light A.A., and on maintenance of ‘B’ vehicles.

AUGUST 27

Proposed War Establishment for an Army Tank Battalion received by Unit for information and study.

AUGUST 31

Strength of Unit

Personnel:

41 officers

577 other ranks

Infantry Tanks Mk II (Mathilda): 16

Troop Carriers: 11

Scout Cars: 1

Trucks: 15 cwt: 8

30 cwt: 7

60 cwt: 3

Armament:

Besa LMG: 18

Bren LMG: 31

2-pounders: 16

Revolvers: 613

Rifles: 72

Thompson Sub MG: 48

Rifles A/Tk Mark 1 (Boyd's): 3

Rifle No.1 (Pooled): 4

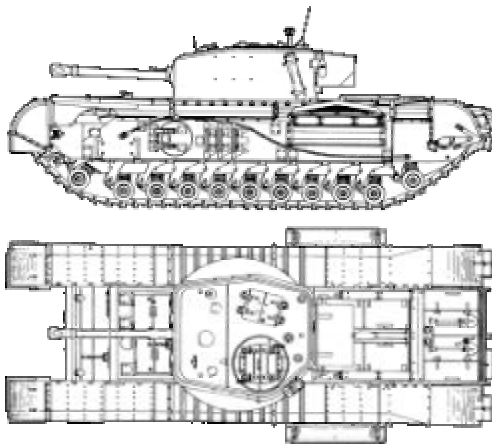
SEPTEMBER 2

1 CDN ARMD BDE concentrates in FARNHAM area. The 12th Can Army Tank Bn (TRR), less 'A' and 'B' Squadrons, departs today from its Camp in West Lavington Downs, to be located as follows:

Battalion H.Q., 'A', 'B', and 'C' Squadrons at Tinker's Firs. And Headquarters Squadron at Grant's Farm. Huts are available at both locations -- to accommodate Regiment (less one squadron which will remain in tents). The intention is to rotate the squadron in the tent area.

SEPTEMBER 5

At 0115 hrs, the hut used as quarters for 16 officers from 'A' and 'B' Squadrons was destroyed by fire at Tinkers First in Salisbury Plains. Most of the officers lost their kits to the flames. There will be a Court of Enquiry.



Churchill Mark IV

Sir Alan Brooke, Commander in Chief Home Forces, paid a visit to the Brigade, and watched it carry out its first large-scale Brigade exercise. He was received by Lt. Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton, the Corps Commander, and Brig. F.F. Worthington.

They watched the Churchills and Mathildas thunder across the plain to the attack. Lysander aircraft also took part. The exercise over, Gen. Brooke, Lt. Gen. McNaughton, and Brig. Worthington inspected the Regiment in its own lines. Gen. Brooke complimented the men on their fine showing.

SEPTEMBER 15

A practice Tactical Exercise, to study a simple combined operation with infantry, was held by the Brigade. Objective: to drive enemy out of Tilshead Down and high ground to the south.

SEPTEMBER 18

Special emphasis is to be given in Gas Instruction for next three days; including a check of anti-gas equipment. Each man is to undergo a two-minute "Tear Gas" test with his Respirator on, and with it off for the last few seconds.

SEPTEMBER 20

Regiment awakened at 0515 hours by a siren sounding the first air raid alarm since the Brigade arrived from Canada. But no enemy plane was seen. Reactions of the troops, and compliance with instructions, were considered 'good' by the Brigadier General and staff.

Regiment was also subjected to a light concentration of DM (smoke) gas for two minutes without respirator, then, with it adjusted.

SEPTEMBER 23

Regiment paraded at 0815 hrs for inspection by Brig. F.F. Worthington. The Brigadier made a thorough inspection of each man, including his clothing and equipment. Each man was also questioned about the training he was receiving, and about the position he holds in his troop.

The gist of the Brigadier's talk to the troops immediately afterward was that: 1) the last days in September mark the end of preliminary training, which has proved "highly successful"; 2) the fighting group of the Brigade will proceed to Wales for practice at the firing range; and 3) the Brigade is to move to winter quarters, where training will continue apace. Then the Brigade will enter into its last stage of training in preparation for the battles to come.

SEPTEMBER 25

The 12th C.A.R. paraded to witness a demo of the McNaughton Tube at 0830 hrs. The tube had been sunk by the R.C.E., and only a thin chalk line marked the spot. After the arrival of Brig. F.F. Worthington and guests, including observers from the U.S. Army, the signal to fire the tube was given. Once the dust and smoke cleared, an anti-tank ditch approx. 100 yds. long, 15 ft. wide and 8 ft deep was revealed. Whereupon two tanks, a Churchill and a Mathilda, set out to put it to the test.

The Churchill lurched its way down, up and out. So did a Bren Gun Carrier -- to everyone's surprise. But the Mathilda had to be ingloriously pulled out. The demonstration showed that, while some tracked vehicles could make it out of the Tank Trap, they were so exposed for a few minutes that they could easily be knocked out of action by anti-tank weapons.

OCTOBER 4

An advance party consisting of 5 officers and 45 other ranks proceeded to the Tank Firing Range at Linney Head, Wales.

OCTOBER 7

The Main Body, consisting of 12 officers and 204 other ranks proceeded by train to Linney Head. Remainder to follow by train tomorrow.

OCTOBER 9

The first Canadian-built war cargo ship, the Fort Ville-Marie, is launched at the Vickers shipyards in Montreal.

OCTOBER 18

The last detachment from Linney Head, Wales, arrived today. The Battalion is now located and quartered as follows: Battalion H.Q. and H.Q. Squadron: at Westbrook Farm (one mile south of Elstead, Surrey); 'A' Squadron: at Green Gates in Tilford, Surrey; 'B' Squadron: at the Eden Lodge in Tilford, Surrey; 'C' Squadron: at the Highcroft in Milford, Surrey.

NOVEMBER 1

Information received from Brigade that the Churchill tank, Mk IV, is to be substituted for the Infantry Tank, Mk II (Matilda). The armament of a Churchill tank consists of one 2-pounder gun and two Besa Machine guns. The crew consists of five men: tank commander, driver, co-driver (who operates one of the machine guns), the gunner, and loader-operator (who loads the gun and operates the radio).



Editor's Note

If the 2-pounder looked like a peashooter on the Matilda, imagine how puny it looked in the turret of this 45-ton behemoth. Fortunately, the 2-pounders were later gradually replaced by more business-like 6-pounders in Worthing. Jack Wallace brought the first one to 'C' Squadron from Brighton. "What with those track guards," he says, "I felt I was moving a naval cruiser down the Brighton-Worthing Road."

NOVEMBER 2

The Regiment moves to the Elstead area, except for 'C' Squadron which settles in Melford Haven, some 6 miles south of Godalming.

anecdote

Members of the Press and Army Public Relations arrived on the scene. They wanted a demonstration of a Churchill's prowess, and pointed to a nearby small and roofless stone building.

"Can a Churchill tank forge its way through it?" they asked. Col. Jake Vining consulted with Sgt. Tommy Gilmour. "Piece of cake," said Tommy. His driver, Tony Gendron, agreed. A camera 'shoot' was arranged for the next early morning. Came the moment of truth. Tony's Churchill rumbled forward. The outmatched building tumbled like a dusty deck of cards. CLICK, CLICK. Handshakes all around. While we tankmen can be excused for not knowing, surely some member of the erudite Press should have known and -- more important -- cared. For that pile of rubble had withstood the vagaries of time for nearly 1500 years. It was a Roman shelter.

Source: Tony Gendron

NOVEMBER 3

Three troops from 'A' Squadron and three troops from 'B' Squadron participate in a scheme with Le Régiment de la Chaudière. Object of the scheme: to familiarize the tank crews with the infantry, and vice versa.

NOVEMBER 9

Day of Remembrance -- Approx. 300 all ranks from the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, including 60 from our Unit, attended Divine Service at the Winchester Cathedral. The Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire and the Mayor were present at the service. The 1st Lesson was read by Lt. Col. J.G. Vining. The sermon was preached by the Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Winchester.

NOVEMBER 15

Studies of, and exercises in, every aspect of modern tank warfare continue without let. Today, it's a study of tank obstacles; tomorrow, 'A' and 'B' Echelons practise harbour parties, traffic control, replacement of supplies, and evacuation of casualties. And officers and other ranks are constantly being sent on specializing courses of every description.

NOVEMBER 16

The Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers arrive in Hong Kong to beef up the British garrison defending the colony against a Japanese invasion.

Source: National Post, Canada

NOVEMBER 27

The 1st Cdn Army Tank Brigade held a Signals Exercise at 1430 hrs.

DECEMBER 1

The First Canadian Armoured Brigade has been given an operational role, that of guarding the South Coast of England. The Brigade continues to train with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions. And the Brigade is billeted in Seaforth, Worthing, Brighton, and Nottingdean.

DECEMBER 2

Regiment now has 6 Churchill tanks.

DECEMBER 7

At 7:49 a.m., 50 Japanese planes, travelling at 210 mph, launch a surprise attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbour. Roosevelt calls it a "Day of Infamy."

DECEMBER 11

Our Unit participates in a Tank Attack Scheme in conjunction with the 72nd Royal Artillery Regiment.

DECEMBER 12

An Advance Party, consisting of 4 officers and 40 other ranks, left at 0830 hrs for the Regiment's new quarters. It arrived at Castle Goring, Sussex, at 1100 hrs.

DECEMBER 13

Twelve Churchill tanks received today, for a total of 23. Only 10 Matildas are left.



Matilda Mk2

DECEMBER 18

Battalion H.Q., 12th Cdn Army Tank, departs Westbrook Cottage, Elstead, and proceeds to Castle Goring in Worthing Area.

DECEMBER 22

Operational Instruction to our Brigade: We are to “counter-attack immediately any hostile tank landings at the Beaches or Ports.” We are “NOT to be employed on any tasks that might compromise (our) primary role.”

DECEMBER 25

Our first Christmas away from home.

DECEMBER 26

Major Jean V. Allard struck off strength to No.2 District Depot, Toronto, Canada, w.e.f. June 16, '41.

DECEMBER 28

The Officers of this Unit participate in a Divisional Scheme, held by the 1st Canadian Division.

War Chronicles 1942

This year, Canada's Wartime Prices and Trade Board brought in sugar rationing, limiting consumption to 12 ounces per person per week. Sugar bowls were removed from tables in all restaurants, hotels and institutions.

The Canadian government proclaimed western British Columbia a "protected area" under wartime regulations. Japanese nationals (Canadians) were ordered to move inland for security reasons. Within weeks, the government included second and third generation Canadians of Japanese origin under the edict. They were treated as aliens and deprived of their property.

Editor's Note

Their homes and fishing boats were also taken, and never given back! The Toronto-built Avro Lancaster bomber flew its first combat mission. And the U.S Army Engineers started building the Alcan (Alaska) Highway to supply the northwest in case of Japanese invasion.

Historical note

Locating 'C' Squadron some miles from the rest of the unit, which was billeted within quick striking distance of Worthing's beaches, was not accidental but part of an over-all strategy.

Remember, a German invasion was then considered an imminent possibility. And 'C' Squadron was held in reserve, ready to plug any breach in the Regiment's line of defence.

Source: Brig. Gen. Fernand Caron

JANUARY 19

Our Battalion HQ and 'C' Squadron participate in a Security Exercise conducted by the Home Guard Unit stationed near Castle Goring. Object: to test local security measures against infiltration by enemy paratroops.

During time limit, troops of the Three Rivers Regiment capture 15 of a possible 20 'paratroops'. But one member of the Home Guard succeeds in penetrating into our lines and planting a 'bomb' in the basement of Castle Goring before he is taken prisoner. Oops!

Editor's Note

Or might it have been an inside job. Were the Castle doors unlocked for an old friend?

JANUARY 21

Four 3' Howitzers Churchill's are issued to our regiment.

JANUARY 25

Advance Parties from HQ, 'A' and 'B' Squadrons proceed from Elstead and Tilford to our Battalion's new location in Worthing, Sussex. Task: ready new quarters for arrival of remainder of Unit.

JANUARY 26

'A' and HQ Squadrons proceed to Worthing, Sussex, by train and motor transport. Meanwhile, Battalion HQ leaves Goring Castle and also proceeds to Worthing -- to take up new quarters at 69 Upper Brighton Rd. Our whole Battalion is thus quartered in a radius of less than 1½ mile. Except for 'C' Squadron in the Abbey, our billets here are clean modern cottages, with all conveniences -- by far the best so far.

A Drill Hall is included among the buildings assigned to the Regiment. It will be used as a Mess Hall, Quartermaster Storeroom, Guard Room, and for the Pay-master's offices. There is also a very modern kitchen where our cooks will be able to make the most of the rations. At least it's our fondest hope.

The 14 other ranks from 60th L.A.D., R.C.E.M.E., stationed at Tilford with our 'A' Squadron, moved to Worthing with that Squadron. They are also quartered in private billets, and have their workshop in the Drill Hall.

JANUARY 28

Brigadier R.A. Wyman, R.C.A., takes over command of the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade.

anecdote

Our Regiment left Elstead, Surrey, moved to Worthing, (Sussex) and surrounds, and settled into actual houses. Except for 'C' Squadron, which took over Goring Castle, later moving into the Abbey in nearby Sompting Abbott. Some troops from our other squadrons even shared premises with the regular dwellers.

The incentive to the homeowners was a blend of patriotism and profit. And it wouldn't be wrong to say that profit loomed larger at first for many, what with the under served bad reputation which preceded the Regiment, and the 7 o'clock curfew initially imposed but soon removed. Source: Jack Partridge

Editor's Note

In fact, when the TRR was shifted to Brighton after a 15-month stay in Worthing, the local administration actually invited the Regiment back; an invitation which was accepted with alacrity by all, and by none more than the 60 or so members of our Regiment who will have married local belles by the time the 12th Canadian Tank Regiment (TRR) was summoned for the invasion of Sicily.

JANUARY 30

Rev. J.L. Wilhelm ("Padre") begins living with TRR, as they settle in Worthing. But he is still Chaplain to the Brigade as a whole.

JANUARY 31

Strength of unit as of 2359 hrs:

Strength of unit as of 2359 hrs:	
Personnel	
Officers	35
Other Ranks	565
Vehicles (tracked)	
Tanks, Churchill, Mark II	50
Troop Carriers, Mark I	11
Troop Carriers, Mark II	2
Vehicles (wheeled)	
Trucks, 15-cwt	8
Trucks, 30-cwt	14
Trucks, 60-cwt	15
Sedans	3
Water Truck	1
Scout Cars	9
Motorcycles	6
Armament:	
Besa M.Gs, light	92
Tank guns, 2-pdrs	50
Howitzers, 3"	12
Bren M.Gs	40
Thompson Sub-M.Gs	58
Pistols, .38"	612
Pistols, signal	3
Rifles, #1, Mk III	74
Rifles, #1 (ported)	4
Rifles, Boyd's, Mk I A/Tk	3

FEBRUARY 10

A demonstration of a new type of casualty sling, adopted by the Royal Armoured Corps, is being held by the 2nd Canadian Light Field Ambulance, at HQ Squadron today.

FEBRUARY 13

Demonstration today, on Ludshot Common, of the following:

- a) clearing of minefields**
- b) Ronson flame-throwers**
- c) M.T. smoke producers**

FEBRUARY 14

The 12th Canadian Army Tank Battalion (TRR) marched to the Drill Hall at 0930 hrs for a “Farewell Parade and Inspection” in honour of Major General F.F. Worthington, M.C., M.M., who is leaving the Brigade to take over command of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division now being formed in Canada.

FEBRUARY 15

Training films “Camouflage” and “Replenishment of ammunition in the field” are being shown in Drill Hall.

FEBRUARY 24

A tactical discussion re an “Infantry-Tank Set Piece Attack” is being held this evening for all officers.

MARCH 8

An air raid alert was sounded at 1500 hrs, lasting about 15 minutes. No enemy planes were sighted.

MARCH 10

‘A’ Squadron is to hold an overnight scheme in the vicinity of Highden Wood, to practise harbouring at night. ‘B’ and ‘C’ Squadrons will do the same over the next two nights; followed by the ‘A’ and ‘B’ Echelons.

MARCH 13

Major C.B. Van Straubensee takes over command of 'C' Squadron from 2 I.C., Capt. "Fern" Caron.

anecdote

On my first day, the Squadron was doing P.T. (Physical Training) in the usual lackadaisical manner, when a flag-flying staff car pulled up and a very senior officer stepped out and leapt over the fence like an African gazelle. To my horror, I recognized Gen. Montgomery. The Squadron, however, reacted admirably, which seemed to impress the General.

He proceeded to question me about the Unit, which he referred to as the "Five Rivers Regiment." All my efforts to correct him were ignored, and he ordered me to show him our equipment.

Having just taken over, I was not too familiar with the new Churchill tanks, only recently issued to the Regiment. However, as the General was persistent, I had to improvise with some jargon about "actuating pistons", "pneumatic tension absorbers", etc. This seemed to satisfy 'Monty' who, before he left, complimented me and 'C' Squadron of the 'Five Rivers Regiment' (sic), all of whom looked "very fit and battle-worthy."

Source: Major Van Straubensee

MARCH 16

An air raid alert was sounded at 1115 hrs, lasting until 1145 hrs. No enemy planes sighted.

Our Unit departed from its lines at 1730 hrs, taking part in a scheme with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade.

Lt. D.K. Dawson and members of 12th Canadian Army Tank Battalion Orchestra proceeded to London to take part in a broadcast to Canada over the BBC. A recitation by Sgt. G.R. Lowden of 'B' Squadron is on the program.

MARCH 25

One troop from 'A' Squadron, under Lt. D.A. McIntyre, participates in an Infantry and Tank attack demonstration with one platoon of the Carlton & York Regiment in Wepham Down.

MARCH 30

The Three Rivers Regiment participates in the Exercise Mickey with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade. Exercise cannot be completed due to extremely poor visibility.

APRIL 1

At 2230 hrs, a secret message is received from HQ of 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade that enemy parachutists have arrived at Cherbourg, France. Guards doubled, in spite of the date.

APRIL 5

Today, RCAF Squadron Leader L.J. Birchall spotted a Japanese armada heading for Ceylon, where he alerted the British and averted a second Pearl Harbour.

APRIL 6

General Andrew G.L. McNaughton forms the First Canadian Army in Britain.

APRIL 9

At 0745 hrs, an unidentified German aircraft flew over our billet area. The aircraft scored a hit on a building near the Worthing Gas Works. Fog and rain helped the plane glide to its objective unobserved. The plane flew off at a few hundred feet altitude with machine guns firing.

anecdote

It was about ten in the morning, and Tony Gendron and I were just back in our billets from a Muster Parade at the Drill Hall. Our room was on the second floor of a private home nearby. Then we heard the plane and air raid alert at the same time. We rushed to the window, just in time to see it drop its bomb. It seemed to be coursing for the large gas reservoir that loomed over the downtown. But then, to my horror, I realized that the bomb was missing its target and heading instead for the Electricity Works with its tall yellow-brick chimney.

“Tony!” I yelled, “That’s where Peggy’s working.” I was halfway down the stairs, when I heard the explosion. I grabbed our landlord’s

bicycle and raced to ... God knew what! An air raid warden, already on the scene, tried to stop me. "My fiancée is in there," I yelled as I sped by him.

A pall of dust hung over the whole area. And the explosion had shattered the glass-panelled roof and every window pane. I also learned later that one yard-worker had been killed, and another severely injured when a brick wall fell on them.

But when I peered into the street-level window of Peggy's office and called her name, she appeared almost instantly: pale, shaken, hair a little awry, but -- thank God -- beautifully unharmed. When we married some 6 months later, and only 7 weeks before we set sail for Sicily, she became one of 61 Worthing war brides our Regiment proudly claims.

Source: Your proud editor

APRIL 11

Capt. Cameron, acting I.O., 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, gives a talk and demonstration to all squadrons re uniforms of the German armed forces.

APRIL 19

Pre-Exercise concentration movement begins for Beaver 111 Scheme. Unit leaves Worthing at 1238 hrs. First harbour reached at 1650 hrs. Distance covered: 14½ miles. There were 10 tank breakdowns on way. Tanks quickly repaired by our fitters and 60th L.A.D.

APRIL 20

Our Unit departs for next harbour at 1230 hrs, arriving at 1455 hrs. Distance covered: 13¾ miles. There were 20 tank breakdowns during this move. All tanks reached harbour after minor repairs.

APRIL 21

Unit leaves for final harbour at 1230 hrs and arrives at 1635 hrs. Distance covered: 24¾ miles. Only one tank breakdown this time.

APRIL 22

After a session of general maintenance, our Unit rests up during afternoon for a night movement. Beaver III begins at midnight.

APRIL 24

Our Unit's Fighting Group takes up battle positions west of Washington Gap. Beaver III Exercise ended at midnight.

APRIL 25

Total distance covered during Beaver III Exercise: 103½ miles. Regiment was issued its first "Iron Rations" yesterday. Issued on a 5-man basis, they consist of: 5 tins of 'hard tack' (these biscuits may be the reason the rations are called 'iron'), 5 tins of 'bully' beef, 1½ tins of beans, 3 tins of sardines, 1¼ tins of jam, 3 tins of tea per person, sugar and milk (powder). The men seem to find them very satisfactory, which reflects rather sadly on our cooks' offerings.

MAY 5

'B' Squadron, under the command of Capt. J.R. Walker, cooperated with two companies of the West Nova Scotia Regiment in a 'Tank cum Infantry' attack. Trucks and scout cars were used instead of tanks to save petrol. (The UBoats are taking a toll!) The attack was carried out in spite of a persistent fog, as such conditions may well prevail in actual combat. Many important lessons are learned and passed on to all concerned.

MAY 9

"Vehicle Casualty" forms are issued, umpires appointed, and signals and frequencies allotted – for Beaver IV Exercise now started and slated to continue till May 13.

MAY 10

Two 'A' Squadron tanks 'ruled out' at 1245 hrs by umpires, as sabotaged by 'fifth columnists'; but this PROMPTLY countermanded by Chief Umpire.

MAY 11

The German submarine U-53 torpedoes British steamer Nicoya and Dutch ship Leno near Anticosti Island, instigating the Battle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence between the Royal Canadian Navy and German U-boats.

Source: National Post, Canada

MAY 15

The Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) remains in harbour. Time spent on maintenance; correcting faults discovered in Beaver IV Exercise, and getting ready for the up-coming "Tiger" Exercise.

MAY 15

The Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) is officially designated the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment.

MAY 18

Message from Brigade H.Q. that Airborne troops, Paratroops and Gliders may be used during "Tiger" Exercise.

MAY 25

Warning received from 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade that the TRR must be prepared to move, starting at 0530 hrs on May 26, on one hour's notice. Weather: intermittent rain.

MAY 26

At 1605 hrs, the Unit is to be prepared to move at once. At 1615 hrs, meeting of 'O' Group. At 1800 hrs, Unit passes Brigade starting point.

MAY 27

Top Nazi SS official Reinhard Heydrich is shot and mortally wounded by partisans in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Hitler orders savage reprisals against the populations of Moravia and Bohemia in response, and 10,000 Czechs are murdered.

MAY 27

Pleasant surprise: first issue of rum to the Three Rivers Regiment since the start of the war.

MAY 30

British and Canadian warplanes ravage Cologne, Germany, in the first thousand-plane raid of the Second World War.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 1

Lt.-Col. J.G. Vining and Lt. F.L. Caron proceed to Bulford to attend course at R.A.C. Officers Tactical School.

JUNE 4

Major C.H. Neroutsos attends a conference on Exercise "Tiger" at Tunbridge Wells, presided by Lt. Gen. B.L. Montgomery, C.B., D.S.O.

JUNE 6

Major C.H. Neroutsos gives lecture on Exercise "Tiger" and on 'The New Formation of the British Division', to all available officers.

JUNE 14

Major C.B. Van Straubensee is acting as Tank Advisor at a series of discussions and demonstrations on ATk Artillery put on by 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade.

JUNE 16

At 2359 hrs, 'B' Squadron's O.C. ordered a Surprise Dispersal Move. By 0025 hrs, Squadron was ready to move. 'A' and 'B' Echelons passed Start Point at 0028 hrs, proceeding along Upper Brighton Road to a point west of Lychpole Farm; returning to billets at 0310 hrs. Other squadrons followed suit over the next few days.

JUNE 19

'C' Squadron was the last to be ordered out on a Surprise Dispersal Move. The Squadron's O.C. varied the surprise by calling the move at 2201 hrs, when many of the personnel were out on pass; and by arranging for a Commando versus Tank action with the O.C. of the Local Commando Group.

The men on pass were collected within 20 minutes, and the Squadron was passing the Start Point in a record 23 minutes, or just 3 minutes later. However and unfortunately, the O.C. of the Commando Group and 4 of his personnel (perhaps surprised by the speed of the Squadron's response) were captured almost immediately; so disorganizing the rest of the commandos, that they were unable to launch a concentrated attack.

JUNE 20

A Japanese submarine shells isolated-Estevan Point on Vancouver Island, with little damage -- the only time Canadian territory comes under fire in the Second World War.

JUNE 23

A fire-fighting lecture and demonstration is being held this afternoon outside the Drill Hall: principally on how to deal with incendiary bombs.

JUNE 25

Brig. R.A. Wyman, E.D., Brigade Commander, carried out a full-day inspection of the 12th Canadian Army Tank Battalion, starting at 0900 hrs, and including a Dispersal Move code-named "DIVE" at 2030 hrs. Though there were constant planned interruptions by the Brigade Staff, these failed to interrupt the orderly sequence of this Unit's response. Brigade Command was well pleased with the Regiment's appearance and performance.

JUNE 27

All Units' available officers attend a lecture on Army Air Support given by Major J.G. Stewart, commanding No.1 Canadian Air Support Patrol.

JUNE 29

RAM patch is to be discontinued and replaced by a black diamond with a red bar bearing the letters: 12th CTR. The name of the Regiment is to be changed to 12th Canadian Tank Regiment in the near future.

JULY 1

The Three Rivers Regiment's "Composite Squadron" leaves today to participate in the Canadian Corps Field Firing Exercise this month at Training Area No.4.

Our Unit also celebrates the first anniversary of its arrival in England, on this Dominion Day.

JULY 2, 4, 6

Air raid warnings but no enemy action.

JULY 8

Lt. F.L. Caron appointed Captain effective 17 May 1942.

anecdote

For fear the 'good life' in Worthing (officially referred to as the 'defence of Britain') would turn us men soft, our C.O., Jake Vining, ordered some extra-curricular P.T. (Physical Training), which S.S.M. Fritz Prevost translated sadistically (every Saturday) into trucking us 3 miles away from the Drill Hall and forcing us to run all the way back -- before we could go out on pass and visit our girlfriends.

With the result that, one fine Saturday, a bunch of desperate laggards, showing some of the initiative that made the TRR famous, boarded a passing bus, once they had fallen far enough back to get away with it. Unfortunately, the bus's itinerary proved to be the same as the return route chosen by Fritz for the rest of us huffers and puffers. Fritz spotted the 'riding high' laggards. But they also spotted Fritz -- with at least equal consternation. So they were waiting for us at the very next stop. On foot! But NOT out of trouble!

Source: Jimmy Hodson

Editor's Note

RSM Fritz Prévost doesn't remember the punishment he exacted. Neither do we. But we do know he was highly creative on such occasions.

JULY 12

Air raid warning sounded at 2145 hrs. No enemy action.

anecdote

While in Worthing, we kept our vehicles in a park that required guards. Our stalwart Irishman Tpr. Dick Greer was on duty, armed with a Thompson machine gun. Our C.O. Jake Vining decided to check the guard.

As he approached, Dick shouted the required: "Halt! Who goes there?" Jake stopped, identified himself, then, approached him. "What," he asked, "would you have done if I had kept going?"

"Well, Sir," said Dick, "I have 40 rounds in this weapon, and I wouldn't have missed with all of them." I guess Jake liked that.

Source: Bill Alderson

JULY 15

The Regiment wins the Brigade Sports Championship.

JULY 16, 17, 18, 20

Air raid warnings, but no enemy action.

JULY 21

Message received from I.O., 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, re precautions to be taken if unexploded incendiary bomb found.

Editor's Note

Happily for all concerned, Worthing was only very occasionally subjected to enemy action. Mostly, it was overflowed by enemy bombers on their way to or from London. However, incoming enemy bombers often flew in very low, trying to avoid detection by radar.

So there was always the possibility of an aborted flight and an arbitrary shedding of the bomb load. There were also exceptions. Such as a bomber which crashed in a tree in downtown Worthing on its way to a raid on London; bombs dropped by lone raiders on the local gas works and electricity works respectively, and a landmine which exploded in the 'A' Squadron area. Fortunately, 'A' Squadron had not yet returned from a war exercise.

JULY 22

An excellent lecture was given by Col. Yeo of the Royal Tank Regiment (ex-C.O. of 44 R.T.R.) on "Tank Commander's Viewpoint on the Lybian Campaign."

A very instructive lecture on Combined Operations (hindsight tells us that it was really based on the Dieppe Raid to come) was given by Lt.-Col. J.G. Andrews to all available officers of the Brigade.

JULY 25

Warning Order sent to Squadrons re Exercise Harold to be held shortly. Air raid warning sounded at 2110 hrs. No enemy action.

anecdote

One night in Worthing, while Cpl. Tony Gendron was acting Orderly Sergeant, Tpr. B. Pigeon ran into the guardroom in an unusual state of excitement. For him. "You won't believe this," he said, "but a kangaroo just went by." Knowing Pigeon's bent for tricks, Tony said: "Sure. You bet. Get back to your post." "I'm not kidding," said Pigeon. "Come and see it for yourself."

But there was nothing Tony could see out in pitch darkness, though he could just make out a faint slap-slapping sound in the distance. Certainly not enough evidence to invite ridicule with a report. Later, another sentry reported the same thing to S.S.M. Fritz Prevost, and was charged with being drunk on duty for his pains.

Next morning, some alarmed Land Army girls reported a 'would-you-believe-it' kangaroo near Sompting Abbott. Some 'C' Squadron stalwarts gallantly sallied forth and captured the 'wild' beast.

We learned later that the smallish kangaroo (in fact, a wallaby) had been brought to Britain by an Australian airman, as a unit mascot. But it had escaped from the airbase in northern England, and had somehow made its way south all the way to Worthing, in a vain attempt to get back home.

Until he was reclaimed by its rightful owner, 'C' Squadron billeted the wallaby in the Abbey's wash-house. And, when it was discovered that it had been taught to box, some hilarious bouts were arranged. And bet on.

Source: Fritz Prevost

JULY 26

The new A.F.V. Ranges at Minehead, Wales, are now completed. Our Unit has been allotted period August 7-20. Advance Party of 50 O.R.s, with Lt. F. Major in charge, proceeding to Minehead.

JULY 27

Enemy Order of Battle received from Brigade H.Q. re Exercise Harold. Now almost daily, air raid warnings occur this day at 0605 hrs and 2205 hrs. No enemy action (bombers returning from raids on London). Object of Exercise Harold: Training of Command and Staff, and Harbour details.

JULY 31

12th Canadian Army Tank Battalion (TRR) captures Bostall Hill. 'Enemy' surrounded and captured. Exercise Harold ends.

AUGUST 6

Our Unit has the honour of being the first to occupy new Camp and Firing Range at Minehead.

anecdote

While we were on the shooting range in Minehead, Bob Horowitz coached our relay swim team for a match-up against a British Royal Navy team and a British Army team.

We would do our tank shoot in the morning, and train in the large pool in the afternoon. Who was 'we'? Bob Horowitz, Don Larose, yours truly, Arnold McCourt, and a fourth member whose name I cannot recall. Well, Bob got the best out of us. And we got the best of them. We won! En avant, le Régiment.

Source: Arnold McCourt

AUGUST 10

Last night was the most active in air warfare in Worthing Area since the Regiment has been billeted here. Air raid warnings have been sounding 5 or 6 times day and night, lasting from 5 minutes to 2 or 3 hours over the past few days.

During this night, a bomb-laden Heinkel III, flying in low from the sea, crashed into a house in Worthing and burnt brightly for some minutes. Warning received from Brigade H.Q. that increased air attacks on coastal towns (such as Worthing) are to be expected, and additional precautions to be taken.

AUGUST 16

Clyde Wilson, a professional boxer, organizes a boxing tournament to be held in the Drill Hall, and fingers Vern Dowie to fight Leonard Garnett for one of the many bouts on his card.

anecdote

I had been paired off with Leonard once before back in high school. After receiving a few stinging punches, I decided to try the same tactic as before. I closed my eyes, pirouetted, and swung blindly for the side of Leonard's head. I connected as before, and found Leonard prone on the mat as before, when I opened my eyes. Who says lightning can't strike twice in the same place? Ask Leonard.

Source: Vern Dowie

AUGUST 19

Canadian and British soldiers raid German positions in the French town of Dieppe. Of the nearly 5,000 men who crossed the English Channel, 3,369 were killed, wounded or captured.

Source: National Post, Canada

AUGUST 19

First news of the raid on Dieppe was received over the radio today.

Editor's Note

But it was not until the return of our Unit to Worthing that most of us learned it was our Brigade's 14th Canadian Army Tank Battalion (the Calgary Regiment), which had participated in the raid. And this brings to mind another interesting aside: it was a flip of a coin that determined the choice of the Calgary Regiment for that terrible adventure.

It happened that the Ontario Regiment was not ready at that time. So the C.O. of the Three Rivers Regiment and the C.O. of the Calgary Regiment flipped a coin; and the Calgary Regiment 'won.' Poor bastards!

Our rear party in Worthing reports considerable air activity over Worthing. Duels between aircraft can be seen over the Channel from the billet area.

AUGUST 20

The Three Rivers Regiment took 20 tanks to the Ranges in Minehead and, after ten days of driving and firing, brought 20 still operational tanks back to Worthing.

AUGUST 21

The Three Rivers Regiment's firing exercises at Minehead are considered very successful, though there was some difficulty experienced with the 6-pounders.

AUGUST 25

Air raid warnings sounded at 0530, 0615, and 1932 hrs. No enemy action.

SEPTEMBER 1

The first issue of The Turrett is published.

Editor's Note

Yes, Turrett with two 'T's. The title designer happened to be of the French persuasion.

SEPTEMBER 25

Squadron leader K.A. Boomer downs a Japanese fighter off Alaska, the RCAF's only air combat in North America.

Source: National Post, Canada

OCTOBER 2

Due to the increase in the number of sneak raids by the German Air Force, the First Canadian Corps has issued orders that light A/A machine guns are to engage all aircraft approaching from seaward under 500 feet, and without prior recognition. All units are to site and man their guns within their accommodation areas or in any area in which they are concentrated -- between first and last light daily.

OCTOBER 4

Effective today, all outgoing mail is to be censored locally. The purpose of this change of policy is to train Unit censorship officers in their duties, and to instill in all ranks a practical knowledge of censorship restrictions.

OCTOBER 8

Orders for 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (TRR) to move from Billet Area to Training Area No 4 given to "O" Group by Lt.-Col. J.G. Vining.

Lt.-Col. Vining, Major C.L. Smith, the 2 1/c, the I.O. and the Signal Officer proceed to Grandstand in Lewes for meeting re coming Exercise "Breastroke II." After which, they proceed to H.Q., 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, to attend conference on Exercise Colossus, starting October 14.

OCTOBER 10

An increasing number of officers and men are being sent on such specialized courses as a Gunnery Instructors Course, a D&M Churchill Instructors Course, a Pye Radio Course, an A.F.V. Wireless Course, a Driver Mechanics Course, an Aircraft Recognition Course, A First Aid Course, even an Intelligence Course for Brigade I.O.s, and an Ab Initio Clerk's Course.

OCTOBER 12

At 1045 hrs, the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade and Support Group carried out the Battle Exercise Breastroke II. Col. The Hon. J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton, commanding 1st Canadian Corps, Brigade R.A. Wyman, commanding 1st Cd. Army Tank Brigade, and a party of U.S. Army Officers viewed demonstration. After which, the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment was reviewed by the Minister of National Defence and Gen. McNaughton. Then a luncheon in honour of the Visiting Party was given by the Regiment and presided by Lt. Col. J.G. Vining.

OCTOBER 12

An unfortunate accident occurred during the day, when a Scout Car of ours turned over, severing Maj. C.L. Smith's left arm above the elbow.

Editor's Note

As a matter of interest, Major Smith was the first serious casualty in the Regiment since it was mobilized.

OCTOBER 14

At 1100 hrs, Exercise Colossus is carried out. A composite Regiment of the 11th and 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiments, under the command of Lt.-Col. J.G. Vining, first formed a 'close laager' for inspection by the Minister of National Defence; then, on a given signal, formed an 'open laager' to repel a theoretical enemy attack. The composite Regiment made a very good showing.

OCTOBER 20

A meeting of all officers who lost their kit in the fire at Tinkers Firs, in Salisbury Plains, on the night of September 45 1941, was held in Officers Conference Room at 1400 hrs -- to discuss claims based on new instructions received.

Letter received from 1st CATB/ADM HQ, dated 13 Oct 42, containing instructions re 1st Cdn Ay Tk Bde Fall Track and Field Meet. It details time, date and place at which Meet is to be held, order of events, morning and afternoon, and list of officials.

OCTOBER 21

Major G.S.G. Jones and Lt. J.F. Wallace are attached to A.F.V. School for special course. One other rank proceeds to Bovington for wireless course. One other rank proceeds to Bovington for A.F.V. D&M course.

Two other ranks proceed to Lulworth for refresher course at A.F.V. Gunnery School. And two vacancies allotted to the Regiment for 12-week upgrading course for fitters. 'B' and 'C' Squadrons allotted one vacancy each.

OCTOBER 23

The 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade 'Fall Track and Field Meet' took place today, at the Greyhound Stadium, Hove, at 1350 hrs. The Meet officially opened by Lt.Gen. H.D.G. Crerar, D.S.O., G.O.C., following a March Past by all contestants. The Guard of Honour was furnished by our 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment.

The 11th Canadian Army Tank Regiment took the honours with a total of 43 points. The Medical Corps came second with 29 points. And the TRR limped in third with 13 points.

anecdote

Because I had been on a Gunnery Instructors Course and had not trained for the event, I was picked to be the 'rabbit' for our Unit's designated runner for the half-mile race. That is, I was instructed by RSM Fritz Prevost to set a killing pace, then, drop out. But, as I started the second and last lap, I found our designated runner collapsed on the grass with a cramp.

I had no recourse but to continue the race. Finally, after another hundred yards or so, someone from another unit passed me. Should I, could I, try to keep up? I had no idea. But he was widening his lead at an alarming rate. So I decided to go for broke and surprised myself and, I guess, everybody else.

As the winner crossed the finish line, I literally stepped on his heel. He then dove for the grass, exhausted. And, damn it all, I still had a couple of hundred yards of hard running left in me.

When came time to receive my silver medal, there was quite a bit of applause from our section of the bleachers. "You're a pretty popular fellow," said Lt. Gen. Crerar. "No sir," I said. "They just haven't had many chances to applaud today."

Source: Charlie Prieur

OCTOBER 24

A 'miniature rifle' shoot is held at the Armoury at 1400 hrs. Voluntary teams of 15 men per squadron are formed. Prize for highest score is awarded. And, to cap the day, a Regimental Dance is to be held in the Drill Hall this evening. Music is to be provided by our own orchestra.

OCTOBER 26

Censorship report for the week is being forwarded to H.Q., 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade. State of security of our Regiment is rated: Good to Excellent.

OCTOBER 27

Major C.H. Neroutsos proceeds on command to O.C.T.U., as Member of Selection Committee.

OCTOBER 28

Cpt. W.G.D. Stanley is attached to 400 Squadron R.C.A.F., for Potential Air Liaison Officer Instructions. A number of other ranks attend Gunnery, First Aid, or Brigade Intelligence courses. Gunnery Instructors and Senior N.C.O.s attend lectures on Weapons Training. Still others attend lectures on the Use of Anti-Freeze, and on Recognition, Care and Maintenance of Ammunition.

OCTOBER 30

Lts. W.M. Prince and R. Scott, and two other ranks, taken on strength from No.2 C.A.C.R.U.

OCTOBER 31

Letter of appreciation for the valuable help and cooperation provided by the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (TRR) received from Brig. G.G. Simonds, Comd., 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade.

No fewer than 21 air raid warnings were sounded during the month of October. No enemy action.

NOVEMBER 1

New Pyrotechnic Signals came into effect at first light this morning. White snowflake parachute flare, as used by Royal Corps, will indicate low-flying aircraft sighted.

NOVEMBER 1

At a meeting on this day, Paul Squire, U.S. consul in Geneva, Switzerland, was told by Dr. Carl Burckhardt, a vice-president of the International Red Cross, that two high-level German sources reveal that Hitler signed an order, in 1941, calling for Germany to be "Juden-frei" (free of Jews).

NOVEMBER 3

Program of Exercises with live ammunition in South Downs Training Areas, for week of November 1 to 7, received from HQ, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade. All warned.

Starting today, and each Tuesday and Thursday till further notice, a class in Gunnery for all troop N.C.O.s will be given, in Drill Hall, by N.C.O. instructors recently graduated from the Lulworth Gunnery School.

A campaign for the sale of Canada's Third Victory Loan was conducted in the 1st Canadian Tank Brigade. The 12th Army Tank Regiment subscribed \$7,200, exceeding subscriptions by all other units in the Brigade by a wide margin.

Major C.B. Van Straubensee returns to Unit on completion of course at the Battle School.

NOVEMBER 5

Three other ranks attend Hydraulic Powered Traverse Gear course at Powered Mounting Ltd. One other rank attends CMHQ course on Motorcycle Recovery.

A skeletal Signal Exercise known as "Blather" took place today under Brigade control. Object: to practise communications within the Regiment and with Brigade HQ and other arms.

NOVEMBER 6

Lt. J.L. Dubreuil appointed Technical Officer. Lt. D.K. Dawson taken on strength from No.2 C.A.C.R.U.

Typhoon aircraft operating over South Coast of England will carry special markings, so that they can be easily recognized; thus eliminating danger of being fired on by our own troops.

Effective this date, Unit Censorship of all outgoing mail ceases; reverting to spot checks at Base Post Office. Censorship within Regiment rated Very Good.

Practice Anti-Aircraft firing to be held between 0900 hrs and 1200 hrs today. Also at 0900 hrs, all tanks of our Unit depart from this area to participate in Exercise "Cavendish", slated to start on November 8.

NOVEMBER 8, 9

The 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade to practise tank loading and unloading on barges at the New Haven yards.

NOVEMBER 9

Capt. W.H. Clare, R.C.A.M.C. attached to 12th Army Tank Regiment.

NOVEMBER 10

Capt. R.M. Houston and Lt. J.L. Jemmett proceed to G.H.Q. Battle School Course. Lt. D.M. Gordon attached to Regiment.

Fighting Group, the 12th Cdn Ay Tk Regt returns from Exercise "Cavendish".

Notes taken by Umpires during Exercise "Blather" received from 1st Cdn Ay Tk Bde. Main faults attributed to lack of practice in radio netting and procedure.

Warning received from HQ, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade that from first light on November 11, friendly aircraft will use coast between Beachy Head and Cuckmere Haven to return to base – flying under 500 feet. No gun is to fire without prior recognition.

NOVEMBER 11

Effective today, the tank and ram badges are NOT to be worn. The distinguishing badge to be worn by the 12th Army Tank Regiment consists of a Red Horizontal Stripe ($\frac{3}{4}$ " wide and 3" long) with "12th CTR" in gold, on a black diamond-shaped patch. We are now Army Troops.

NOVEMBER 12

Major G.S.G. Jones attends one-day camouflage course at Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

A Brigade Signal Exercise, known as "Mike", is being held today, attended by Major M.B.K. Gordon and the Adjutant.

Every officer in the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade is to have in his possession a copy of pamphlets: "Officer and Fighting Efficiency" and "The Soldier's Welfare - Notes for Officers."

NOVEMBER 13

Lt. A. Bilodeau taken on strength from No.2 C.A.C.R.U.

Confirmation of report previously submitted on the number of Officers and other ranks who have had training in Combined Operations requested by the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade. A NIL report submitted by Lt. Col. J.G. Vining for the 12th Army Tank regiment.

NOVEMBER 15

To commemorate victory in Egypt, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, has decided to lift ban on ringing of church bells between 0900 hrs and noon today. Bells of Broadwater Church in Worthing rang at 1015 hrs.

Results obtained by personnel attending Intelligence Course received today. Also results obtained in Field Sketching and Camouflage course. Four more Other Ranks attend course in First Aid.

NOVEMBER 16

Meeting today to discuss arrangements re movement of the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (TRR) from Worthing to Brighton, scheduled for end of month.

NOVEMBER 17

Extracts from Field Censorship Reports received from 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade indicate that the Regiment is becoming 'security-minded', and a major improvement in the morale of Personnel is apparent.

NOVEMBER 18

Program of exercises with live ammunition in South Downs Training Areas for week ending November 22 received from 1st Cdn Ay Tk Bde. Warning received from the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade that full-calibre practices seawards, by day and by night, are to be held by coast batteries in Angmering, Worthing, Horsham and Littlehampton. All informed. An Assault Meet was held by the Regiment including, an Obstacle Course, a Jeep Jump, a First Aid race, etc.

NOVEMBER 19

HQ, 1st Cdn Ay Tk Bde, forwarded a letter from 1st Cdn Corps re relations of Cdn Forces in Great Britain with Home Guards, quoting an article which appeared in the London "Star": "For two years, the Canadian Forces in Britain have been so closely allied with the Home Guard that a friendliness much deeper than ordinary military ties has built up, and it is not likely to be ended by demobilization after the war."

This close companionship between the Home Guard and the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (TRR) has been apparent in and around Worthing.

NOVEMBER 20

Training Area 7 is available for BESA (machine gun) training on 21 and 22 November. The C.O. took this opportunity to give further training to the Fighting Group. Approximately 29,000 rounds of ammo is available.

NOVEMBER 24

In a letter from 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, the Regiment is informed that the faults in the Sten magazine, revealed in the Dieppe raid, have been remedied. With proper training, the Sten will prove accurate, effective, and of simple mechanism. All ranks are to be given thorough training in the use of the weapon.

NOVEMBER 25

Preparations are being made for this Regiment's move from Worthing to Brighton. The 14th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (Calgary) is replacing our Unit in Worthing.

NOVEMBER 27

The Regiment moves from Worthing to Brighton starting at 0900 hrs.

NOVEMBER 28

Lt.Col. F.A. Vokes and Major C.H. Neroutsos attend a 2hour demonstration of "Petroleum Warfare."

NOVEMBER 30

Table of Tides, Moonlight and Darkness for the Sussex Coast (Newhaven) received. The 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment's weekly paper "The Turret" (sic) distributed.

NOVEMBER 30

A program of training for months of December and January has been arranged by the First Canadian Corps. Object: to achieve a satisfactory standard of cooperation between army tank sub-units and infantry sub-units. The 12th Army Tank Regiment's period of training for the month of December will develop as follows:

'A' Squadron to train with the 1st Canadian Infantry Division, 'B' Squadron with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, and 'C' Squadron with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.

The program of training will be standard and on the following schedule:

First Day - Issue of narrative, model exercise, practice in the giving of practical and suitable orders.

Second Day - Assembling of Infantry Battalion and Tank Squadron at an R.V., where infantry and tanks can carry out exercise on a troop/platoon basis.

Third Day - Exercises on a Squadron/Company basis. Analysis to follow.

DECEMBER 1

A Sanitary Inspection of areas occupied by the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment was made by the representative of the 5th Canadian Field Hygiene Section, 2nd Canadian Light Field Ambulance. In general, the sanitary condition of Unit Lines was very satisfactory.

DECEMBER 1, 2, 3

First 3-day training exercise will involve the following units: 'A' Squadron with 49th Edmonton Regiment; 'B' Squadron with the Winnipeg Rifles Regiment; and 'C' Squadron with the Royal Highlanders Regiment.

DECEMBER 3

The following personnel, 12th Army Tank Regiment, have been awarded a Good Conduct badge:

**Tpr. Deslauriers, C.H.
Tpr. Dion R.
Tpr. French E.C.
Tpr. Kemp E.
Tpr. Kemp L.
Tpr. Langelier O.
Tpr. Lavigne J.
Tpr. Leonard J.
L/CPL Maheu H.
Tpr. Panke E.
Tpr. Paradis P.E. Tpr. Phillips J.
Tpr. Tyo W.W.
Tpr. Wassell W.
Tpr. Wooner T.C.**

DECEMBER 4

Second 3-day exercise will involve following units: 'A' Squadron will train with the Seaforth Highlanders; 'B' Squadron, with The Regina Rifles; and 'C' Squadron, with the Calgary Highlanders.

DECEMBER 6

Lt. Col. J.G. Vining received a letter from the National War Finance Committee, advising that the City of Three Rivers had gone “over the top” in the Third Victory Loan Drive in the Province of Quebec. The members of the Victory Loan Committee have requested that the Commando Dagger, City of Three Rivers, be sent to Lt. Col. ‘Jake’ Vining “feeling sure that the Regiment will know what to do with it.”

DECEMBER 7

For the third 3-day training session, ‘A’ Squadron begins training with the Régiment de Maisonneuve; ‘B’ Squadron, with the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Regiment; and ‘C’ Squadron, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment.

A steady rotation of Officers and Other Ranks continues in attendance at specializing courses within regimental lines and around the British Isles.

DECEMBER 8

The Brigadier, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, has directed that, as soon as a tank goes out of action during present exercises in the field, Squadron Leaders are to immediately inform Major Noble of Brigade Ordnance Company, who will replace derelict tank with a new one. 4 tanks of ‘C’ Squadron went out of action today, due to engine and gear-box defects.

DECEMBER 12

Movement Order, in the event of concentrated bombing or raid in Brighton area, was issued by Lt.Col. Vining, C.O. Our Regiment is to proceed to area North Heath Barn.

DECEMBER 14

Letter from Commander in Chief, Home Forces, was forwarded to the Regiment today. After commenting on the high morale and fighting efficiency of the troops, the C. in C. says: “Looking forward to the possibilities of 1943, I derive high hopes from all I see and know of the Canadian Army. When the great day comes, it will play a decisive part in the decisive battle, and results will certainly compensate for the long period of waiting for the opportunity to prove its worth.”

DECEMBER 14

For the fourth 3-day session this month, 'A' Squadron began training with the Carleton & York Regiment; 'B' Squadron, with the Régiment de la Chaudière; and 'C' Squadron, with the Royal Regiment of Canada.

DECEMBER 18

Today, 'A' Squadron began three days of training with the Royal 22nd Regt; 'B' Squadron, with the North Shore New Brunswick Regt; and 'C' Squadron, with the Essex Scottish Regt.

At 1156 hrs, an enemy aircraft, a Dornier 217, approached 'A' Squadron HQ from an easterly direction, then, turned south towards sea as it engaged ground targets with cannon fire. As it crossed sea front, it was in turn engaged by Bofors anti-aircraft guns which could only fire two rounds before enemy aircraft was set upon by two Mustangs. When last seen, enemy aircraft was losing altitude and trailing smoke.

DECEMBER 21

'A' Squadron began a second 3day training session with the West Nova Scotia Regiment; 'B' Squadron, with the Queens Own Rifle Regiment; and 'C', with the Royal Hamilton Light Inf. Regiment.

DECEMBER 23

Report given by Major Van Straubenzee on 5th Cdn Inf Brigade exercise with 'C' Squadron (Infantry/Tanks cooperation training): various new methods of attack were tried out, including the experiment of carrying infantrymen to objective on sleds; and also mounting 4 men (armed with Thompson sub-machine guns, Brens and hand grenades) in the driving compartment of the leading echelon tanks, then decarting them out of the escape hatches when objective is reached. Both methods were found to have merit. Live ammunition was used.

DECEMBER 24

At 1500 hrs, the officers and men of HQ and 'B' Squadron entertains approximately 250 children from area occupied by Regiment, at a Christmas Party. Party fare includes cartoon films, soft drinks and chocolate bars. Same entertainment is to be given by 'A' and 'C' Squadrons on December 26.

Numerous personal invitations received, and accepted, by various members of Regiment to spend Christmas Eve or Christmas evening.

Midnight Mass for Roman Catholics will be celebrated at St. Mary's Church on Surrendon Road, in Brighton.

DECEMBER 25

Those without wives or girlfriends in Worthing celebrate second Christmas overseas, in Brighton. The dinner menu features turkey, roast duckling, even plum pudding, apples, chocolate, and plenty of Canadian beer. It's not just the turkey that's stuffed, or the candles that have a glow on. There is also razor blades and cigarettes, courtesy of the Knights of Columbus.

Major C.L. Smith, HQ Squadron Leader until injured (lost an arm when his scout car turned over during a field exercise) in October '42, visited Squadron to wish men a Merry Christmas, and to say goodbye before returning to Canada.

Lts F. Simard and R.C. Yelland taken on strength.

DECEMBER 27

Course taking continues apace: including Driver Mechanics Course, Assault Course, even Shoemaker Course.

War Chronicles 1943

JANUARY 1

Lt. M. Gordon and H.Q. 2nd Troop are to participate in experiments being conducted by the Royal Engineers in bridging, and in crossing soft ground with tanks.

JANUARY 4

Our Regiment receives its first Churchill Mk IV tanks, replacing eight Mk 1s.

Two-phase inspection of Regiment: while Brig. R.A. Wyman inspects personnel on parade at Preston Park, Brighton; Brigade Staff inspect billets, administration, vehicles and equipment.

Regiment also receives a large shipment of mail, mostly Christmas parcels. Unfortunately, a fire back in a Halifax warehouse, which was extinguished with chemicals, has spoiled much of the contents. There was a warning attached that: Everything not in sealed containers has been contaminated by fumes and is not safe to eat.

Brigade Command stresses need for all ranks to be fit and hard. Special physical training program to be started. And two squadrons per week are to be sent for training in Combined Operations. Small arms firing practice also to be held during whole month, featuring Bren Light Machine Guns, Sten Guns, Thompson Sub Machine Guns, and Rifles.

JANUARY 6

Capt. J.R. Walker promoted to A/Major, O.C.; Lt. J. Bilodeau, to A/Capt., 2 i/c; Lt. F.W. Simard, to i/c of Wireless Telegraphy (all radio communications).

JANUARY 8

Showing of training films slated for every Monday till further notice. Films feature aircraft recognition, Churchill tanks, Combined Operations, Hygiene, etc.

JANUARY 12

Comments (received from the 3rd Canadian Division following Infantry-cum-Tank training exercises) focus on communications, netting and use of No. 38 sets, and Unit Training at Platoon/Troop level. Suggestion is made that carriers be used instead of tanks in further exercises -- to save petrol.

JANUARY 14

Infantry-cum-Tank exercises are proceeding.

JANUARY 15

Lt. T.E. Melvin is taken on strength.

JANUARY 20

Unit warned that three German airmen, who escaped from crashed plane at Caterham near Croydon, are still at large.

JANUARY 22

Privilege Leaves are stopped effective Feb 6, until further notice.

JANUARY 25

Special classes in Basic Training, of 5 weeks duration, start in all Squadrons.

JANUARY 30

Infantry-cum-tank exercise "Attack against Paratroops" starts at 0900 hrs. It involves a Composite Squadron ('A' Squadron and one troop each from HQ, 'B' and 'C' Squadrons),

Commanding Officer of the Three Rivers Regiment (12th CTR) is authorized to nominate 1 Major, 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, and 3 Troopers for P.O.W. (prisoner of war) escort duty to Canada. Personnel selected must have compassionate grounds, have served 18 months overseas, and have clean conduct sheet.

FEBRUARY 1

Lts. 'Pete' Ryckman and N.A. Dickens, and Sgts. Johnny Allen and T. Olsen are on the way to North Africa to be attached to armoured units of the 1st British Army fighting in Tunisia.

Specifically: Lt. Ryckman and Sgt. Allen are attached to the 17/21 Lancers of the 6th British Armoured Division, and Lt. Dickens and Sgt. Olsen to the North Irish Horse.

Editor's Note

Sergeant T. Olsen was later awarded an M.I.D. (Mentioned in Despatches) during that special attachment -- for gallantry in the field.

FEBRUARY 3

A new recognition patch issued to 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade today. It features **CANADIAN ARMOURD CORPS** in red letters on a green field with a brown background. The patch is approx. 4" long, 1½" wide, and is to be worn just below shoulder strap on both sleeves. Our tank patch is now obsolete.

FEBRUARY 6

A gathering of all Officers took place at the HQ Squadron's Officers' Mess in honor of Major M.B.K. Gordon's promotion to Lt. Col., and his appointment as C.O. of the 27th Army Tank Regiment (Sherbrooke Fusiliers).

FEBRUARY 7

Squadrons practise loading and unloading tanks onto Tank Transporters. It took 'C' Squadron 3 minutes to load and 2½ minutes to unload -- the best time to date. Four troops loaded in 55 seconds.

FEBRUARY 9

Special instructions on **SECURITY** re Exercise "Spartan", scheduled for March '43, received from 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade.

FEBRUARY 11

The First Canadian Tank Brigade is visited by His Majesty King George VI, accompanied by Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton, G.O.C. -- First Canadian Army, Major Gen. J.H. Roberts, Mr. Vincent Massey -- High Commissioner for Canada, Maj. Gen. F.F. Worthington, and Lt. Gen. Kenneth Stuart -- Chief of the Canadian general Staff. After inspecting both the Three Rivers Regiment and the Calgary Regiment, the King watched the Tank March Past of the Ontario Regiment.

anecdote

"I was picked to be the Honour Guard Commander of a Brigade Guard," recalls Jack Wallace. "We drilled at the Ontarios. We were just as good as the Scots Guards. I strutted like a peacock. Imagine: Guard Commander, when the King came into Brighton Station. But, unknown to us worthies, we were simply part of a cover plan to disguise his whereabouts. Fortunately, we were disbanded in time to see him on the South Downs.

P.S. Brig. Wyman also held his own inspection about this time, and found a pair of ladies stockings and panties in Sgt. Roger 'Lothario' Huard's tank."

anecdote

"A march past by the H.Q. Squadron of the Three Rivers Regiment was avoided at all cost. We either boasted more men with two left feet, or too many of us marched to our very own beat. Whatever the reason, brigade organizers soon learned to make special arrangements when our HQ Squadron was involved. This royal inspection was no exception. The other squadrons of the T.R.R. were either to march or to stand in proud and precise formation before their tanks. But H.Q. was lined up along the top of a dike, thus managing to keep us in respectable alignment.

"However, we had been marched up onto the dike hours early, and the Royals arrived hours late. So there came a time when an excess of body liquid brought tears to our eyes. It was dance or wet our pants. R.S.M. Jack Davy, after a very brief consultation with higher and higher ups, finally relented. "About turn!" he barked. "Unbutton!" ... "Fire when ready!" We performed to a man with remarkable precision and grace.

The golden arch of urine was a joy to behold. And -- suddenly -- there

to behold it was His Majesty, with his cortege of cars making a hiccup of a halt in an attempt to stop at a diplomatic distance.

“About turn!” shouted the R.S.M. (Was he kidding?) The scramble that followed can best be described as ‘buttons and bends.’ Finally, a semblance of order and decorum. The dike served as a template. The royal cortege lurched forward. Given our long, mostly seemly wait it swept by our end of the parade with unseemly haste. But not so fast that we failed to see a broad grin on the kingly countenance.

Source: Everybody who was there, including Lloyd Militzer

FEBRUARY 12

Lts. W.G.Ravenscroft and E. Stelfox, and 58 Other Ranks were taken on strength today.

FEBRUARY 13

Wounded today: J. Stefan

FEBRUARY 15

Regiment attended a showing of training film “Camouflage – Air View” in Technicolour. Very instructive.

FEBRUARY 17

Major C.B. Van Straubenzee is appointed O.C., ‘B’ Squadron. Capt. F.L. Caron is now Tank Commander of ‘C’ Squadron.

FEBRUARY 18

Letter received from Command, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, re firing exercises. They are to be held at Birling Gap ranges in Minehead. Our Regiment must take full advantage of opportunity to train all ‘green’ gunners.

FEBRUARY 19

Lt. G.O. Tamblyn and 8 other Ranks taken on strength.

FEBRUARY 22

Specimens of enemy clothing (uniforms, gas masks, helmets, etc.) are received. Lectures on German Army recognition are given as well.

FEBRUARY 23

'A' Squadron proceeds to Beachy Head Firing Range for practice.

Lt. J.C.P. Mills, of 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, Heavy Support Squadron, is taken on strength, 12th Army Tank Regiment.

FEBRUARY 24

Our 'B' and 'C' Squadrons proceed to Beachy Head Range for firing practice. The rest of our Regiment begins its move back to Worthing. To be completed by February 26. Two of our 'C' Squadron crew members injured near Lewes during move to Range, when their tank goes out of control and hits a tree.

FEBRUARY 25

Twenty-four Other Ranks taken on strength by 12th Army Tank Regiment, from the 1st Cdn Army Tank Brigade, Heavy Support Sqdn.

Lts. W.G. Armstrong, R.L. Forbes, J.C. Oliphant, and five other Ranks, taken on strength.

FEBRUARY 26

Move to Worthing from Brighton completed by 1130 hrs. Regiment located as follows:

- ? Regimental HQ and HQ Squadron -- Eardley Hotel, Marine Parade
- ? Regimental QuarterMaster & Stores -- 2 New Parade
- ? R.T.A., 60 L.A.D. and R.C.C.S. Detachments -- 115 Brighton Road
- ? 'A' Squadron -- 199 Brighton Road
- ? 'B' Squadron -- 193 Brighton Road
- ? 'C' Squadron -- 60 Church Walk
- ? Officers' Mess -- 4 Windsor Road

MARCH 1

Capt. W. Piché appointed A/Major; Lt. ‘Pat’ Mills is appointed Acting Captain, and is no longer attached to HQ, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, Heavy Support Sqdn.

“Spartan” exercise begins.

MARCH 6

Lt.Col. J.G. Vining receives letter from Lt. R.W. Ryckman (att. 1st British Army, North Africa). Quote: “On the whole, I consider our training and battle practice teach success in actual combat. From what I have seen, mistakes -- as shown up on schemes -- are the same as in battle. Except that, in battle, they’re final.”

MARCH 12

“Spartan” exercise ends.

MARCH 14

The Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.T.R.) returns to own lines after participating in Spartan scheme – the largest scheme ever held in England. “Spartan” did much to clarify, for all commanders, the problems involved in:

- (a) advancing from an established beach or bridgehead**
- (b) handling forces composed of various types of divisions**
- (c) controlling all types of air support.**

MARCH 14

anecdote

The Spartan exercise, scheduled for March 1-14, was shortened for reasons of cost. But another suggested reason was that the local civilians had become alarmed, when one of their ladies met and spoke to C.O.-to-be Capt. F. Caron and, mistaking his accent, thought he was a German.

Source: Bill Prince

After "Spartan", the Regiment exchanged some of its Churchills for Ram (MkII) tanks. Built at the Montreal Locomotive Works, the Ram tanks are the 'camel' product of a committee of industrialists and bureaucrats who refused to heed Brig. Gen. Worthington's suggestions and recommendations. However, many of Brig. Gen. Worthington's ideas have been incorporated by the Americans in their "General Sherman" tanks. The Ram was declared obsolete before it even got into mass production.

Editor's Note

The name 'Ram' was the winning entry by Major J.A. (Jack) Wallace of 'A' Squadron, Three Rivers Regiment.

MARCH 15

Warning received from HQ, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade: "anti-personnel 'butterfly' bombs are being dropped by Germans in this country". The bombs are in containers 43 in. by 7 in., which hold 23 of them per. They are dangerous to touch and may explode spontaneously within 30 minutes. All warned.

MARCH 17

Capt. J.D. Pearson, HQ 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, is taken on strength by the 12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment (TRR).

APRIL 18

The Three Rivers Regiment takes its new 'Ram' tanks to the Minehead Ranges in Wales for a baptismal 'shoot'.

APRIL 19

Mordechai Anielewicz and his Jewish fighting organization rise up against the Nazi occupiers in the Warsaw ghetto. His fewer than 500 fighters are virtually wiped out after a six-day battle against 2,000 SS troops.

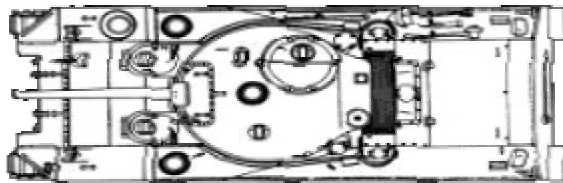
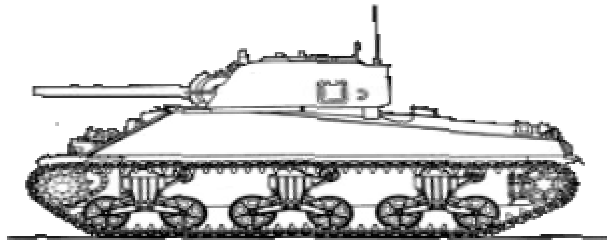
APRIL 19

The Regiment receives its Mobilization Order -- the first real intimation of pending operations. Major E.L. Booth of the 1st Hussars is posted to the Three Rivers Regiment as Commanding Officer, replacing Lt.-Col. J.G. Vining, who has

been struck off strength to 2ND C.A.C.R.U. Major Booth has just returned from attachment to the 17/21 Lancers of the 6th Armoured Division, part of the First British Army in North Africa.

APRIL 30

The Three Rivers Regiment moves to Hoddum Castle, in Annan, Scotland. Churchills and Rams are left behind. Our Regiment is issued Shermans. These 30-tonners can reach a speed of 30 m.p.h, and are equipped with a confidence-building 75mm cannon and two Browning machine guns.



Sherman M4A4

Recollections

Our crews, mechanics, and fitters felt much happier with the new Shermans. They greatly appreciated the American mechanical efficiency and know-how; as well as the little time required to maintain Sherman tanks: 30 minutes a day vs. the average 3 hours or more to keep the Churchills in operation. They also liked the quicker, electro-hydraulic system that 'traversed' the turret.

As for our loader-operators, they were delighted with the crystal calibrator, invented by a Canadian: D.L. Hings of North Burnaby. In addition to the no.19 radio, it made tuning the set to given frequencies much easier and more accurate.

Source: then-Captain Fernand Caron

excerpt

Lt. 'Al' Cawsey of the Calgary Tanks was less upbeat about the Sherman. He wrote: "The Sherman didn't have much of a reputation. Its armour-plating was not particularly thick, and its 75-millimetre, while an improvement over the 6-pounders to which Canadian tankmen were accustomed, would prove later to be no match in one-on-one fights with the bigger German tanks: such as the Panther and the Tiger, which were often equipped with the superlative 88 mm gun. Still, we grew to love the Sherman and adapted quickly."

Editor's Note

Well there were many exceptions to his "no match" remark. The 'Battle of Termoli' for one, where our Three Rivers Regiment destroyed 14 of the German tanks for 7 of ours, and 4 of the latter were recoverable and recovered.

MAY 4A complete training program on these new tanks is started, as well as firing exercises on the Kirkubright Range. The training program includes finishing off the individual trooper's training; listening to lectures by Security Officers, loading onto and un-loading from LSTs; and waterproofing all vehicles. Tactical and formation signs were obliterated. All squadrons also practised assault landings from H.M.S. Thruster, a Royal Navy LST (Landing Ship Tank).

Editor's Note

LST'S (also referred to as Large Slow Target) weighed 2366 tons loaded with 20 tanks, forged along at 9 knots max, and 1152 of them were built in the U.S.A.

Source: Bill Alderson

MAY 21

Wounded today: H-62522 Tpr. Frank Wurmlinger

MAY 23

Wounded today: B-62037 C.F. Aubertin

MAY 26

Wounded today: B-37977 Lloyd Cross

JUNE 15The Three Rivers Regiment is now ready and moves to the Port of Embarkation at Gourock on the Clyde in Scotland – the same port where it first set foot on the British Isles some two years before.

JUNE 17

Our Regiment sails from Gourock, crammed into 6 LSTs of the U.S. Navy. Its effective strength at this time is 37 officers and 550 non-commissioned officers and men, including 36 American and 18 British citizens.

JUNE 19

Two of our LSTs developed problems. One (LST 366) with clogged, even bursting, fuel lines, is left behind by the convoy. For 48 hours, it's a sitting duck for any roving U-boat; till new engine parts are rushed to it by destroyer.

anecdote

On the month-long journey to Sicily from Scotland, the filters and injectors on the two diesels of the LST clogged up with sawdust and other sludge left in the fuel tanks by the workers in the U.S. Sgt." Doc" Curran, 'A' Squadron's chief motor-mechanic, volunteered his crew to work on one engine, while the hard-pressed Naval ERAs worked on the other. "Doc" also devised a successful pre-filtering system that thereafter kept lines whistle-clean.

As a result, a bond of friendship developed between sailors and tankers. It grew to include friendly poker games. During one of these poker games, the ship's captain, Lt. Cdr. Norman Hall lost his LST 366 to our Lt. Lou Maraskas. (Lou had counter-bet the squadron's Shermans!) However, it was generally conceded that hitching their new acquisition to the Shermans, for the drive across Sicily and up the Italian 'boot', would prove a bit of a drag. So Cdr. Hall instead devised a battle flag for the Squadron, as a token of its new proprietor-ship. It featured a leaping blue-and-white Marlin, the words 'A' Squadron (upper left) and the number LST 366 (bottom right).

Source: Bob Campbell

JUNE 30

Our convoy puts in at Gibraltar. Everybody relaxes, even though depth charges punctuate the night at irregular intervals, to dissuade Italian 2man submarines from sneaking into the one opening in the underwater steel cable net strung across the harbour. Never has anyone seen such a star-filled night.

anecdote

A route march was ordered along the docks. A substantial part of the regiment scrambled down from the LSTs. In many cases, this meant walking the plank from one ship to the other, as they are docked in tandem. We had been two weeks at sea by then. Long enough to have developed 'sea legs': not the best footing for a march on land.

To those of us left aboard, it proved a hilarious sight. We learned what it means to walk like drunken sailors. An appalled Lt. Col. Booth, who was heading the parade, shouted back the order to "March at Ease". As it was an order seldom if ever heard before, the floundering ranks began to flounder even more. It needed nearly half a mile before the stutter of boots settled down to a semblance of the staccato beat of trained troops.

Source: Tony Gendron

JUNE 30

At 1100 hrs, the cat is finally let out of the bag: the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 1st Canadian Tank Brigade are to join up with the Allied Forces. Indeed, we become an integral part of the famous Eighth Army under General Bernard Montgomery.

anecdote

While S.S.M. 'Fritz' Prevost took the men ashore, the officers decided to visit the famous Rock Hotel. On the way, we stopped to sample the local vintages in several bistros, and arrived at the Hotel in a rather mellow state.

At the main entrance stood a chap in uniform with lots of gold braid. I handed him my beret and trenchcoat, and asked him to check them for me. He promptly dropped them on the floor, booming: 'Young man, I am Admiral Cunningham!

Source: Major Van Straubensee, who died shortly after writing this story, in 1989.

JULY 1

Part of convoy anchors off Algiers. Some ships, including one of our LSTs, pull into harbour for re-supply. Half of 'C' Squadron rushes ashore before the order is countermanded. No shore leaves. No exceptions. A very disgruntled bunch of men shuffle back aboard. The captain of one of our LSTs off-shore, however, breaks the tedium by opening the bow and lowering the ramp – so that those so inclined can enjoy a swim. Many seize the opportunity. And two actually swim ashore and back – a total distance of several miles.

anecdote

Our being docked but ship-bound did not prevent a good bit of buying and bartering, via baskets lowered by rope to eager young Arabs on the dockside.

The success of this gambit was not unqualified. One sergeant and his crew, after sampling a proffered bottle of champagne, bought a dozen; only to find that the dozen bottles finally hauled up on deck, hand over hand, were filled with seawater. Of course, the vendor had long since departed with his fistful of British pounds.

Source: Sgt. Marcel Mousseau

JULY 4

excerpt

The Slow Assault Convoy (with the reserve combat units) was steaming at a leisurely eight knots off the North African coast. Suddenly, a torpedo struck the merchantman City of Venice, which later sank. Half an hour later, the transport, St. Essylt, was hit by a torpedo. Next day, another transport, the Devis, was torpedoed and sank within twenty minutes... These three vessels had been loaded with vehicles and signals equipment in equal portions: so that, if one ship were sunk, the H.Q. could still function smoothly. The chance of all three ships being sunk was a million to one. Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

JULY 5

excerpt

The Fast Assault Convoy (which carries the troops taking part in the actual landing, including the Three Rivers Regiment) sails from Algiers at 1000 hrs. At 1645 hrs, a huge explosion galvanizes the escorting destroyers into action. A Liberty ship has been torpedoed, catches fire, settles by the stern and sinks out of sight at 1700 hrs. Destroyers drop depth charges. Convoy closes ranks and sails on. Survivors are left behind to be picked-up by Navy rescue tugs.

Source: Bogie Wheels

anecdote

The LSTs had shifted ballast, readying for the coming landing, just before the above sinkings; with the result that one enemy torpedo actually passed under the LST carrying the TRR's 'C' Squadron -- on the way to sinking one of the above-mentioned cargo ships.

N.B.: Shifting ballast (i.e. emptying the ballast tanks of their sea water or filling them with same) meant, in this case, to change the LSTs' draft from 12' at the stern and 6' at the bow, to 6' at the stern and 3' at the bow. This enabled them to get closer to shore.

Source: Vern Dowie

ONE AFTERNOON IN 1943

A true story written by Charlie Prieur, editor of these Chronicles

Death is doubly shocking on a beautiful day. And July 8, 1943, was just such a day.

I was not yet 20, a corporal in the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank), and heading for my first action. Our whole regiment was aboard tank-landing ships, on the way to (we had not yet been told) what proved to be the invasion of Sicily.

It was a day with wide horizons. A few plump clouds strolled deep in the sky. And, on the only visible shore -- the yellow-green flank of French Morocco -- small white houses could be seen, scattered about like grazing sheep.

So far, the month-long voyage had been virtually free of mishap, and I had shelved most of the worries I had brought on board. Slumped in the cool shade of a towering pile of rafts on the back deck, my best friend Tony and I watched our endless convoy scratch its zigzag course on the glassy Mediterranean Sea.

Suddenly, thunder rolled under the surface and thumped our hull. A question mark of silence ... then alarms shrilled all over our ship. ACTION STATIONS! I jumped to my assigned position behind a machine gun on the railing. Tony ran to man his gun on the opposite side. I flipped off the safety catch, then, turned to wave at my friend across the deck; but the high-piled rafts hid him from view.

For long minutes, the danger remained indefinite: a clatter of boots on the steel deck, a flurry of orders near and far, the short nervous stutter of a Bren gun clearing its throat, and the whoop-whoops of frenzied destroyers on the scent. But, nothing on which to focus our fears.

Then far ahead, a tall ship caught my eye. It was falling back, out of step in the stately procession. There was a plume of smoke curling up from its deck, back of the funnels. Slowly, as the ship drifted closer, the plume grew into a black oily billow rooted in flame.

As if this were the signal they had been waiting for, men began scrambling down the sides of the stricken ship. Some dove clean. Others jumped; a few holding their noses like kids at a swimming hole. Then crammed lifeboats began splashing down.

By now, the torpedoed ship was abreast of ours, so close I could almost feel the heat. A white face suddenly stared from the red glow of a hatch way, opened its mouth in a silent scream, then, fell back into the inferno. A yell reached from somewhere, faint with distance, thin with horror: "Hey, some poor bastards are still below!"

As the ship dropped back, I saw it shudder. Its bow rose and broke clear of the water. It kept rising till it pointed straight at the sky like an accusing finger. Then a giant hand seemed to pull it from below, and the churning waters swallowed it whole.

I stood, rooted, stricken, staring at the spot now just a boiling patch of froth ringed by debris and the heads of some of the last to jump, as it all slowly drifted out of sight.

Nothing surely could ever be the same again. I walked around the rafts on the deck, to share the horror with my friend Tony. He was still standing at his post, as I should have been; still gazing out to starboard, for the 'all clear' had not yet sounded.

"Bet you it's a false alarm," he said.

Source : Charlie Prieur

JULY 6

excerpt

During the afternoon, Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, seeing that he is ahead of schedule, abruptly reverses the direction of the Fast Assault Convoy in order to use up some time -- and encounters a German U-boat moving in for the kill. Two destroyers immediately attack the would-be attacker . . . and blow it out of the water.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

Cruiser in convoy hits mine, but carries on. Damage slight. Pass Bizerta in late afternoon. All ranks are informed that Sicily is destination. Map kits are issued, detailed orders given, and a small booklet is distributed: "How to speak Italian in one easy lesson."

Source: Bogie Wheels

JULY 9

The Padre (Hon/Capt. Joseph Lawrence Wilhelm) serves with our Regiment throughout the invasion of Sicily.

JULY 9-10

excerpt

Under the sub-heading: "Disaster in the air, success on the beaches," a press release tells of a sudden storm that threatened 'the greatest seaborne invasion' in this war . . . a storm that died down almost unnaturally as the huge armada of 3,000 ships and landing craft headed for the Sicilian beaches. But, by that time, the storm had caused chaos in the air for the paratroopers.

Of the 137 British gliders released, 69 came down in the sea, drowning some 200 men. A further 56 landed in the wrong parts of Sicily, and only 12 reached the target area -- a vital bridge south of Syracuse. U.S. paratroopers fared almost as badly. Their pilots were inexperienced, and the navigators were working from daytime photographs in darkness. Dust, anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighters compounded the problems, and most of the 2,781 paratroopers were scattered over a 50-mile (80 km) radius.

Source: American "Chronicle of Second World War"

JULY 10

excerpt

The first Shermans of the Three Rivers Regiment rolled off L.S.T.s on the left flank of the 1st (Infantry) Brigade's beach about 0900 hrs, and at 1015 hrs the unit reported one squadron ready for action.

Source: Official history: "From Pachino to Ortona"



Sherman M4A4

excerpt

The first tanks of the Regiment to land at Pachino were those on LST 321, which had grounded on a sandbar. They waded through water that was slightly over 6 feet deep to the beach approximately 180 yards away, and, from there, proceeded to the area allotted as a 'de-water-proofing area'... The two recovery tanks, that were a part of the L.A.D., were kept busy all day...and until midnight of D plus one...rescuing 'drowned' trucks. The Luftwaffe made the beach uncomfortable come evening. Enemy bombers and fighter-bombers made the ships in the harbour their targets, as well as the concentration areas that lined the shore.

Source: The History of the Three Rivers Regiment 1943-45 by Capt. R.H. Heggie

anecdote

Thank God our landing in Sicily, on July 10, 1943, caught the Germans by surprise. Because everything else caught us by surprise, and we didn't need enemy fire to complicate our solutions to the problems we faced: a violent, pre-dawn storm that fortunately abated just in time, a sandbar that stranded 'B' Squadron's LST quite some distance from shore, and a total lack of previous experience.

Of course, our amphibious 'duck' and 'B' Squadron's 18 Sherman tanks splashed their way to shore without too much trouble. But the 'soft skins' (the trucks) were another matter. A kind of floating 'bridge' needed to be built all the way to shore. The Navy had anticipated this eventuality, too. A long brace of wooden floats, known as 'biscuits', had been affixed to each side of our LST's hull. These could be freed from their pipefitters' cradle by an exploding charge, and dropped into the water. Then the segments would be bolted together, end to end, and towed to assigned positions by a small motorboat (from our LST's deck) -- starting from both the shore and the end of our ship's ramp.

But the charges refused to explode. So we used axes to cut the retaining ropes. That being done, the rest went swimmingly (pun intended). Until it was time to drive the trucks along that heaving, sinking snake of a bridge, which left only inches of margin for error. Luckily, we were mostly spared the extra complication of enemy fire. But the occasional salvo from our own battleships and cruisers, plus sporadic not-too-distant explosions, and the constant threat of an air raid, tended to foster a sense of urgency.

All our 'soft skins' made it to shore. And there's nothing like terra firma for anybody but a sailor!

Source: Bill Alderson

JULY 10

The invasion of Sicily, code-named “Operation Husky”, is now in full swing. The Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.T.R.) effects assault landing at Pachino Bay, in support of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division. Only ‘C’ Squadron participates on this first day, supporting the Carleton & York Regiment. After dark at the landing site in Pachino Bay, the reinforcements on the beaches, and on the ships massed in the harbour, are strafed and bombed by the Luftwaffe. The curtain of tracers alone seems too dense to allow even a bird to fly through.

For the first three days, resistance is slight. The enemy consists mainly of disheartened Italian troops, mostly waiting for the opportunity to surrender and sever their alliance with the hated Germans.

anecdote

I'll always remember July 10, 1943. It was not only the day we landed in Sicily, but also the day I was promoted from trooper to sergeant. I had been ordered by Lt. Pete Ryckman to lead our Recce troop from the beachhead. About 3 or 4 kilometers inland, we ran into an Italian armoured regiment with about 50 Ansaldo tanks armed with 57mm cannons, anyone of which could have blown our Bren gun carriers to kingdom come. With no chance of escaping, I told my driver Len Johnson to head for the centre of the column at full speed.

Drawing from my experience in the Spanish War, I shouted “Donde esta el comandante?” which was fortunately close to the Italian. Soon, a Brigadier with a chest full of ribbons marched up to meet us. I told him I expected him to surrender at once and save himself and his men from being massacred by the huge force following me. He agreed on one condition: that he surrender to an officer of at least equal rank.

At the time, my uniform consisted of a pair shorts and a helmet. As my impressively large (if I say so myself) and hairy chest bore no insignia to betray my lie, I promptly promoted myself to Generale Maggiore (Major General). The relieved Italian officer just as promptly saluted me, and the deed was done.

I ordered him to take his tanks and trucks off the road, and soon the rest of the Recce troop came roaring through. Even though Captain ‘Pete’ Ryckman promoted me to sergeant (from trooper) on the spot, it still was a long way down from major general.

Source: Bob Gladnick

excerpt

At this time, German forces in Sicily comprise only two under-strength divisions, as Hitler's vaunted intuition has failed him again. He had expected the Allies to invade Greece and concentrated the bulk of his available forces there. But German efficiency maintains and the situation is quickly remedied with, among others, the Hermann Goering Panzer Division.

Source: American "Chronicle of Second World War"

anecdote

Fritz Prévost, our RSM, was the founder of the TRR's celebrated "Goose the Moose Club in Italy." It was part of the initiation ceremonies when an officer was promoted. It was our version of a hazing -- much gentler than those we are now reading about; although we cannot say: more civilized.

At some point in the ceremony, the blindfolded officer/victim would have to goose the moose; that is: poke his index finger into (remember: he was blind-folded) a warmed jar of vaseline. The first officer to be selected for this uplifting ritual was Frank Johnson, when he became O.C. of 'C' Squadron. The second one was our Padre, Fr. J.L. Wilhelm, just before he left us to become Chaplain of the Brigade. Maybe that's really why he left us!

Source: Fritz Prevost

Excerpt

Tourist guides recommend against travelling in Sicily in July, and the Canadian invaders soon found out why. The temperature on July 10 rose to a sweltering 114 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, of which there was precious little."

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

Despite the very large part Canadian sailors and airmen were taking in actual combat in 1943, the sense of remoteness of the war from Canada remained strong until the landing in Sicily. Source: Jack Pickersgill

First Canadian Armoured Brigade Order of battle

HQ Squadron, 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade
11th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Ontario Regt)
12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Three Rivers Regt)
14th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Calgary Regt)
1st Canadian Armoured Brigade Signals (RCCS)
1st Canadian Armoured Brigade 83 Company (RCASC)
1st Canadian Light Field Ambulance (RCAMC)
1st Canadian Armoured Brigade Workshop (RCEME)
1st Canadian Armoured Brigade Ordnance, PG PK (RCOC)
1st Canadian Heavy Recovery (RCEME)
1st Canadian Army Tank Troops Workshop (RCEME)
1st Canadian Assault Troop (CAC)
'A' Squadron, 25th Canadian Armoured Delivery Regiment
98 Field Regiment (SP) RA (att. to Bde at Sangro River Crossing)

Corps

1 Cdn. 5 Brit. 10 Brit. 15 Brit. 30 Brit. 11 U.S.

Canadian: 1st Canadian Infantry Division, the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, and (after Ortona) the 5th Canadian Armoured Division.

British: the 1st British Division, the 4th British Division, the 5th British Division, the 6th British Armoured, the 49th (WR) British Division, the 50th (Northumberland) British Division, the 51st (HD) British Division, the 58th (London) British Division, the 78th British Division, and the 231st Indian Infantry Brigade.

Indian Brigade: the 4th Indian Infantry Division, the 8th Indian Infantry Division, and the 10th Indian Infantry Division

American: the 85th U.S. Division, and the 88th U.S. Division.

New Zealand: the 2nd New Zealand Division.

Formations under which First Canadian Armoured Brigade served:

**First Canadian
Gen. H.D. Crearar**

**United-States
Lt.Gen. Mark Clark**

**British 8th
Fd. Marshall Bernard Montgomery
CB, DSO
Lt. Gen. Truscott
KCB, DSO
Gen. Sir Oliver Leese
BT, KCB, CBE, DSO
Lt. Gen. R. McCreery
KCB, DSO**

JULY 12

Early in the morning, the Patricias, supported by tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment, entered the town of Modica. Here, two NCOs discovered, in a building, the General commanding the 206th Italian Coastal Division. He was quite willing to surrender, provided he could do it in proper form to an officer of equal rank.

There was considerable difficulty in arranging this formality, but, after some delay, the Officer Commanding the Three Rivers Regiment escorted him back to Divisional Headquarters, where Gen. Simonds had the pleasure of accepting the formal submission of the first enemy general to be captured by Canadian troops in this war.

anecdote

The Three Rivers Regiment recorded that: "The first troops who entered Modica saw practically the whole supply of white clothing of the town's population hung in every conspicuous spot as a sign of surrender, and the civilian population greeted the troops with cheers and yells of approbation."

JULY 14

At 1915 hrs, Major J.D. Pearson, O.C. of 'A' Squadron is ordered to join up with the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade at Vizzini-Grammichele, and be ready to contact strong enemy formations. He promptly requests extra 75 mm ammunition, and badly needed maps of the area.

JULY 15

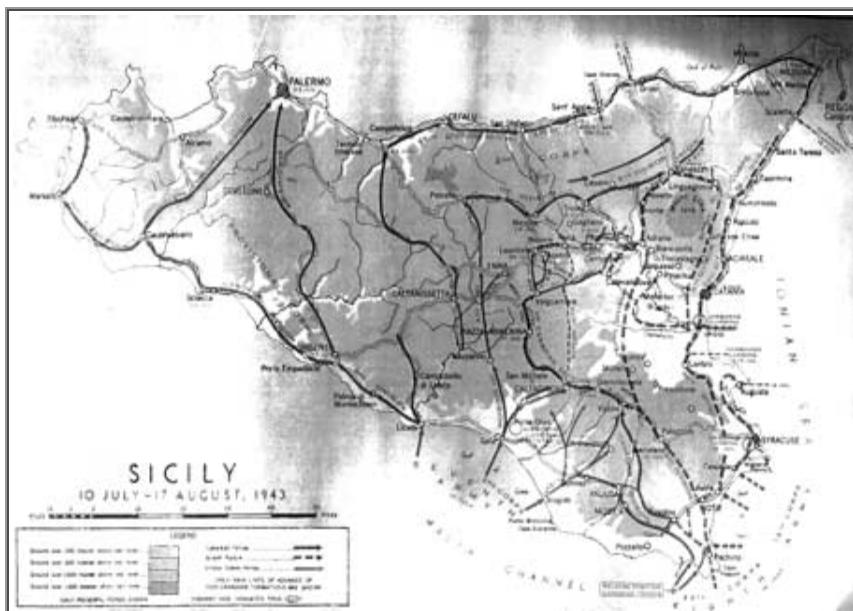
At 0900 hrs, they reach the town to find it strongly defended by detachments of the 4th Hermann Goering Flak Regiment.

The Regiment accounts for 2 enemy tanks (one PZKw Mk IV and one PZKw Mk III) and 3 self-propelled Multiple Flak Guns. The T.R.R suffers its first casualties: one dead and 10 wounded, as well as the loss of one tank and three universal carriers. A sobering baptism of fire.

JULY 15

The Three Rivers Regiment -- the only part of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade to be committed to action in the Sicilian campaign -- meets its first German opposition at Grammichele -- a town perched on a very high hill. Both 'A' and 'B' Squadrons are in action on the outskirts.

A Recce troop of the Three Rivers Regiment -- leading the column -- approaches the town. There is no sign of the enemy. They are there, nevertheless: detachments of artillery and tanks of the Hermann Goering Division, biding their time. When the group reaches the outskirts, there is a sudden spatter of fire from guns ranging from 20-millimetre to 88-millimetre.



'A' Squadron loses one tank by anti-tank fire. During this morning, Major C.B. van Straubenzee and Lt. Pete Ryckman move forward with a carrier section of the Recce Troop and come under heavy observed fire from multiple flak guns that are dug in on a hillside before the town. Almost immediately, his scout car is hit and Major van Straubenzee is wounded. He remains to direct the operation. Lt. Ryckman engages the enemy gun positions with the .50 Brownings with which the carriers were equipped, in an effort to destroy them, or, failing that, point out their positions by tracer-fire. Our tanks in the immediate vicinity did destroy them, but not before all three carriers of the Recce Troop were hit and set on fire.

Ten miles from Vizzini, Grammichele was sited on a long 250-foot-high ridge that commanded Route 124. It was an ideal spot to set up an ambush, and parts of two battalions from the Hermann Goering Division were preparing to do precisely that, as the Canadians approached from the east.

The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, and the Three Rivers tank, ran right into the German ambush. It was 0900 hrs, when the leading troops and tanks of the mile-long column reached the outskirts of Grammichele where they were greeted by a sudden storm of shells and machine-gun bullets.

The battle for Grammichele was brief but furious. British self-propelled guns put in a timely appearance and gave valuable

supporting fire, while the Canadian infantry and tanks attacked. When two companies of Hasty Ps outflanked the town, the Germans began withdrawing. By noon, Grammichele had been cleared of enemy troops, and the Canadians were counting the cost of this first encounter with a real enemy. The skirmish had resulted in 25 Canadian casualties; German losses were unknown, but the Hermann Goerings left behind the smouldering hulks of three Mark IV medium tanks and several flak guns.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

Killed today: E.J. 'Jim' Lloyd (our first KIA)

Wounded today: Major C.B. Van Straubensee

Lt. Patrick E. Sheppard B- 61834 E. Meyers

B- 24343 Lloyd F. Melitzer

D- 36065 Gordon B. McLellan

D- 71119 Thomas M. Kelly

B- 62525 J. Mc. Van Wart

D- 36637 J. MacLeod

B- 37945 R.J. Cline

D- 36686 P.R. Eden

post-war note

One of the wounded on this day, Jimmy Van Wart, was only 19. He was hit by 18 pieces of shrapnel and a fragment from his Bren gun carrier. Most dug into his leg, ripping him open from knee to hip in the process. One metal fragment, deeply imbedded in his shoulder, only worked its own way out in 1955, in Toronto. By that time, Jimmy was married to Ilse, a lovely German lady from Berlin who had survived all the bombings there. Jimmy's many wounds neither handicapped him for life, nor showed when he was dressed, nor slowed him down.

Apart from a mild case of diabetes, he lived a virtually illness-free life (at least none that he complained about) till he died of a heart attack, in his sleep, at the unfortunately too young age of 57, in Vancouver. (Jimmy was originally from Fredericton, N.B.)

JULY 15

2 i/c of 'A' Squadron when he landed in Sicily, Major Pat Mills is promoted, today to command 'C' Squadron.

anecdote

I was Lt. Pat Sheppard's loader-operator, and ours was to be the lead tank in the above-mentioned counter-attack. But it suddenly stalled, refusing to start again. Our lieutenant, reacting very properly, switched tanks with Sgt. Hrabi and carried on up the railway line towards the reported resistance. So -- as fate would have it -- it was poor Ellis Lloyd, his 'new' loader-operator who met death instead of me, as I later learned. Meanwhile, Sgt. Hrabi, something of a mechanic, finally managed to get the balking tank to lurch ahead a short distance, where it stalled again.

With nothing to do, while Sgt. Hrabi tried to putter it back to life, I decided to test my Thompson submachine gun, and fired a bullet into a wrecked enemy truck nearby. And, to my astonishment, a German soldier, hiding behind it, promptly surrendered.

I just as promptly -- and with a bit of a swagger, I must admit -- handed him over to the infantry. Then I heard our tank cough back into action and climbed back into it.

But its engine died once more a short distance on. Looking for something to do once more, I spotted a small cave and decided to scout it out. Not a smart thing to do! I found myself suddenly facing a half dozen armed enemy soldiers in the gloom.

Instinctively, I began to raise my arms, perhaps to surrender, myself. I'll never know for sure. But they thought I was raising my gun to shoot and dropped theirs, yelling: "Kamarad!" Now in an utter daze, I put my gun down -- believe it or not -- and knelt to give first aid to one who was propped up against a wall and obviously badly wounded.

The rest of them must have felt that nobody but nobody could possibly be that crazy, and that a horde of other Canadians must be waiting outside; for they neither jumped me, nor shot me, but meekly walked out with their hands up and made me a hero. Obviously unsung. Or I would not now have to tell you about it.

Source: Zukie Zeil, the unsung 'hero'

Editor's Note

Defecting soldiers were often NOT Germans, but conscripted citizens of subjugated countries. Many surrendered at the first opportunity; that is, whenever they could without being shot on the spot by the ubiquitous S.S.

JULY 15

This evening, Major F.L. Caron, commanding 'C' Squadron, becomes Regimental 2 i/c, replacing the wounded Major C.B. van Straubenzee. Capt. J.C.P. Mills leaves 'A' Squadron to take over command of 'C' Squadron.

From this time forward, the Canadians were engaged in increasingly arduous fighting against the Germans, who waged a series of most stubborn and skilful delaying actions, a type of operation for which the rugged terrain of Sicily was singularly favourable. Fought as it was in the blistering heat of a Mediterranean summer, the campaign, which the Germans conducted during the next three weeks, was a hard and exhausting one. To the difficulties of ground and climate, and the determination of the enemy in action, were added the boundless industry and ingenuity, which he displayed in laying mines and effecting demolitions. Thanks to the mountainous nature of the country, advance was largely limited to the roads, which were, themselves, narrow and tortuous; and the German engineers made the most of the ample opportunities presented to them by these conditions.

Source: Official history: "From Pachino to Ortona"

JULY 16

The Germans have abandoned Caltagirone to the approaching 48th Highlanders without a fight. So the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and 'B' Squadron tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment form the vanguard, headed for the next large town, Piazza Armerina. It's uphill all the way. At 2366 feet above sea level, it's the highest community the Canadians have so far encountered.

The advance is uneventful until noon, when the vanguard runs into elements of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. In the face of German artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire, the Loyal Eddies calmly deploy on either side of the highway and hunt down the enemy on the nearby heights. So steep are the approaches that the Three Rivers tanks of 'B' Squadron are unable to raise their guns sufficiently to give the infantry adequate tactical support. Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

JULY 16

At dawn, the First Canadian Division reports that Piazza Armerina is secure. Our tank support on the way to and into Piazza Armerina, even though limited by the very 'anti-tank' topography, has cost us dearly.

Editor's Note

Ironically, the three men killed (listed here below) had scrambled out of their tank, which had been disabled by one of our own artillery shells falling short. They climbed onto the back deck of another tank, where an 88 mm H.E found them.

Killed in action this day:

Cpl. William F. Hulse, age 21
George Woldemar W. Karcameron
James H. MacTavish, age 23

Editor's Note

G.W. Karcameron was one of our older troopers and had served as a gunner in the White Russian Army during the Russian Revolution.

Wounded today:

G-799 M.G. MacIntosh
D-36637 J. MacLeod
H-63763 G. Malyk
D-36316 Sgt. Marcel Mousseau
D-71016 Sgt. J. (Jack) R. Reid
D-38430 W. MacGregor
B-62554 Don C. Baillie
B-61834 E. Myers
B-62027 C.F. Angolia

Editor's Note

It seems a propos to mention reinforcements at this juncture. Casualties, both the dead and wounded, needed to be replaced. And promptly. These replacements came mainly from CACRU; that is, the Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit, commanded by our ex-C.O., Lt. Col. 'Jake' Vining, who was deemed too old to command our Regiment in action -- to the chagrin of everyone at the time.

JULY 17

anecdote

Some Italian villagers, spotting my clerical collar, approached my jeep and pleaded with me to bury some American dead on a hillside nearby. With a few volunteers, I followed the village guide. It was a brutal introduction to the worst of war. The naked bodies of 21 young paratroopers, some dismembered and all bloated by a week in the torrid Sicilian sun, lay scattered around their crashed glider.

As we scraped the rocky soil, seeking futilely to dig a large enough mass grave (official cemeteries had not yet been designated), one volunteer after another gagged and rushed from the scene. How I kept my own stomach from turning inside out, I still don't know. Except that I prayed a lot and kept reminding myself, desperately, that those bodies had all been 'temples of immortal souls.'

I had to return again and again to our unit for another party of volunteers. After about the sixth request, tough Sgt. Christopherson, a professional wrestler before the war, started ranting and raving: "How many men does it take to bury a few bodies?" he shouted, reasonably enough. So I asked him to take direct charge of the next party. Truth to tell, he vanished from the scene almost before he got there.

A few hardy souls and I finally had to bunch the bodies together, douse them with gasoline, and burn the remains to fit the stony limits of the mass grave. If this is war, I thought, I'm not at all sure I can last it through.

Source: 'Padre' J.L. Wilhelm

Editor's Note

Last it through, he did. After Sicily where he was awarded the Military Cross, he became R.C. Chaplain of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade. In May 1944, he was named Chaplain to 5th General Hospital in Rome. Then, in October '44, he was promoted to R.C. Chaplain of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, where he served till the end of the war. In 1982, Col. J.L. Wilhelm became Colonel Commandant of Chaplains (R.C.) of Canada's Armed Forces: an honorary appointment, though it lasted 7 years.

He retired after 15 years as the Archbishop of Kingston in June 1982. How long was he actually with the TRR? From August 19, 1940 to June 1941 at Borden. Then, as R.C. Chaplain attached to the 1st Cdn. Armd Bde, he stayed with the TRR from the time we settled in Worthing, England, in 1942. Finally, he accompanied the TRR throughout the Sicilian campaign, following which he was succeeded by H/Capt. Jos. Mulaney, OMI, for a short spell; then by H/Capt. M.A. Minville till war's end.

JULY 17

**Of those wounded yesterday, two have since died:
B-61834 E. Meyers
D-38430 W. MacGregor**

JULY 19

General Simonds now decides to continue the advance on a two-brigade front, with the 2nd Brigade moving up on the left against Leonforte, and the 1st Brigade branching off to the right to take Assoro. These are no easy tasks. Both towns stand on very high ground, and attackers have to approach across the valley of the Dittaino River.

Editor's Note

It should be pointed out that, in Sicily, whatever brigade of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division was engaged, it was always with the support of the tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment.

JULY 19

This morning is spent on tank maintenance, while waiting for orders from Divisional H.Q. When orders arrive, 'C' Squadron moves to the 1st Brigade area, so they can advance with them on to the town of Assoro. The attack begins immediately to the north Valguarnerna, and 'C' Squadron has to ford a river to keep up with the infantry. Major Pat Mills recce's the crossing and is assured there are no mines there. His Squadron pushes on, only to find that the report is false.

Because the crews, whose tanks have hit mines, are under the impression that they are being heavily mortared instead, NINE tanks are disabled before the Squadron is called to a halt. This is the first time that a minefield is encountered. Heavy mortar fire prevents any track repairs, and 'C' Squadron spends the night in the minefield lit by burning stubble, and exploding ammunition and petrol dumps.

Meanwhile, 'B' Squadron has contacted the Royal 22nd Regiment and harbours to the east of Valguarnerna. And 'A' Squadron's attack with the 1st Infantry Brigade is delayed because of road obstructions in the form of mines and blown bridges.

'C' Squadron helps the Engineers lift over two hundred mines in their vicinity. But, in spite of this cleanup, the fitter's truck, while moving between disabled tanks to repair broken tracks, strikes a mine and is destroyed. Source: Capt. R. H. Heggie's "The History of the Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.A.R.) 1943-1945"

Recollection

Mines were the biggest single problem encountered by the Canadians in Sicily. You didn't do anything, or go anywhere, without checking for mines... Italian mines could be very tricky. The slightest jar could trigger them, and there was a joke among Eighth Army engineers that "you could always find an Italian minefield because there was always a couple of dead Italians around; (their mines) were so sensitive that they used to blow themselves up".

The Germans were 'very clever' about installing their mines; they were often booby-trapped. Sometimes they placed two or three mines on top of each other. Of course, it was not practical to remove all mines, just those in key locations. The rest were simply marked off with wire and a warning sign. Source: Geoff Walsh, chief engineer, 1st Canadian Division, "D-Day Dodgers"

JULY 20

The attack on Assoro is proving virtually a private affair for the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, as even the supporting tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment are temporarily held up by a vast crater across their only approach.

Though the Hasty Ps' C.O., Lt.-Col. B.A. Sutcliffe, is killed on a recce before the attack even begins, they regroup under Major Lord Tweedsmuir; 'force march' seven hours in darkness to the foot of the Assoro mountain; and, with less than an hour before the break of dawn, scale the final 1000-foot escarpment to surprise the German defenders from the rear. Theirs was a feat with few equals in military history.

JULY 21

While the Hasty Ps were surprising the Germans at Assoro, 'Monty' (Gen. Montgomery) gave up any further attempts to take Catania by frontal assault; to continue would cost casualties "he could not afford." Accordingly, he issued orders for all formations, except the First Canadian Division (supported by the Three Rivers Regiment of the First Canadian Armoured Tank Brigade), to go over to the defensive... Canadian operations were "to continue without restraint directed on Adrano." Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

JULY 21

The 48th Highlanders are ordered to assist the 'Hasty Ps', who are beleaguered on the crest of the Assoro Mountain. The 48th attacks the heights southwest and southeast, supported by the Three Rivers' tanks, which proves, in this operation, that the Shermans have unexpected possibilities for mountain warfare.

Source: from Official History: "From Pachino to Ortona"

Editor's Note

Both Leonforte and Assoro stood on very high ground, and had to be approached across the valley of the Dittaino River. The Germans, with their observation posts dominantly sited on the ridge between the two towns, were thus able to keep attackers under continual and accurate fire.

This combination of enemy-dominated heights, crow's-nest towns with access by a single, narrow, winding road, and valley approaches intersected by one or more rivers (whose bridges had first been blown up, then precisely bracketed by dug-in artillery and mortar fire) set the pattern for our whole progress up the Italian mainland.

Except that, by grimly slowing our advance, the Germans gave themselves more time to prepare their defences, using coerced Italian civilians. They also sometimes integrated several ridges and valleys for a defense in depth, thereby increasing the cost of conquest. This is why many military schools agree that Italy offers the textbook geography for the defender. And Hitler committed many of his elite divisions to take every advantage of this fact.

JULY 21

**Killed in action today:
G/663, Joseph Hamilton, (age 24)
Joseph Lambert (age 24)**

**Wounded today:
D-36506 George Pronovost**

JULY 22

While the Edmonton Regiment captures the southern end of Leonforte during the night against a very determined rear-guard, supporting Three Rivers tanks have to wait for a Bailey bridge to be built (at night and under intense fire) by the engineers over a 60-foot-deep ravine. So 'A' Squadron's No. 4 Troop positions itself on the edge of the ravine, to try to neutralize the heavy machine gun and mortar fire that's inflicting heavy casualties among the engineers constructing the bridge, and the 'Eddies' in the town. Enemy aircraft also bombed the area but caused little damage.

Out of his tank, to guide his troop into position, Lt. Douglas Neil McIntyre (age 27) is hit by shrapnel and dies before being evacuated.

Source: Capt. R.H Heggie

**Killed in action today:
Lt. Douglas Neil McIntyre (age 27)**

JULY 22

As soon as the bridge is completed, the three tanks of our 'A' Squadron's No.3 Troop cross it and zigzag up the very sharp hill to the town. One of our tanks is destroyed and another damaged in a running battle with enemy tanks in the town's streets. Two of the enemy tanks are knocked out.

After twelve hours in their shrinking bridgehead across the Daittano, the decimated 'Eddies' are finally relieved.

Recollection

As their grateful Colonel, Jim Jefferson, recounted: “The Three Rivers Regiment’s leading tank was seen to be approaching. Simultaneously an enemy tank rounded a corner near Battalion Headquarters. The Canadian gunner was lightning on the trigger and the enemy tank exploded almost in our faces.”

JULY 22

Recollection

The skirmish at Leonforte

No. 2 Troop (commanded by Lt. L. Maraskas) of ‘A’ Squadron, 12th CTR (Three Rivers Reg’t) was tasked to break into town over the now completed bridge – to relieve the hard-pressed infantry. No. 3 Troop (commanded by Lt. D.N. McIntyre) moved to the edge of the ravine to provide covering fire to No. 2 Troop’s attack. Lt. McIntyre was hit by shrapnel when he stood up on the turret to get a better view. His gunner (Cpl. E.R.M. Griffiths) assumed command of the tank and evacuated his officer, who did not survive.

No. 2 Troop, with Lt. Maraskas in the lead, crossed the bridge and broke into town. Tank 2A, commanded by Sgt. W.R. Campbell, flushed out a German tank on a side street and, followed by Tank 2B (Sgt.J. Gallagher), chased it across town through a maze of narrow back streets until the German tank commander set a trap at a major intersection. In a close range exchange of gunfire, the German MK IV damaged Campbell’s Sherman, starting a fire in an ammunition bin, which was quickly extinguished by the co-driver, L./Cpl. H. Holt. Tpr.F.Lund, the driver, smartly reversed and backed his tank around the corner. The German tank was also hit and damaged, but managed to escape along the main street and get out of town along Route 121, towards Nissoria. It was found the next day, abandoned in the ditch alongside the road, with a sizeable hole in the front plate of its turret.

Shortly after the above exchange, a second German tank attempted to escape town. But Campbell, emulating the strategy of his first antagonist, trapped and destroyed it at the same intersection; thereby blocking any exit from the side street where his troop was halted.

With Campbell's tank damaged and two of his own crew members slightly wounded, Sgt. John Gallagher circled the block, managing to drag the wrecked PZKV Mk IV out of the way. He then led the advance up the main street. Nearing the edge of town, Gallagher's tank (2B) was hit and destroyed by an anti-tank gun. Or by the damaged German tank which, after its exchange with Campbell's tank, had escaped to lay in wait at a bend in the road. Gallagher evacuated all his crew. But his driver, Tpr. Joseph W. Norman, was badly burned and died of his wounds later in the day. Gallagher recalls that, when he ordered his crew to "bail out", he scrambled out of the narrow hatch to find his gunner, Tpr. "Red" Barrow, already out on the rear deck. Somehow, Barrow had passed by him in the hatchway.

Towards evening, No.4 Troop (commanded by Lt. J.L. Jemmett) moved into town to relieve No.2 Troop. The latter was then withdrawn to the Squadron harbour area, where a section from R.C.E.M. sealed the hole in the right sponson of Campbell's tank. It was then found that several 75 mm high explosive (HE) rounds had been damaged in the ammunition racks beside the co-driver, some had been scorched by the fire, before Holt managed to extinguish it.

Tpr. Lund and L/Cpl Holt, slightly wounded in the hand and leg respectively, were treated at a Field Dressing Station, but refused evacuation and returned to duty.

While the Regiment had been involved in several actions prior to this skirmish, this just may have been the first tank vs. tank engagement by Canadian armoured troops during WWII. Enemy losses were two tanks and an important strong point, against the loss of one of our tanks and two fatal casualties (Lt. McIntyre and Tpr. J.W. Norman).

Source: W.R. Campbell

The Canadian Division was really doing a big left hook moving on the outer circle on the left flank via Enna-Leonforte against Adrano. This was hilly country, and enemy demolitions made progress difficult.

Source: From Gen. Montgomery's diary

It was a tall order for a division in its first combat and largely bereft of transport in mountainous country which favoured the defender.

Source: American historian Carlo D'Este

Killed in action today:

Lt. McIntyre

Tpr. J.W. Norman

Wounded today:

Tpr. Lund

L/Cpl Holt

G-918 Gerald H. Abell.

F-97623 T.D. MacFarlane

D-71125 Pat. M. Lenham

D-71157 Edouard ('Eddy') Desjardins

JULY 23

By this date, Leonforte and Assoro are in Canadian hands. The Germans make two attempts to retake the towns. They are beaten off by the infantry, and a flanking movement by two troops of 'A' Squadron, to some high ground southeast of town, which provides fire positions overlooking the road to Nissoria. One attempt, supported by a German 8-wheeled armoured car, receives a rude surprise from the tanks in their hull-down positions, which discourages future ventures of this type.

By this time, 'B' Squadron has moved, with the 3rd Infantry Brigade, to the extreme left flank of the Canadian push. This force remains there for the next five days, as a pivot for the 1st Division's swing to the east.

The actual fighting for the towns of Leonforte, isolated by a blown bridge over a gorge, and Assoro, perched on the peak of a steep and rugged hill, proved one thing: that tanks, even when deployed in penny-packets or individually, were a great asset in so-called non-tank country. The drivers showed great skill negotiating rock and boulder-strewn slopes, roads, and goat trails. The 75 mm tank guns firing high explosives had brought artillery right up to the enemy front-line positions.

Source: John F. Wallace MC, "Dragons of Steel"

JULY 23

The next major objective is Adrano at the foot of Mount Etna. But, to reach it, elements of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 12th CTR have to clear several stubbornly held positions (Nissoria, Agira and Regalbuto), along Highway 121, before crossing the Salso River.

The plan is for a combined Armour/Infantry force to attack along the highway, capture Nissoria, and break through the strongly held town of Agira.

Wounded today:

Major John D. Pearson

D-36546 F. (Fritz) Lund (remained on duty)

D-71220 Vic J, Howard

JULY 24

historical note

After a rancorous ten-hour session of his Grand Fascist Council, Mussolini reluctantly resigned. The next morning, he was arrested. Italy's aging King Vittorio-Emmanuele III announced the formation of a government under seventy-one-year-old Marshal Pietro Badoglio... Adolf Hitler was infuriated... Within forty-eight hours, the Germans were preparing plans to take over Italy in case their erstwhile ally collapsed or surrendered.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

JULY 24

Wounded today:

Lt. John (Tiny) L. Jemmett

Lt. A. Bilodeau

B-71131 Omer Gravelle

A-4262 G.T. Meinzinger A-58041 John C. Rupert

A-103244 H.A. Simmons

B-37992 James C. Mason

D-71092 Henry R. Betts

A-4342 George Cuyler

H-100847 G. Anderson

A-55286 D.T. Ascott

H-26596 W.R. Learmouth

JULY 25

Relieving 'C' Squadron Troops 4 & 5 are first across the bridge. The three other Troops, led by Lts. Ted Smith, Slim Waldron and Bill Wadds, move up to support the 2nd Infantry Brigade in the final taking of Nissoria.

Wounded today:

B-62646 K.D. MacKenzie

B-62557 K.L. Learmouth

JULY 26

About midnight, Brigadier Vokes decides to send in the Seaforth. The men from Vancouver meet considerable fire from machine-guns and tanks as they move up. But, with the help of our tanks, anti-tank guns and elements of the Patricias, capture, and consolidate on, Objective Grizzly, two large features immediately west of Agira, which were held by fresh troops of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division.

Killed in action today:

L/Cpl. L.W. McCracken

Tpr. F. Granite,

Tpr. W.C.Palmer

Tpr. K.E. Roder

Wounded today:

D-36546 F. 'Fritz' Lund

excerpt

On the afternoon of July 26, 'A' Squadron again moved forward, this time in close support of the Royal Canadian Regiment; and, without too much difficulty, forced entry into the small town of Nissoria. No.1 Troop, led by Sgt. Johnny Allen, broke out the far side of the town and advanced, without encountering any opposition, some distance along the highway. There, they assumed positions facing Agira, and waited for the rest of the Squadron to catch up.

When Allen's troop met no opposition, Major J.D. Pearson, O/C 'A' Squadron, led his H.Q. Troop and following tanks out along the highway. Suddenly, an undetected 88mm FLAK 41 anti-tank gun knocked out the first and fifth tanks, and then proceeded to destroy the tanks in between. Four crewmen were killed: L/Cpl. L.W. McCracken, Tpr. F. Granite, Tpr. W.C.Palmer and Tpr. K.E. Roder.

And a number severely wounded, including the O.C., Major Pearson, who suffered a badly smashed femur. The latter, along with the evacuated crews, lay trapped in the ditch alongside the road.

It should be noted that, in much of Sicily, the roads are perched on the sides of hills, with a sheer wall to one side, and a precipitous drop on the other: with the result that, on many occasions, the tanks had to go into action in Indian file, with little chance to maneuver.

No.2 Troop, commanded by Lt. L. Maraskas, was now reduced to two tanks after the action at Leonforte, and would have been next to move out into the open. But having established the general area of the enemy gun, Lt. Maraskas set off to try and outflank its position; leaving Tank 2A (Sgt. Campbell's) to lay a smoke screen over the area of the trapped tank crews, so they could be extricated from their predicament.

At this juncture, Lt. Col. E.L. Booth, O.C. of the 12th C.A.R., arrived. And, after being briefed on the situation, joined Lt. Col. Ralph Crowe of the R.C.R. in an independent attempt to locate the '88'. Lt. Col. Crowe was killed for his initiative. The enemy gun was not located, and presumed to have withdrawn once its task was accomplished.

Meanwhile, the smoke screen permitted the surviving tank crews, and the wounded, to withdraw into town with no further losses. Lt. Maraskas returned from his unsuccessful attempt to discover and outflank the '88' and, after a brief discussion with Col. Booth, took temporary command of the remainder of our 'A' Squadron.

It was then decided to try and withdraw Sgt. Allen's Troop from its precarious position behind the enemy lines. This presented a problem, as radio communications were ineffective. However, Allen decided on his own that he had better return and, when about halfway back, managed to radio the Squadron that he was on his way. Warned of the situation in Nissoria, he led a wild dash past the wrecked tanks and reached town almost at the end of the fuel reserves of his three tanks.

It was then decided that 'A' Squadron would be withdrawn to a close-support position in the rear of the town, where they could refuel and rearm. The infantry, meanwhile, would establish defensive positions in town. But, until the Anti-Tank units could be brought forward, one tank would stay up with the infantry, in case the enemy armour tried to re-enter and retake the town. This assignment fell to Sgt. Bob Campbell (Tank 2A) and, when the Squadron moved out, he positioned his tank to cover the only entry into town from the east. Night fell and, during a final 'recce' of his field of fire, Campbell

recovered the Squadron's 'Battle Flag' from Major Pearson's wrecked tank.

Shortly after midnight, Anti-Tank troops arrived. And, once they were briefed and positioned, Campbell withdrew to rejoin the rest of his Squadron. As he left town, his driver, Tpr. 'Fritz' Lund, spotted something on the moonlit road ahead and stopped. Closer examination by his co-driver, L/Cpl. Herbert Holt, revealed four Teller mines wired together and stretched in a row across the road. Obviously not all the enemy was on the east side of town. A burst of Browning from the hull set off a most satisfying "bang", which alerted and created some concern among the rest of the Squadron in harbour nearby. The Battle Flag was later handed over to Major Pete Ryckman, when he assumed command, replacing Major Pearson.

Attacks the next day by the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment and the 48th Highlanders were unsuccessful in dislodging the enemy from the high ground overlooking Nissoria. And it was only on the evening of the 27th that the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and tanks of 'C' Squadron, advancing behind a heavy artillery barrage, were able to seize the positions dominating the town.

JULY 27

The RCR reports at 1615 hrs that Nissoria is secure. The only sign of opposition comes in the form of a tank outside the village and a large gun on the main street. Both of these are knocked out by Three Rivers tanks. So far, the attack has been little more than a noisy afternoon stroll. But all this changes as soon as the leading companies of the RCR emerge from Nissoria's east end.

The Germans hold their fire until the two forward companies are in the clear, then, let go with everything they have. The RCR's support companies are hit by a mortar barrage. Not even the tanks can survive. As the infantry scatters, the Three Rivers Regiment rolls forward. Without infantry protection, the metal monsters are sitting ducks, and the Three Rivers Regiment loses ten tanks in a matter of minutes.

Editor's Note

All but three were recoverable and were duly recovered.

JULY 28

Recollection

After a horrible night, I was resting on Nissoria Ridge. A member of one of my crews heated up some bully beef and brought some to me in a 'billy' can. I thanked him and leaned against my tank to enjoy it. But a cloud of flies almost beat me to it. I looked around to find where they had come from and it turned out to be a dead German on the edge of a slit trench about 10 feet away. I walked over and kicked him back into his trench, then returned to my tank to resume my meal. For a long time afterwards, I wondered how I could have become so callous in such a short time.

Note from the official record "From Pachino to Ortona": "The Three Rivers Regiment's squadron ran into well-sited anti-tank guns and, though it knocked out several of them, ten of its tanks were hit and at least temporarily put out of action."

It is a distressing sight to see the tanks knocked out, some of them afire. A burning tank is said to have "brewed," and the infantry soon see enough of them to give the Shermans the grim nickname, "Ronsons," after the cigarette lighter. Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

Killed in action today:

Sgt. Gerald E. Merry (married, 2 children)

Wounded today:

Letter? 51119 O. Langelier

anecdote

It fell to my Squadron ('C'), with Troops 4 & 5 leading, to cross over first, and support the Seaforths in the hills. Those who knew Major-General Chris Volkes, who had command of the whole operation, will recall that he did not welcome advice on his plans; and, in particular, insisted that everything happen according to his precise timetable.

My squadron was strung out along a road, and I left it in charge of a new, young Captain, with strict orders to be ready to move out at a moment's notice. I then hurried to the Orders Group with Lts. Wallace and Dawson.

At 0400 hrs, I returned to my Squadron with orders to take them into the attack at 0500 hrs. But my Squadron was nowhere to be found. Not a sign of a tank anywhere. Panic!!! I have detailed orders to be at the start line by 0500 hrs and, if we are not there, Volkes will have my guts for bootlaces.

Up and down the road I searched in vain. With desperation settling firmly in my stomach, I suddenly spotted a gleaming object up on the hill in the moonlight. Further investigation found it to be someone's rear end performing a normal bodily function. Climbing the hill at a run, I discovered all 18 of my tanks beautifully camouflaged, just the way it's taught in training.

We made the start line in the nick of time, and I escaped Volkes' wrath.

Source: Major Pat Mills

Editor's Note

In point of fact, Major Pat Mills was presented with the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade's Battle Pennant.

Source: Jack Wallace

JULY 28-29

'A' Squadron clears approaches to Regabulto.

JULY 29

Wounded today: Sgt. John J. Wells

JULY 30

'B' Squadron is ordered to move along the Dittaino River Valley that runs parallel to the Agira-Regabulto road. They are to proceed as far as Cantenuova. Here No. 3 Troop, Lt. Melvin's, gives covering fire to the party of Engineers who are making the western road in the town passable for vehicles.

The Troop comes under fire from one anti-tank gun whose first and only shot hits the turret ring of the tank commanded by Cpl. 'Chuck' Willoughby, killing him instantly. The tank backs down from its exposed position, and the crew evacuates just as the area comes under mortar fire.

One mortar bomb drops into the open hatch and explodes inside the tank, throwing the complete turret some 20 feet into the air. None of the four remaining crew members, in a ditch alongside the tank, are hurt.

Killed in action today:

**L/Cpl. D. Forrest
Tpr.J.F.Marsh
Tpr. D.L. McClure
Tpr. W.J. Wright.**

Wounded today:

**Capt. Fernand L. Caron
B-102642 J.A. Wiwzor
H-95501 M. Maximick
D-71193 Donald (Don) T. Hutchison
(paralyzed from waist down and lost right arm)
D-36434 Joseph Morin
D-36514 C. Stowe
D-36627 A.J. Anderson
B-38155 Morris M. Kumhyr
B-62502 Peter Laberge**

anecdote

During a short lull, Lt. Melvin sent me to make sure Cpl. Chuck Willoughby was beyond needing help. He was and I so reported. Distraught, Lt. T. Melvin swore that henceforth his would always be the lead tank. I mention this because it has a bearing on the shocking event of December 20, 1943. Source: Harold Dumontier

Also on this day, 'A' Squadron's harbour comes under a well-directed concentration of shellfire. The Regimental 2 I.C., Major F. Caron, who is visiting the Squadron at the time, is wounded and has to be evacuated.

Four 'A' Squadron men are killed in the course of this action (3 by shelling while in harbour, and the other during the actual attack):

**L/Cpl. D. Forrest,
Tpr.J.F.Marsh,
Tpr. D.L. McClure,
and Tpr. W.J. Wright.**

Source: "History of the Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.A.R.) 1943-1945" by Capt. R.H. Heggie

JULY 31

Activity on the last day of July is confined to the support 'A' Squadron continues to give to the 231st Brigade, who are clearing Regabulto. The Brigade Commander stands on the rear deck of Major Ryckman's tank and personally directs the fire of Squadron Headquarters. This teamwork brings about the destruction of a German ammunition and petrol dump. 'A' Squadron remains in position overlooking the town until the morning of August 3rd.

Meanwhile, two troops of 'C' Squadron, under Lts. Wallace and Dawson, support elements of the 2nd Brigade across the Salso River. These two troops are able to shoot up several enemy defensive positions and destroy one 88mm gun tractor.

Editor's Note

The very brief last paragraph above covers 'C' Squadron action that stretched from 0430 hrs to 1700 hrs.

AUGUST 3

'A' Squadron is ordered back to take up a defensive position overlooking the road from Nicosia.

AUGUST 4

Our entire Regiment is ordered to the 2nd Brigade area, to the north of Regabulto to await further orders from Divisional Headquarters. While in this area, fighter-bombers of the USAAF bomb the area immediately to the south, between the regimental harbour and the town.

There has been some error in determining the day's bomb-line, but no damage is inflicted on the Regiment. The Germans, by this time, are being rapidly squeezed into the area around Mount Etna, which can now be seen for the first time, as well as the triangle of land between it and Messina. They are attempting to stage another Dunkirk here, in an effort to salvage men and material.

The plan finally adopted calls for a composite force to cross the north branch of the Salso River, follow the river valley, and exploit as far as possible towards Adrano. This composite force is to consist of our whole Regiment (except for 'C' Squadron

which is in reserve resting from the previous day's action), the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, the 4th Recce Squadron of the P.L.D.G.s, two troops of anti-tank guns, and a detachment of Engineers. The whole action is to be supported by the Divisional Artillery, the R.A.F., and the U.S.A.A.F. Col. Booth is to take command of the composite force, called "Booth-Force". Intelligence reports show that the area to be exploited is defended by paratroopers, who are well dug in, and evidently quite prepared to stay.

During late afternoon, Col. Booth and I.O. make a recce to find a suitable river crossing. There is none of the usual variety, and it is decided to use the single-tracked railway bridge that is undamaged. This bridge is made of metal framework, and the track is laid across open ties.

AUGUST 4

**Wounded today:
D131211 W.H. Burbridge**

AUGUST 5

The start line is crossed at 0600 hrs, and the advance towards Adrano gets away to a smooth start. The 4th Recce Squadron of the P.L.D.G.'s experiences a great deal of difficulty getting their wheeled vehicles across the railway bridge over the Salso river, but manages to get them all across, and then take their place in the column.

As the valley opens out, so do the tanks of leading 'B' Squadron. 'A' Squadron supports the advance from fire positions; while, at the same time, keeping pace with the leading elements.

The Divisional Artillery cannot cover the objective, but concentrates on likely enemy positions up to their extreme range. Artillery support at the objective is to be provided by S.P. guns, which are following.

The first objective is the high ground overlooking the Simeto River, due west of Adrano. If the river can be crossed, then the advance will endeavour to push on. It becomes evident, from the absolute lack of anti-tank defenses that the Germans have not counted on our tanks using the long railway bridge. However, the enemy troops manning the usual machine-gun and mortar positions fight hard and well. Sniper activity causes

many casualties. The first objective, having been gained after some good work by 'B' Squadron, is consolidated. Then it is found that the river is impassable, and the advance cannot continue.

However, by holding the high ground already captured, the Canadians are in a commanding position, and the enemy's defenses to the east become untenable. 'B' Squadron withdraws to replenish with ammunition and petrol, while 'A' Squadron takes over the defensive positions on the high ground. The supply echelons put in some excellent work this night, bringing up supplies across fields well lit by burning farm houses and haystacks, and under continuous mortar fire.

anecdote

One very dark night, around this time, someone came back from the front and told Capt. Harvey Clare, our Regt's M.O., that a seriously wounded crew member has been heard moaning near a disabled tank in No Man's Land. Capt. Clare jumps out of his bunk, pulls on his boots, and runs over to wake me up. "Padre," he shouts. "Let's go".

"A badly wounded man needs our help somewhere up there." "Up where?" I ask, groggy from lack of sleep. "Come on, we'll find out." We jeeped into the mortar-punctuated night finally stopped by a sentry who whispers: "It's No Man's Land beyond this point." "Good," Capt. Clare whispers back. We have a report of a wounded man out there." "Well, don't say you weren't warned," shrugs the sentry, waving us on.

We found the wounded man so far beyond the point I expected a challenge in German. We brought him back more dead than alive. I can't for the life of me remember his name, or whether the poor fellow survived. Those were busy days ... and nights.

Source: Archbishop J.L. Wilhelm

AUGUST 5

Today our Regiment watches, with grim satisfaction, the complete destruction of enemy-held Adrano by medium bombers of the American Air force.

anecdote

At this point, Gen. Guy Simonds hatched a plan worthy of his reputation as Canada's foremost tactician. Ascending the hill at Centuripe, which offered a panoramic view of the whole battlefield, he saw one of the rare opportunities to properly use tanks. The junction of the Salso and Troina rivers gave way to a flat-bottomed valley leading to the Simeto (a real river, unique in this part of Sicily at this time of year).

Simonds hurried to Christ Vokes's Second Brigade headquarters to propose an improvised "striking force" to take advantage of the ground and of the situation. Under the command of Lt.-Col. Leslie Booth, this force would consist of Booth's Three Rivers Regiment, the Seaforth Highlanders, supported by self-propelled and anti-tank guns. First thing the next morning, "Booth Force" would speed down the Salso valley and seize the high ground overlooking the Simeto. "I think such a move will startle the enemy," Simonds wrote Vokes that evening, "and will probably result in a good mix-up in the open country where the tanks will really be able to manoeuvre. I think Booth will handle such a party well." It would prove to be one of the most propitious days for Canadian soldiers in Sicily.

Booth Force surged down the valley at 1000 hrs. Within half an hour, the Canadians were practically on their objective, defended by fanatical machine-gunners belonging to the 3rd Parachute Regiment. 'C' Company of the Seaforths dismounted and by rushes began ascending the hill, accompanied by Booth's Shermans.

The paratroopers, although lacking anti-tank guns, were cleverly concealed, and Booth "found that the best way to deal with them was to have the tanks scout around the terrain and clean out all suspicious-looking places with 75mm H.E. and with blasts of machine-gun fire."

By early afternoon, it was all over ... an action historian Reginald Roy describes as "a classic example of exploitation, speed and cooperation."

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

Editor's Note

For reasons of accuracy, and to give due credit to other participants in this action, John Wallace's account of the action, in his book "Dragons of Steel", needs to be quoted here:

A strike force called Booth Force, commanded by Lt.Col E. Booth was formed. It was made of 'A' and 'B' Tank Squadrons (TRR), 'A' and 'C' Companies, Seaforth Highlanders, 'A' Squadron, PLDG, a troop of the 90th Anti-Tank Regiment with engineer and other artillery elements.

It struck east between the Salso River and the Troina-Adrano road heading in the direction of Caraci (a village three miles west of Adrano) forcing the enemy during a four-hour fight to withdraw to the north. According to Maj. Gen. G.G. Simonds, GOC, 1st Division, the success "was due to the 12th Canadian Tank Regiment."

The entire action of the past few days has been watched by Gen. Montgomery and Maj. Gen. Simonds, both of whom declare it to be the finest piece of infantry-tank cooperation they have ever seen.

excerpt

This was "infantry-cum-tank" action at its best. The way to deal with the enemy, it was found, "was to have the tanks winkle about the terrain and clean out all suspicious-looking places with 75-mm. H.E. and with blasts of M.G. fire".

The enemy's losses in killed were extremely heavy, but Canadian casualties were few. It had been a model operation, and Lt.-Col. Booth received the D.S.O. for the "dash and determination" with which he carried it out. He was later promoted Brigadier, and was killed in Normandy while commanding an armoured brigade.

Source: Official history: "From Pachino to Ortona"

Editor's Note

In a C.B.C. broadcast later on, Lt. Gen. Simonds declared it the most successful action of the 1st Canadian Division's campaign.

In the course of these actions, Cpl. J.M.V. Dilio and Tpr. B.M. Kane are killed, and a number wounded by shells, mortar and sniper fire.

The Three Rivers' part in the Sicilian campaign ends here. Within a day or two, all Canadian troops are to be withdrawn to the south, to refit for landings in Italy. Only the extreme northeastern corner of Sicily now remains to be cleared.

The American forces advancing along the northern shore from Palermo, and the British forces streaming northwards from the Plains of Catania, coupled with the commando landings at Taormina, have everything well in hand.

**Killed in action today:
D95959 Cpl. J.M.V. Dilio
B88064 Tpr. B.M. Kane**

**Wounded today:
B-62037 C.F. Aubertin**

anecdote

When teased by his crewmates about his countrymen's rather faint-hearted resistance to the invasion of Sicily, Tpr. Jimmy Dillio remarked, "Italians have so many relatives in Canada and the U.S., we seem like family to them. In fact, I am." Jimmy was killed soon after by a German sniper.

Source: H.E. Dedels

AUGUST 8

The Regiment is ensconced in a pleasant olive and orange grove some six miles east of Adrano), on the northern bank of the Salso River.

AUGUST 9

This morning, Lt. Gen. Simonds thanks our Regiment for the splendid part it has played throughout the campaign.

AUGUST 11-13

The First Canadian Division is transported to the southern edge of the Catania plain, north and east of Grammichele, where it had its first clash with German troops. It is joined here by the

First Canadian Army Tank Brigade, soon to be redesignated the First Canadian Armoured Brigade. “A tiresome and dusty trip,” according to the RCR captain, Strome Galloway. “In fact, everyone is covered from head to toe in white dust.

It’s about an eighth of an inch thick on the peak of my cap and my moustache is snow white. With little shade available, they’re exposed to the blastfurnace of the sirocco, a dry breeze, which blows across the Mediterranean from North Africa. It is a decidedly unhealthy area, with malaria, jaundice, sand-fly fever, and dysentery prevalent.”

AUGUST 13

**Wounded today:
D-36368 Tpr. Phillipe Juneau**

AUGUST 16

‘C’ Squadron is bombed while in rest area near hospital.

anecdote

The word ‘bury’ has a number of meanings, which depend on the context. To E. Thiffeault, whose first language was French, the word had but one meaning: the basic English one of ‘put into the ground.’

So, when Major Pat Mills -- mindful of bombings or, worse, inspections from on high -- told his driver (Thiffeault) to “bury the regimental wine,” he did. He poured all ten gallons of it into a trench.

Source: Jack Wallace

AUGUST 17

Sicily is finally cleared of the enemy.

Recollection

With the benefit of hindsight, the War Diary says, on the first anniversary of our landing in Sicily:

“The Three Rivers Regt. fought the whole Sicilian campaign, supporting 1st Canadian Division and 231st Brigade (the Malta Brigade). It was just about an ideal breaking in for an Armoured Regiment. It began like a Battle School and ended in some pretty

stiff fighting. First, an enemy lorry was knocked out; that was hailed as a great victory. Opposition was comparatively light until we came up against the 'Boche'. He was one tough boy, but the Regiment faced him and the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, and out-fought him. Such battles as Regabulto, Agira, Adrano and Nissoria were tough enough, and the Three Rivers lost considerably in men and tanks. The campaign ended on 17 August, 1943."

Also from the War Diary:

"One officer and 19 other ranks of the Three Rivers Regiment were killed in action or died of wounds, and six officers and fifty-seven other ranks were wounded during the twenty-eight days that were spent in action during the Sicilian Campaign. Nine Sherman tanks were destroyed by enemy action, as well as five scout cars, three carriers, one Jeep, one 15 cwt lorry, one 60 cwt lorry, and one ambulance. Four more Shermans had to be evacuated to workshops for major repairs."

AUGUST 20

Montgomery, accompanied by Guy Simonds, visits the troops and says: "I regard you now as one of the veteran divisions of my army. Just as good as any, if not better."

Editor's Note

In a press release titled by the Canadian Press: 'Canadian Tank Units Score', and sub-titled: Good Work Done in Sicily Invasion, which was dated: August 25,'43 (therefore AFTER Sicily was liberated), war correspondent Ross Munro is purported to have written all of the following:

"The first armoured formation to campaign in Canada's history, this tank brigade came to Sicily from England, like the 1st (Canadian Infantry) Division, to invade as part of the British 8th Army.

Two (?) of its regiments were in action in the drive through Sicily. Brigade Headquarters and two other regiments -- the Ontario and Calgary Tank Regiments which fought at Dieppe landed at a port on the east coast of Sicily three days after the initial assault and went into the Catania line. Etc." It's hard to believe that Ross Munro, a thorough professional, wrote the above. First off, it's not only seriously inaccurate, it's also very badly written: two things Ross Munro was never guilty of. Secondly, the Calgary Regiment -- as

everybody knows -- was the only Canadian tank unit in action in the Dieppe Raid.

And, finally, Ross Munro would surely have mentioned the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) at least once, as we had done 100% of the fighting in support of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division throughout the Battle of Sicily. But don't take my word for the latter: here's what the C.O. of the Calgary Regiment, Lt. Col. Cyril H. Neurotsos, DSO, later wrote about the Sicilian Campaign in an article titled "Minehead to Melfa": "Excepting the 12th (TRR), none of us saw action in Sicily."

AUGUST 24

Amid sweltering temperatures and clouds of flies, the Canadian invasion plan is finalized.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

AUGUST 26

The Three Rivers Regiment's wartime designation is officially changed from the "12th Canadian Army Tank Regiment" to the "12th Canadian Armoured Regiment."

Editor's Note

However, this change was not actually implemented till late October.

SEPTEMBER 1

Padre' Wilhelm is transferred to Brigade H.Q.

SEPTEMBER 3

Allied troops land in force on west coast of Italy, and Canadians are leading the invasion -- the first Allied troops to return to continental Europe to stay.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

Geography, it seems, did not play a significant role in planning the invasion of mainland Italy. There was woefully little grasp of the difficulties the invaders would face, according to British historian G.A. Shepperd, who points to the Appennine mountain range which runs the length of Italy and the rivers that plunge from the peaks. "These

natural barriers inhibit large-scale military movement except on the established coastal roads, particularly in winter when rivers are often in spate,” Shepperd writes. “In addition, the extensive mountainous areas, themselves formidable barriers, favour the defence; and operations launched against ‘the grain of the country’ invariably prove both slow and costly.”

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

SEPTEMBER 8

General Eisenhower announces that Germany’s former partner, Italy, has surrendered unconditionally. Actually, the document of surrender was signed on September 3, in a mess-tent in Sicily by Lt-Gen. Giuseppe Castellano for the Italians, and Gen. Bedell Smith for the Allies.

SEPTEMBER 10

The engineers soon became the unsung heroes of the Canadian advance. “They did a terrific job,” said Doug Harkness, the future federal cabinet minister, then 2 I/C of the 1st Anti-Tank Regiment. “If it hadn’t been for the Bailey bridges, I don’t know how long we’d have been stuck in southern Italy.”

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

SEPTEMBER 12-24

The Three Rivers Regiment, now finally in reserve after its grueling solo support of the First Canadian Infantry Division and the 231st (Malta) Brigade throughout the Sicilian invasion, moves from Sicily and concentrates at Taranto, Italy.

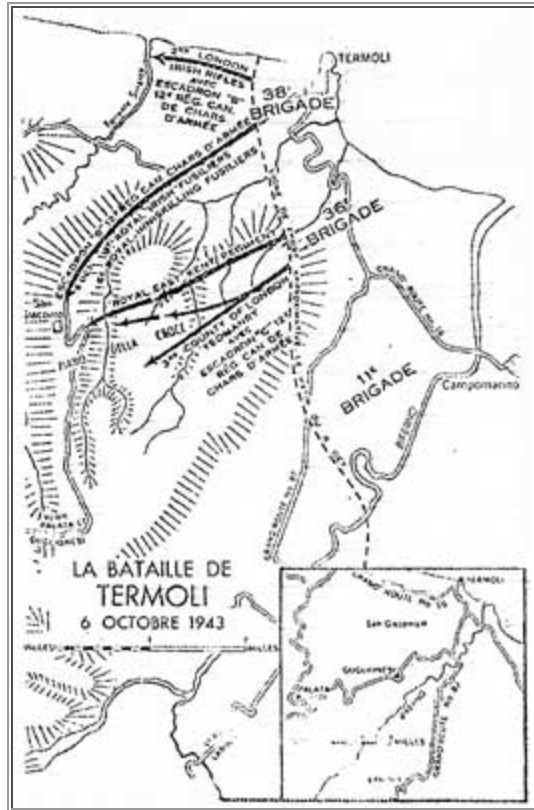
SEPTEMBER 27

British forces take Foggia airfield, and Canadian soldiers take Melfi.

OCTOBER 4

Today, the British 78th Division made its landing between the mouth of the Biferno and the modest port of Termoli on the Adriatic Sea. This was the “seaborne hook” which was to secure the whole inland advance of the Eighth Army and compel the abandonment of the Termoli-Campobasso lateral road. The landing however did not at first fulfill expectations.

The presence of a false beach prevented the landing craft from unloading all but a small proportion of the British 4th Armoured Brigade in time to support the infantry. Two brigades were heavily counter-attacked by German tanks on the plateau overlooking the mouth of the river. The situation was critical.



OCTOBER 5

On this day, the enemy's 16th Panzer Division launched an even more determined counter-attack. But the Three Rivers Regiment, which had moved overland from Foggia, arrived on the scene in time to bring its squadrons into action in support of the infantry brigades.

OCTOBER 5

Recollection

Late in my six-month tenure as 'C' Squadron Leader, I had still not had a 'crime' to handle. This was mainly due to the efficiency of my S.S.M., Tommy Gilmore.

We had moved from Taranto to Termoli, by ship and road. There, we were to relieve a Squadron of the 4th County of London Yeomanry and launch an attack at 5 a.m. We arrived at our designated harbour area located on the side of a hill, just at dark and in the pouring rain.

There, unfortunately, my 'no crime' record was shattered, and I had to lay a charge against one of my sergeants. Not because he had a WOMAN in his trench, but because he was five minutes late at the Start Line.

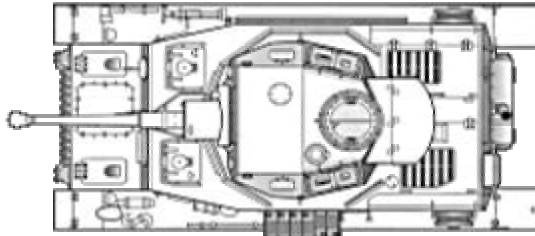
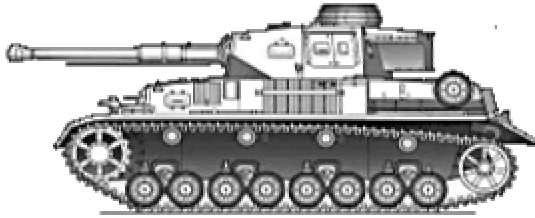
Source: Major Pat Mills

OCTOBER 6

"On the undulating plain west of Termoli, a tank battle raged back and forth among the olive groves throughout the 6th. The faster Shermans finally gained the upper hand; and for weeks afterwards, wrecked and burnt-out German Mark IV tanks were visible reminders of the bitter struggle.

After the battle, Brigadier Russell, commanding the Irish Brigade, spoke in glowing terms of the part played by the Canadian tanks. This was the first time that any unit of the First Army Tank Brigade had been able to give battle on ground which was suited to rapid manoeuvre and tank-versus-tank action."

Source: Official history: "From Pachino to Ortona"



Panzer Mk IV

OCTOBER 6

At Termoli, our Regiment supports the 78th British Division in the face of repeated counterattacks. Accounts for 14 enemy tanks for the loss of seven of our own.

Wounded today:

B-62246 Tpr. J. Stefan

B-67969 Tpr. Lester F. Wilson

excerpt

Here follows a digest of Jack Wallace's piece in *Canadian Armour* about that epic battle and the outstanding part played by the Three Rivers Regiment. It is necessarily only a partial view of the 12th's overall contribution to the victorious outcome of the Battle of Termoli. But it gives a graphic personal account of the grind, peril and cost of a battle dictated by a professional and skilled enemy, who takes every advantage of a topography designed for delaying tactics and rearguard action.

During September 1943, the enemy had established a defence line stretching from just north of Naples, east through the Apennines to the Biferno River; its eastern anchor being TERMOLI on the Adriatic Coast. Some six divisions of the German Army were now deployed to hold that line.

Although Termoli was the anchor of the German defence line, it was not strongly garrisoned (at the outset), having only small elements of the 1st Parachute Division. That was soon to change as Hitler, on September 30, ordered that the German winter defence line must not be further north than the Sangro River (some 30 miles north of Termoli). Therefore, hoping to head off any future allied seaborne landings, the 76th Panzer Corps Commander had ordered 16th Panzer Division to head for Termoli by way of Campobasso on Route 87, so as to beef up the defences of the Termoli area. When its leading column reached Campobasso, it received word that, indeed, an Allied landing had taken place at Termoli at 0200 hrs on October 3rd.

The British Special Service Brigade had landed about one mile west of Termoli and, although a quick overland surge had been planned -- to meet the 16th Panzers, the supporting 78th Division's infantry were instead bundled onto available landing craft, and made their own seaborne landing. But one of its Brigades (the 11th) and the tanks of the 3rd County of London Yeomanry, had to struggle along the slow overland route, hampered by heavy rains and enemy demolitions. When they did reach the Biferno, only six tanks were able to get across.

On the day of the landing, October 4, the 16th Panzer Division -- still to the south of Termoli -- had split into two battle groups. Their tank strength was estimated to be 30 PZ KW 1V Specials, mounting long-barreled 75's, which outgunned the British and Canadian Shermans' 75's.

The 16th Panzer Division carried out their offensive against the bridgehead on October 5th; and, having the advantage of attacking from high ground, drove the British forces back to the outskirts of the town itself. British engineers, however, had on that day completed a tank-bearing bridge over the Biferno. And -- three hours after its completion -- 36 tanks of 'B' and 'C' Squadrons, 12th CTR, made their appearance on the battlefield.

For the Canadians, their intervention (at Termoli) had come as a complete surprise. They had expected to be supporting their own 1st Canadian Infantry Division elsewhere along the front. Instead, shortly after the British landing at Termoli on October 3rd, the Three Rivers Regiment was rushed to the aid of the beleaguered British forces in the bridgehead. Within three hours, the Regiment's fighting element was underway. Its designated route turned out to be nothing but a rough trail and, in spite of the heavy rains, the tanks were forced to make their way cross-country, until they reached route 16 leading to Termoli, some 50 miles ahead. The wheeled vehicles of the support echelons, for their part, were compelled to make a long diversion, to

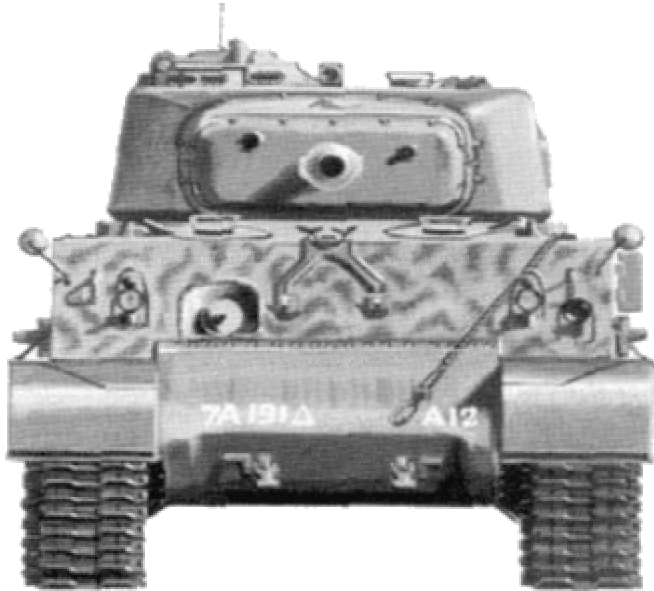
eventually catch up to the tanks. In support of the Three Rivers Regiment, Brigade sent along a workshop, as well as medical and army service corps elements.

At 1500 hrs, both squadrons swept across the bridge and made straight for the battlefront. Their sudden presence in the bridgehead resulted in a heightening of morale among the British infantry, and the concurrent withdrawal of several enemy tanks which "had penetrated the line in several places." The immediate pressure on the defenders eased noticeably. The next day would be the showdown. That night was relatively calm and tank crews, after several hours of maintenance on their tired Shermans, slept alongside them until around four in the morning; accompanied by the Recce troops, maintenance crews, and the Regimental First Aid Post.

At about 0600 hrs, following the Squadron "O" Group, and a hot breakfast cooked up by the tank crews, 'C' Squadron moved from the harbour, crossed over Route 16 to take up 'turret down' positions at the start line, a low ridge just west of Route 87 that ran south to north toward Termoli. The Squadron had been designated to act as the County of London Yeomanry's third squadron, and was to operate on the right flank of that unit. 'C' Squadron's objective (and that of the CLY) was to strike west, to cut the road running south from Termoli to Guglionese, and take the hamlet of Giacomo. But, not having maps, the leading TRR tank troops would simply head west, hoping they were going where they were supposed to go. No. 4 Troop (led by Lt. T. Melvin) on the right, and No. 5 Troop (led by Lt. J. Wallace) on the left, moved forward in two-up formation. Dug-in enemy infantry were quickly revealed and engaged. No enemy tanks moved up to challenge us, nor could any be seen. Covering fire was given to the lead tank Troops by the remainder of the Squadron, bringing up the rear.

"According to information given at the "O" Group," comments Lt. Jack Wallace, "the 36th Brigade infantry were to be following behind us to clear the ground overrun by our tanks. The CLY tanks were to be somewhere to our left."

The first part of the advance covered some one thousand yards and went well. The ground was relatively flat and did not afford much protection to the lead tanks, once we moved over the ridge, which had been shielding us in our 'turret down' positions. Then a ridge across the line of advance brought forward movement to a halt. No. 5 Troop was in a fully exposed position, with enemy infantry in slit trenches around us (they kept their heads low). In this sitting duck position, the Troop was unable to do much except fire on anything that tried to move.



Canadian RAM tank

About mid-morning, Tank 5B (Cpl. R. Campbell's) on the extreme left was hit five times, with the fire coming from a small wood slightly to the rear in the area of responsibility of the 3rd CLY. Before successfully evacuating their tank, Cpl. Campbell's crew discovered what had caused their grief, and were able to take out one enemy PZKW 1V.

For some time, the situation appeared to be a stalemate, with no fewer than 5 'C' Squadron tanks out on the proverbial limb, and the remaining twelve tanks in comfortable 'hull-down' positions behind. Although the enemy infantry weapons could not cause any great damage, some of the more venturesome kept up a continuous nuisance fire on the exposed tanks. Somewhat more dangerous, was the hail of steel fragments raining down on protruding tank commanders' steel-helmeted heads from artillery shell bursts overhead.

The lead tank (Lt. Wallace's) did not move more than a hundred yards when it was hit by shells several times in the rear, killing the driver and the gunner, and smashing the leg of the crew commander. Before struggling out of his tank, Lt. Wallace reported that the fire seemed to be coming from the same bothersome small wood, but the CLY came on the air to say the wood had been cleared. They were proved wrong, however, when No. 2 Troop (commanded by Lt. M. Bier) took out another enemy tank there a short time later, and -- possibly to their own surprise -- the CLY knocked out two more.

The advance was able to continue, with British infantry moving forward from the direction of Termoli. Our Squadron "found good shooting and led the advance" for about another mile, when our progress was checked by bad ground. However, being now on high ground, the Squadron was able to provide effective covering fire to the infantry.

The next morning, 'C' Squadron of the Three Rivers Regiment, acting independently, moved off at first light to head off any possible counter-attack. "The heavy casualties suffered the previous day by the enemy infantry and machine gunners was noticed with professional satisfaction."

Source: Lt. Jack Wallace

OCTOBER 6

Editor's Note

Here's another anecdote that typifies the myriad personal acts of heroism that go unsung and unrewarded, but that every victory, small or large, is made of:

anecdote

One of our remarkably few casualties on this momentous day was Sgt. Ronnie Leather. When his tank was hit, early on in the action, he leapt out to clear the hatch. Then, noticing that none of his crew had followed, he climbed back into the turret to lend a helping hand.

The tank chose that instant to explode in flames. Ronnie somehow made it out again; but this time burnt bare of clothes. He died early next day, hopefully before shock gave way to pain.

Source: Renny Sparks

Also killed in action on this day:
D-36321 Tpr. Daniel McAuley
H-101039 Tpr. Cameron R. Taite
D-36488 L.Cpl. Lucien H. Royer
D-131227 Tpr. Léopold J. Venne
A-4222 Tpr. G.D. Roebuck

Recollections - some personal Termoli postscripts

Major Jimmy Walker, O.C. of 'B' Squadron, and delegated field commander of all segments of the 12th CTR committed to this epic battle, remembered:

"... The lack of sleep. I figure I went 72 hours before I managed a full night's rest."

"... An 'O' Group at 38th Brigade HQ around midnight. I was told to move up till halted by a rep. of the Irish Fusiliers. When I asked 'What if no rep. shows?' I think it was the Brigade Commander who said: "Then, in that case, we might as well say our farewells here!"

"... Leading my squadron by jeep proved the most practical, as it was well after midnight and dark as hell. My heart finally came out of my mouth when, at last, a voice said 'Hold it!' and not 'Halt!'"

"...Somehow or other, 'B' Squadron officers entertained a small group of U.S. fliers, while we were at rest after the occupation of Sicily was completed. Then, following Termoli, we returned to Foggia, where the same Americans found us and invited us back for poker, drinks and 'fried chicken' -- southern-style yet! On mentioning that we had been, mistakenly, bombed by them, I was taken to the operations tent, where their diary clearly showed their air group had been responsible. I then asked about the yellow smoke hand grenades we had (to identify us to friendly aircraft). I was told it meant nothing to them. In fact, had we used them, it would have been an invitation to further bombings."

Major Pat Mills, O.C. of our 'C' Squadron at this time, remembers:

"... The whole (Termoli) show was set up for the Ontarios (11th CTR), who were at the time bucking heavy seas aboard LSTs and delayed for several days. So we (Three Rivers) were it, and away we went."

Editor's Note

At this point, the 12th was not Brigade, not Corps, but Army reserve; which virtually guaranteed a rest for the Three Rivers Regiment; following its 5 weeks of unrelieved action in Sicily. But fate had fingered us once more. It was a long, long road to the Termoli bridgehead.

On arrival, we ('C' Squadron) dug slit trenches. The night was cold and rainy. We were on our own, under the command of the Colonel of the County of London Yeomanry Regiment, which had suffered very severe casualties.

Lt. Jack Wallace, who lost a leg in this action, remembers:

“... There were no maps available to troop leaders; so, apart from what we could see, we had no idea what was ahead of us except the enemy.”

“... Watching a German soldier running for cover a hundred yards away, while three Browning machine guns tried to nail him. He made it!”

“...The beauty of the day itself: clear blue skies and warm.” “The smoothness of the ride on the back of Sgt. L. Allen’s tank, while lying on the camouflage net. A real contrast to the ambulance rides and stretcher-bearers who always seemed to let the stretcher drop the last six inches to the ground.” “...Being strapped to an operating table in an FDS (Field Dressing Station), and watching enemy aircraft trying to hit the Biferno river-crossing a few hundred yards away.”

“... Brig. Wyman’s courtesy, in catching up with my ambulance, stopping it, and getting in to give me words of encouragement and thanks.”

“...Keeping a few empty shell casings on hand for disposal of human waste.”

“...Not being particularly frightened about being out in the open in enemy territory, and no nervousness being exhibited by my crew or those of my other tanks. Put it down to our youthfulness. None of my crew was over 25, and I had just turned 22.”

Lt. Bill Prince, a ‘B’ Squadron Troop Leader, remembers:

“...Crossing the Biferno Bridge to join the infantry on the night of October 5th, and being greeted by a British officer who was so happy to see us, he broke into tears.”

“...Some of our Squadron had ‘liberated’ some turkeys from a farm, and we still had several live turkeys in our tanks during the battle.”

“...One enemy tank crew had frantically tried to get out through their bottom hatch, but it would not drop as the tank was bellied on the soggy ground.”

“...One of the abandoned German tanks had only 50 km on its odometer.”

“...Enemy tanks firing at us, and my first experience of seeing the fire coming out of the barrel of an enemy weapon.”

Here's how the British United Press reported the battle of Termoli:

Canuck tanks save Termoli from recapture by Nazis

**Dominion Tanks K.O. 14 of Enemy
After forced march rescues Irish Brigade
By William A. Wilson, B.U.P. Correspondent**

Allied Headquarters, Algiers, November 3 - The Canadian Three Rivers Tank Regiment and the Irish Brigade saved Termoli early in October, after a heavy German counter-attack placed the troops who originally captured the town in a precarious position, it was officially disclosed today.

The Irish troops landed by sea under heavy shell fire on the night of October 5-6 after the German attack during the day had reached within 800 yards of the only road out of the town leading to territory held by the Eighth Army and had nearly resulted in the capture of a brigade headquarters.

The Irish troops organized in the town during the few remaining hours of darkness, while hand-to-hand fighting went on around the railway station on the town's outskirts, and themselves counter-attacked at dawn and forced the Germans to give ground.

Troops who fought off the German counter-attack said afterwards: "We thought for sure they were going to put us in the bag and that we'd never get out of Termoli."

Canucks lose four!

While the Irish Brigade was landing from the sea, the Canadian tanks were racing 40 miles across country to Termoli in a forced march during which they pushed their way along muddy roads, through fences and across fields. Some of the Three Rivers Regiment tanks went directly into battle when they reached Termoli to support the Irish attack without waiting even to fill their fuel tanks. They knocked out 14 German tanks for the loss of four of their own.

By the night of the 6th, the combined Canadian and Irish force had restored the situation and regained most of the lost ground.

Won pennant!

After the battle, the Brigade Commander presented a pennant, which displays a shamrock to the Three Rivers Regiment in recognition of the close co-operation between the tanks and the infantry.

“It was almost the first time in the war that I have ever seen anything go exactly as it is supposed to do according to text books”, he said. “But the tanks and infantry co-operated in complete text book style that time -- it was wonderful.”

The battle was the first tank-versus-tank battle of any size, which the Canadian regiment had fought, although it had had considerable experience in infantry support work.

OCTOBER 7 OR 8

Brig. Russell, Commander of the 38th Infantry (Irish) Brigade, presents Major Walker with his Brigade's battle pennant, as a token of their respect for, and appreciation of, what had been achieved. Despite having fought through the northern part of North Africa, it was the first time that such an honour had been bestowed by the 38th Infantry Brigade.

OCTOBER 10

Shortly after the battle, the 13th Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. M.C. Dempsey wrote to Brig. R.A. Wyman, Commander of the 1st Canadian Armoured Tank Brigade, as follows:

I have been speaking during the last two or three days to several units of the 78th Division and the SS (Special Service) Brigade which took part in the operation at Termoli. Wherever I have been, I have heard nothing but praise for the way in which Lt. Col. Booth's Regiment fought. There is no doubt that they played a very important part in bringing about the defeat of the 16th Panzer Division.

All the accounts go to show that, not only did they fight with tremendous spirit, but also with considerable skill ... It must be a great satisfaction to you to know that, whenever a unit of your brigade gets the opportunity to take part in a battle, it invariably does so with the greatest credit.

Source: The Canadian Army 1939-1945, an official historical summary by Col. C.P. Stacey, O.B.E., A.M., Ph.D., Dir., Historical Section, General Staff

OCTOBER 10

**Died of his wounds today:
B-67924 C.W. Davey**

The Termoli tank battle must have been of a classic nature. For, while I was on a gunnery course near Foggia in the summer of 1944, one class went to Termoli to make a study of the action.

Source: W.M. Prince, C.D., O.D.

OCTOBER 22

The TRR moves into positions near Vinchiatiuro in support of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade.

OCTOBER 27

The Eighth Army captures Montefalcone.

OCTOBER 29

Cantelupo falls to the Eighth Army.

OCTOBER 30

Penicillin becomes a wonder drug for casualties of war. And, in Italy, the use of the drug Atebrine against malaria has reduced mortality by as much as 70%.

OCTOBER 31

The Germans had lost their Italian allies, but they had the rain on their side, a steady remorseless deluge that turned the small fordable rivers of summer into fierce-flowing torrents, and made every mountain track a treacherous quagmire.

The Germans were fighting a skilled defensive battle with the aid of the rain: their new ally. Bridges were demolished, culverts were mined, and booby traps were everywhere. Villages were flattened to deny shelter to the Allies... General Montgomery paused to regroup the Eighth Army; while he did so, four German divisions moved up to oppose him.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

OCTOBER 31

By the end of October, the thirteen Allied divisions found themselves facing nearly twice as many German divisions.

The use of divisions is a convenient but not necessarily accurate measurement. By the second half of the war, there was a vast discrepancy in the quality of German divisions, and few if any maintained their authorized strength in men and equipment.

For instance, an infantry division in 1939 contained 16,000 men; by 1943, the establishment had been reduced to 12,000, but the actual strength of most was below that figure. While there is more consistency with Allied divisions, here, too, there was significant differences in the capabilities of infantry, armoured, and airborne divisions.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

NOVEMBER 1

At this time, the Three Rivers Regiment's designation as C.T.R. (Canadian Tank Regiment) is officially changed to: 12th C.A.R. (Canadian Armoured Regiment; eff. August 1943.

NOVEMBER 8

Eighth Army troops reach the Sangro.

NOVEMBER 8

The Allies take Castiglione.

NOVEMBER 15

The guns are silent along the entire Italian front. Ahead: the Gustav Line.

NOVEMBER 15

The Eighth Army establishes a bridgehead of five battalions on the north bank of the Sangro River.

NOVEMBER 15

German glider bomb hits the British troopship Rohna off Bougie, Algeria: 1115 are killed.

NOVEMBER 28

Montgomery declares that "the road to Rome is open" as the Eighth Army launches a heavy attack across the Sangro River.

DECEMBER 1

One of our 30 cwt trucks, returning from Lucera with regimental and AMGOT supplies, overturns near S. Guliano, killing two hitch-hiking village blacksmiths who are crushed to death under the scrap metal they are bringing back for their business. Acting Adjutant, Lt. J.R. Steinbukle orders a Court of Enquiry to investigate the cause of the accident.

At 1000 hrs, there's a message from 13th Corps: the 12th CAR is to prepare to rejoin 1st Cdn Army Tank Brigade. Details to follow. A meeting of all Squadron Leaders is called for 1430 hrs, at RHQ.

Editor's Note

While the Three Rivers Regiment's move from the Termoli area to the Sangro River area does not include any feats of arms, nor add to the Three Rivers Regiment's growing renown, it serves to illustrate the logistics nightmare that often accompanied transfers from one Eighth Army command to another. It was part of the price of being an Independent Armoured Brigade. The other part was often missing our turn to rest and recuperate, in the regular rotation of fighting units at the front.

It should also be pointed out that such regimental or squadron moves, and personal recces, were often punished with artillery, mortar and sniper fire, as the Germans almost always commanded the heights.

DECEMBER 1

Several italians, in civilian clothing, are questioned by the Town Major, Major R.L. Purves, and the I.O., Lt. J.E. Steinbuckle. Some are allowed to go on their way, but others are sent to the Field Security Section for further questioning.

At 1130 hrs, Lt. J.E. Steinbuckle returns from 13th Corps with orders: no move to take place before December 6. Tanks, then,

to be moved on transporters via Campobasso - Larino - Termoli. Transporters to off-load at a specified road junction, where tanks will follow tail of wheeled convoy from there.

The 60th L.A.D. detachment and the Technical Adjutant are informed of the move, so that the inspection of tanks and soft-skinned vehicles can be rushed to completion before the final Movement Order comes through.

At 1600 hrs, Lt. J.R. MacLaughlin leaves for Brigade, to take over duties of Brigade Intelligence Officer.

DECEMBER 2

Eighty-eight German bombers roared in on the port of Bari today, hitting two ammunition ships which exploded, causing huge fires and extensive damage to the harbour, as well as sinking 17 ships... One of the ships hit in the surprise raid, the SS John Harvey, was carrying a top-secret US consignment of 2,000 deadly mustard-gas bombs.

Most of the dead and injured were stricken by gas escaping from the John Harvey as they swam through the water. Many more deaths from the effect of the gas are expected.

Source: Amercian "Chronicle of the Second World War"

DECEMBER 3

Intelligence Sergeant leaves for Corps to obtain maps covering move and new harbour area. No maps available. Rain begins at 1700 hrs, lasting through the night.

DECEMBER 4

Rain all day. Message from 13th Corps, confirming verbal orders: 78th Division to relieve guards of 12th CAR at Refugee Camp in Campobasso.

At 1600 hrs, Recce party leaves with orders to report to G (Ops) 5th Corps at Paglieta, and lay out given regimental area. After which, pending further instructions, they are to meet the tank column on or after 2400 hrs, night of December 6/7.

Lt. J.A. Cameron is despatched to HQ, 1st Canadian Tank Armoured Brigade, to obtain latest situation, codes, frequencies, ciphers, etc.

DECEMBER 5

R.C. Church service is held at S. Giuliano church. Leave parties return from Naples and Bari (scene of December 2 disastrous bombing of port).

At 1530 hrs, an "O" Group of all officers is held in C.O.'s office, where move and administration thereof are discussed. Formal movement order is issued.

Sgt. J.O.R. Barbeau, the Pay Sgt., discovers a suspicious character loitering in town and brings him in for questioning. His papers state he is Yugoslavian, but there are doubts as to his real identity and he is turned over to Field Security at 13th Corps.

Tank transporters arrive. Men pay final visits to the people of S. Guliano who have been exceedingly friendly, to the extent of inviting them to their houses for meals and social evenings.

DECEMBER 6

Message from 13th Corps: 12th CAR will not move to Scerni as ordered, but to Retacciato. Weather: rain and mist.

All vehicles to be stowed by 1200 hrs. Wheeled vehicles and carriers to move off at 1400 hrs. Tanks to be loaded and on way by 1600 hrs.

At 1300 hrs, the 2 i/c Major P.L. Purves, the I.O. Lt. J.E. Steinbuckl, and R.S.M., with pioneers and two provosts, leave for first staging area, and will mark route as a guide for the main movement.

First kitchen lorries arrive.

At 2130 hrs, leading elements of wheeled vehicle and carrier column reach first staging area. Tank-bearing transporters are not expected till much later. They are travelling on their own time, and diversions and Bailey bridges may present some difficulties.

Report received that bridges over the Sangro River have been washed out, and prospects of continuing move as scheduled are slight.

DECEMBER 7

At 0800 hrs, the 2 i/c Major R.L. Purves leaves for 60th Sub-Base area Termoli, for orders re further movement.

At 0815 hrs, tank transporters begin arriving. They were forced to halt during night because of heavy fog in mountains. RHQ tanks arrive at approx. 1400 hrs.

Lt. J.R. Steinbukle recces a back route, by which, transporters are to return to S. Guliano.

At 1500 hrs, Lt. J.A. Cameron, Regt'l I.O., arrives with very little info re move, except that Brigadier wants us forward. All tanks now off-loaded.

At 2100 hrs, message from 13th Corps: Second lift of tanks of 12th CAR to take place December 8. Number of tanks to be lifted: 16. Convoy to move under own arrangement, and to reach specified road junction by 1600 hrs. After off-loading, transporters are to return to Larino; clearing Termoli-Larino road by 0200 hrs. December 9. Said route to be closed to all other traffic in the meanwhile.

DECEMBER 8

French troops enter the front line for the first time.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

DECEMBER 8

Plans for continuation of move are changed: Tanks to be moved by LCT from Termoli and landed at a point north of Sangro River. Wheeled vehicles will travel by road.

At 1900 hrs, second typhus inoculation is given to R.H.Q. and 'A' Echelon personnel by the R.M.O., Capt. J. Brooks.

DECEMBER 9

Our Regiment is placed on one-hour notice of move as of 1000 hrs, December 9. All ranks are to carry extra three days of rations. As ordered by Sub-Base Area: Tanks, carriers and A-1 Echelon will move by L.C.T.s, from Termoli. Two Troops of 'C' Squadron are on one-hour notice effective immediately.

The M.O. is to travel with the tanks, the medical N.C.O. with the wheeled vehicles.

Remainder of personnel is given their second typhus inoculation.

At 1200 hrs, Capt. O.L. Roberts, M.C., former Adjutant of this Regiment and now at A.F.V. branch, Eighth Army, arrives with general info re sector of front we will be interested in.

At 1800 hrs, Lt. J.E. Steinbuckle returns from 60th Sub-Base Area with instructions that move by LCT is not expected to be made, and leaves immediately for Eighth Army H.Q., at Vasto, for further details.

DECEMBER 10

Orders received that our Regiment is to recce an overland tank route to the Sangro River, keeping off the highway as much as possible. Traffic on main road is exceedingly heavy, consisting mainly of engineering supplies and equipment for bridge construction over Sangro.

At 1300 hrs, Lt. Steinbuckle leaves to recce a tank route to the Sangro.

At approx. 1700 hrs, Lt. Steinbuckle meets with Brigadier Richards of the A.F.V. section, Eighth Army, and is told it is possible to land tanks from the LCTs, contrary to a prior opinion that had been responsible for the change of plan. Lt. Steinbuckle informs Brigadier Richards that he does not believe an overland tank route is practical, but that he will complete his recce and make a detailed report to Army HQ. That done, he contacts our regimental L.O., Lt. J.A. Cameron, at 5th Corps H.Q., Paglieta, and jeeps on to deliver messages from the Regiment to the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade Tactical H.Q.

DECEMBER 11

Back at R.H.Q. at approx. 0300 hrs, Lt. J.E. Steinbuckle is informed that instructions have been received to dispatch 12 tanks and 6 carriers to Termoli harbour at 2400 hrs, and to lead 6 tanks and 3 carriers, fully refueled, on to each LCT at first light on December 11 '43. This order is cancelled shortly after, and embarkation delayed pending further instructions.

Later, the C.O., Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth receives the following instructions:

1. Road route cancelled.
2. Proceed via L.C.T.
3. Cancel all previous orders.

Needless to say, situation is becoming somewhat obscure.

Bath parades, to Mobile Bath Unit in Termoli, are held to keep everybody happy, while Movement Control thinks up new and more intricate ways to complicate the relatively simple matter of moving tanks from A to B.

Lt. J.E. Steinbuckle goes on another prolonged journey to 60th Base Sub Area, as personnel there are somewhat self-conscious about the orders they have to pass on. At 0900 hrs, 'C' Squadron tanks board the LCTs, but recce carriers remain on beach.

At 1400 hrs, R.H.Q., minus its tanks, moves to the beach area -- to be central to loading operations in the event they are carried out. R.H.Q.'s tanks join 'A' Squadron. At 2000 hrs, orders are received that Regiment's wheeled vehicles are to proceed to Scerni come dawn, head of column to pass Termoli at 0800 hrs. Tank transporters are to be available to move one squadron of tanks overland. Tanks will load on transporters during the day of December 12, and move during night of December 12 to 13.

DECEMBER 11

LCTs, on which 'C' Squadron tanks are loaded, have not left harbour because of heavy seas.

DECEMBER 12

At 0730 hrs, R.H.Q. tanks reach beach area to await embarkation. No LCTs in port. At 1230 hrs, Col. Booth and Lt. Steinbuckle reach Scerni to find very little accommodation for vehicles, other than a vast and muddy expanse. Lt. A.G. Waldron remains there to supervise marshalling of vehicles as they arrive. The C.O. and the I.O. proceed to 5th Corps at Paglieta for information. None is forthcoming except an order to move ALL tanks by LCTs to a point immediately south of the mouth of the Sangro River. 'A' Squadron proceeds to the beach at Termoli for embarkation.

The C.O. and the I.O. jeep to the debarkation point, south of the Sangro. They find Lt. J.A. Cameron supervising the landing of the last 'C' Squadron tanks. The C.O. and the I.O. then proceed to HQ, 1st Canadian Armoured, where they contact Brig. R.A. Wyman and ascertain that entire Regiment is to move to the outskirts of Lanciano; the area posted by Capt. Alexander, the Brigade Harbour Master.

The country north of the Sangro River is a scene of utter devastation. Much enemy equipment is lying around, and the landscape has been thoroughly ploughed by enemy shells and our own. The marks of furious fighting are everywhere. The lowland on the opposite shore of the Sangro is sown with mines, and civilians are continually being blown to pieces, as they venture into areas they are warned off.

A large Bailey bridge over the Sangro River is being rushed to completion so that it, in conjunction with the Paglieta Bridge, can be used to form a round traffic circuit. This Bailey bridge, is the longest yet built, and a tribute to the speed and efficiency of the Engineering Corps, even under fire.

'B' Squadron tanks have now landed. 'A' Squadron and RHQ tanks are expected to arrive between 1800 and 2400 hrs.

DECEMBER 14

At 0830 hrs, 'A' Squadron tanks, a number from 'B' Squadron, C.T.D.R., stragglers, and R.H.Q kitchen and personnel, begin to disembark from LCTs.

The Intelligence Sgt., L/Sgt. E.J. Luchuck, is partially successful in obtaining maps of the move to Lanciano from 5th Corps. Maps are in short supply.

DECEMBER 15

At 0600 hrs, the new Sangro River Bridge is officially opened for traffic.

At 1000 hrs, our Regiment exits harbour overlooking Sangro River and proceeds to Lanciano (the tanks by way of a ford and the wheeled vehicles by the Paglieta Bailey bridge), where the Unit occupies an almost demolished hospital, too badly damaged to be of any use to the medical services.

DECEMBER 16

Orders have been changed: Regiment will now move to S. LEONARDO area instead.

At 0815 hrs, Squadrons and R.H.Q. move off as scheduled. Tanks are shelled on the way, and are again under shell and mortar fire upon reaching destination.

0950 hrs. Enemy aircraft are over Lanciano in force again. But Ack/Ack drives them off before they can bomb or strafe.

1300 hrs, Ortona area: The Intelligence Officer Lt. J.E. Steinbuckle leaves to Recce a possible tank route to new area via Treglio, and thus avoiding moving tanks over the main St. Vito-Lanciano road, which is under heavy shell fire. Upon returning, the I.O. informs Lt. Col. E.L. Booth that the route is not practical.

At 1800 hrs, it is decided that our Regiment moves to S. Leonardo area, ready to assist the 1st Canadian Division in an operational role.

DECEMBER 17

No more than 100 Panzergrenadiers caused 1500 American casualties at San Pietro.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

Editor's Note

It is an army dictum that, ideally, the attacking force should outnumber or outgun 10 to 1 the defenders of a stronghold. This is something Montgomery abided by at El Alamein, and an advantage our Canadian troops never enjoyed in Italy, even though most all the enemy strongholds were ideally located on the heights. And single-approach heights at that!

DECEMBER 17

Early this morning, enemy aircraft attack area, destroying 7 ammunition and petrol trucks belonging to the 8th Indian Division parked but 150 yards from the hospital. One bomb falls near our Unit area, wounding one of the Recce personnel.

anecdote

Tpr. J.J. Lalande swears he will wear his anti-gas cape to breakfast from now on, as he's found picking himself off the ground after the first alert, with someone's bacon sandwich stuck to his face and his uniform liberally doused with someone else's coffee.

Source: Eric Ladouceur

DECEMBER 17

Today, our Regiment replaces the British 44th Royal Tank Regiment, which has been under the command of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade since crossing the Sangro.

At 0815, all our Squadrons and R.H.Q. move off as scheduled. Tanks are under constant shell and mortar fire.

At 0950, enemy aircraft are in force over Lanciano again, but A/A barrage drives them off before any bombing or strafing can be done.

anecdote

As we lined up for breakfast, a German plane suddenly swooped by, startling Tpr. Pigeon who was satisfying a pressing and basic need a little distance away. Fortunately, the pilot had already dropped his lethal load. But he chose that moment to cast off the bomb cradle, which Pigeon mistook for a bomb -- in the embarrassment of his situation.

The next thing we saw, through the tears in our eyes, was a flying Pigeon aiming for the nearest slit trench, but hampered à la Laurel and Hardy, by pants and braces around his ankles. He just made it ahead of the cradle, as he disappeared from sight in a flash of bare butt.
Source: Bill Main

At 1300 hrs, one 'C' Squadron tank hit a mine, blowing a track and bogie. Another tank was stopped when a shell landed on the rear deck and damaged the carburator and wiring. Both tanks are recovered soon after, under heavy fire, by means of a feint attack using a combination of tanks, artillery fire, and smoke. This drew the enemy's attention away from the immobilized tanks, which are in full view and, till then, under continual fire. The Germans' intent is either to brew them up with a lucky shot into the open hatches, or pave the way for a tank-destroying patrol come darkness.

By 1600 hrs, our three Squadrons and RHQ are in a concentration area one mile west of San Leonardo, while 'A' and 'B' Echelons and Recce remain in the hospital grounds. The order is given to dig slit trenches, as well as trenches under the tanks to make easy access to escape hatches possible. The area is under heavy sniping and shellfire throughout night.

'A' Squadron is informed that it will support the Royal Canadian Regiment in an attack tomorrow, December 18. 'B' Squadron is told that it will support the 48th Highlanders of Canada in the same attack. 'C' Squadron is to remain in regimental reserve.

C.O., Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth and 2 i/c Major R.L. Purves attend "O" Groups at 1st Canadian Division and 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade; and, together with Infantry Commanders, make a detailed recce of tomorrow's attack ground.

Artillery barrage is to begin at 0800 hrs next morning, concentrating on the enemy line for 15 minutes, and then lifting 100 yards every 5 minutes.

The plan of attack is a simple one. Phase one (dubbed Operation Morning Glory) calls for 'B' Squadron and the 48th to

cut the lateral road running northeast-southwest from Orsogna to Ortona, and then to swing right to cut road east of Villa Grande, and exploit wherever possible.

Upon Phase I being completed, 'A' Squadron and the R.C.R.s are to begin Phase II, which is to gain Orsogna-Ortona road, turn right along it and exploit northwards between the road and a narrow-gauge railway to the west, as far as the 'Dundee Crossroads.' From there, they are to patrol towards the town of Ortona itself. 'Dundee Crossroads' is formed by the Orsogna-Ortona road crossing the road between San Leonardo and Villa Grande.

Wounded today:
Lt. J.R. Purcell
Cpl. R. Bower

DECEMBER 18

At about 0300 hrs, a message is received from the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade that the attack is called off. The 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment is to return to harbour at 0500 hrs.

At 0400 hrs, 'A' and 'C' Squadrons are ordered back to harbour, arriving at 0700 hrs.

At first light, the entire area is a bustle of activity. Crews are making final checks of their tanks and stowing pieces of equipment; infantry commanders are making last-minute checks with our squadron leaders.

The covering Canadian artillery barrage, supplied by 9 field regiments, 3 medium regiments and 1 battery of heavy Ack-Ack, begins at 0800 hrs. Some of this seems to be falling short and around us, as the enemy replies to it. There are a few hectic moments, when we try to figure out whether the shells falling in our area are ours, or those of the enemy.

The infantry is around us now, some taking shelter behind our tanks when enemy shells begin landing close. A few of the infantry take shelter behind a shell-torn building. A mortar lands there, and stretcher-bearers move up to tend the wounded.

excerpt

“At 0830 hrs (Zero hour), the 48th Highlanders of Canada, under command of Lt.-Col. Johnston, and ‘B’ Squadron of the Three Rivers Regiment, under command of Major J.P.C. Mills, move forward on a two-company front towards the objective.”

“Major John Clarke and Captain Lloyd Smith (of the 48th Highlanders) led their partially deafened companies forward, with tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment in close support. “The barrage,” Clark said later, “was perfect... The shell curtain carried right to the objective.”

Only five of the twelve supporting Shermans made it through the mud, but they arrived in time to aid Clark’s company in wiping out the sole remaining strongpoint. Twenty-three paratroopers were captured after what the regimental history describes as an “insane flurry of killing.”

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

DECEMBER 18

At 0907 hrs, enemy infantry and four Mk.IV tanks are sighted and immediately engaged by ‘B’ Squadron tanks, but thick olive groves prevent any observation of results. Lt. W. M. Prince, in the right forward troop, loses his tank to a mine on the objective. He and his crew evacuate tank safely, and a medical officer bandages his wounded hand virtually on the spot. Sgt. W.A. Kennedy’s tank, also part of Lt. Prince’s troop, receives three hits, and four of his crew are wounded.



Sherman tank in action

GProgress in the advance is both rapid and well organized. Shelling is extremely heavy and the enemy fires a number of A.P. rounds on speculation. The 8th Indian Division on the left report two PZKw IVs, and one S.P. driven into a gully in their sector and abandoned, although, as far as they can discover, they are in running order.

Lt. J.L. Jemmett's tank troop, left forward, accounts for many enemy infantry, and lends invaluable aid to the infantry. Liaison and co-operation are closer in this engagement than ever before.

The infantry consolidates on the objective, and the Squadron remains with them throughout the rest of the day and night, in a protective role.

Upon word that Phase I has been successfully completed, 'A' Squadron of the Three Rivers Regiment and the R.C.R.s move up to their Start Line, and cross it at 1215 hrs, to begin Phase 2 (Operation Orange Blossom).

At 1230 hrs, 'A' Squadron (TRR) crosses the start line with 'A' and "D" Companies of the R.C.R. No.3 Troop supports "D" Company on the right flank; No.1 Troop supports 'A' Company on the left.

Lt. T.H. Davidson with Troop 1 and 'A' Company of the R.C.R. succeed in reaching the left flank objective, but are recalled

because of unexpectedly heavy enemy opposition in the centre and on the right flank. Lt. T.R. Davison's tank is hit by an anti-tank gun, killing the co-driver, Tpr. R.J. Dion. At the same time, Lt. Davison is seriously wounded by shrapnel, while outside of his tank.

When orders are received for No.1 Troop to retire, Sgt. S.S. Larson places another driver in the Troop Leader's tank, and brings all three tanks back.

Meanwhile, on the right flank, 'D' Company of the R.C.R. is pinned down by an enemy M.G. position and, because of the disposition of the Company, it is impossible for Lt. R. Heggie, of Troop No.3, to aid them in any way. Lt. Heggie is then ordered to withdraw his Troop from that sector, advance and cover the right flank of F.H.Q., and leave the clearing of this sector to Lt. E.H. Sheppard of No.2 Troop. While advancing, No.3 Troop destroys one Pz. Mk.1V that is moving on the right of the right flank.

At 1600 hrs, because of heavy opposition, the R.C.R.'s are ordered to withdraw some two hundred yards back of the original Start Line, and 'B' Squadron is to consolidate with them there. However, No.3 Troop remains forward to guard the right flank till 2400 hrs.

During the withdrawal, Major Smith's and Capt. R.M. Houston's tanks lose tracks in a minefield. The crews of the disabled tanks are evacuated under heavy enemy fire, and the tanks are later set on fire by the enemy.

Sgt. J. Gallagher, Troop Sergeant of Troop No.4, is badly wounded in the face by a sniper earlier in the afternoon.

At approx. 1800 hrs, Capt. F. Johnson is ordered to report to the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade H.Q. At an 'O' Group, Capt. Johnson is informed that his 'C' Squadron will support the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in the attack scheduled for December 19; the objective being to sweep N. and E. to Ortona.

Intelligence Sgt., E.J. Luchuck is instructed to proceed to A-1 Echelon, to obtain a Codex Code Key. Informed that it is in the possession of R.S.M. 'Fritz' Prevost, who is then moving forward with petrol and ammunition, L/Sgt. Luchuck follows the convoy. Enemy mortar fire is encountered. Tpr. D. Greene, fitter, receives serious injury to his left arm. Capt. J. Brook, our M.O.,

happens to be in the area and renders first aid. He then takes the casualty to 2nd Field Ambulance and returns to R.H.Q.

Recent rains and heavy traffic have made the road to San Leonardo almost impassable. Low spots in the road are often the scene of a traffic tie up, and frantic efforts are made to tow vehicles onto firm ground... To make matters a trifle more trying, enemy machine gunners and snipers cover that section of low ground.

R.H.Q. area is continually shelled and mortared during the night and morning.

Killed today:

D-36560 Tpr. R.J.G.I. Dion

Wounded today:

Capt. William (Bill) M. Prince

Lt. T.M. Davison

D-71115 Sgt. John Gallagher

B-74409 Sgt. W.A. Kennedy

C-31524 D. Greene

B-67962 C.J. Simons

B-61841 W.J. Wright

C-58256 E.J. Windle

B-74409 W.A. Kennedy

Tank casualties today:

'A' Squadron: Two tanks knocked out by mines and later 'brewed' by the enemy.

'B' Squadron: One tank damaged in minefield. One tank hit by anti-tank gun.

Operation Morning Glory, an attack by 1st Brigade, supported by the TRR, was launched on the morning of December 18, to drive a deep wedge into the defensive line that the Germans still held south-west of Casa Berardi. The most notable feature of this assault was the meticulous preparations made to ensure effective tank-infantry cooperation. Each of the squadron commanders was detailed to move with the C.O. of the supported battalion, and, to ensure that communications were maintained, an infantry officer was assigned to ride in each commander's tank with a radio set tuned to the battalion frequency. Additionally, troop leaders met with company and platoon commanders to sort out precisely what was to take place during the attack, and how each arm could best support the other.

This preparation proved to be very effective: tanks fired on every building and haystack that could hide enemy machine guns and, on occasions, when soft ground forced the tanks to take a different route than the infantry, communications were such that fire support never faltered.

excerpt

There is no doubt that the TRR was one of the first armoured regiments to master the complex techniques needed for effective battlefield cooperation between tanks and infantry, and these were soon adopted by the Ontario and Calgary Regiments.

Source: From the illustrated history of The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps

By John Martinson & Michael R. McNorgan

DECEMBER 19

At 0600 hrs, Capt. F.W. Johnson is informed that the attack scheduled for today will not take place, due to the fact that Phase 2 (of December 18) has not been completed. Plans are being made for an attack on December 20th. The Loyal Edmonton Regiment, supported by our 'C' Squadron, will be used in the attack.

At 0600 hrs, Capt. L. Maraskas takes No.2 Troop up to the original Start Line, and from there demolishes two enemy machine gun positions. While on this mission, the Able tank of No.2 Troop strikes a mine and loses a track. Lt. N.H. Bier replaces Lt. E.H. Sheppard of No.2 Troop. The crews of these tanks are returned to 'A' Echelon.

Effective 0800 hrs, the password will be: Challenge: Hello - Answer: Happiness. At 0830 hrs, an Orders Group is held between the Infantry Commander and Capt. F. W. Johnson. The objective is to take the road junction and exploit to the outskirts of ORTONA. Zero hour to be: 1200 hrs.

At 1200 hrs, 'A' Squadron again crosses the Start Line in support of the R.C.R.'s, with No.3 Troop as lead troop on right flank, and No.2 Troop as lead troop on the left flank. No opposition is encountered. Tanks and infantry consolidate on the objective at 1500 hrs.

'B' Squadron and the 48th Highlanders remain on their objective throughout the night of December 18-19, and the day of December 19. Shelling is extremely heavy and unremitting. Three flanks remain open, and small forces of the enemy have not been mopped up completely in the rear; thus giving enemy patrols an opportunity to harass. The right flank has remained open due to the failure of the R.C.R.'s scheduled attack of December 18.

DECEMBER 20

With a company on either side of the road, each supported by a troop of the Three Rivers' tanks and preceded by a heavy barrage, the Edmontons set out from the crossroads. Their left flank is "skylined", and has to be protected by an artillery smoke screen. Progress is steady and, by the end of the day, the forward platoons are fighting in the outskirts of Ortona.

excerpt

In peace time, Ortona held a population of approx. 10,000. The Old Town was a group of narrow buildings, crowded together on a steep promontory thrusting out into the sea. At the point of this projection stood the dilapidated Castle, girdled with walls of great thickness and with a massive tower at each corner.

The harbour, overlooked by a more modern esplanade, was devoid of natural inlets. Two long moles had been built far out into the water to form an artificial basin. The modern buildings of the town fanned out east and west over the wider tableland at its southern approaches. They were rectangularly arranged and were usually not less than four stories high. From a distance, the scene was dominated by the towers of the Castle and by the great dome of the Church of San Tommaso.



The German engineers had ringed the southern approaches with mines and demolitions, and had wrecked the harbour by blocking the fairway with sunken vessels and by breaching the two moles at many points... In the town itself, demolitions had been cleverly contrived by the German paratroopers, who were masters of the art of defensive warfare, to divert an attacker along the main street to the Piazza Municipale (town square), which had been selected by the enemy as the "killing ground".

All the sidestreets leading east and west had been blocked by the simple method of demolishing the adjoining houses so that they toppled into the streets. Many kinds of weapons -- machine-guns, anti-tank guns, and mortars -- had been carefully sited on the various floors and in the piles of rubble, creating a murderous crossfire at every corner. The high proportion of automatic weapons issued to the German paratroops made street fighting against them a formidable task.

The street-fighting, which ensued, was subsequently studied carefully by all the Allied armies. On a small scale, it had all the ferocity of the battle of Stalingrad and was the first attempt in the Mediterranean Theatre to use a built-up area as a strongpoint. It is worthy of note that troops of this same 1st Parachute Division employed similar tactics at Cassino (later on).

In the early stages of the fighting, tanks and infantry were able to work together to excellent purpose. A favourite method of clearing houses was for a tank first to breach the wall with a round of armour-piercing shot, and then to follow this with several high-explosive shells for the benefit of the defenders within. The daring employment

of their tanks by the Three Rivers Regiment, under circumstances generally regarded as highly unfavourable by exponents of tank warfare, was very largely responsible for enabling the infantry to gain the Piazza Municipale, and convert the enemy's killing ground into a shambles for his own troops. Firing over the heads of the infantry, the tanks were able to blast the paratroops from the upper floors of houses and give covering fire at every turn. Losses in tanks were unexpectedly light; only three were wrecked beyond repair during the fighting.

Source: Official history "From Pachino to Ortona"

DECEMBER 20

'A' Squadron remains on objective during the day. Considerable shelling and M.G. fire throughout the day.

'B' Squadron and 48th Highlanders are under heavy shelling and sniping during the night of December 19-20, and throughout December 20. By early afternoon, on the 20th, the right flank has been closed by the R.C.R., and by the 'A' Squadron of the 12th C.A.R.

'B' Company, 48th Highlanders, is then ordered to exploit due north along the (railway) track. 'C' Squadron tanks, under Major Frank Johnson, and 'B' Company, 48th Highlanders, under Major Lyon, move to objective. Due to mud, only two of our eight tanks get through: those personally commanded by Major Frank Johnson and Lt. J.L. Jemmett.

The heights on the left are dominated by the enemy, and the track heavily mined just short of the objective. The Germans are well entrenched, and many hidden machine gun positions are taking a heavy toll of the infantry.

Major Johnson's tank destroys a half-track and an anti-tank on the objective.

Due to the strength of the enemy positions, and their numbers, it is decided to withdraw to a defensive position. Our tanks assist in removing the infantry casualties.

'B' Squadron suffers only vehicle casualties. Lt. R. Johnston loses one tank by a mine, and five others are bogged down in mud.

At 1200 hrs, 'C' Squadron, in support of the L. Edmonton Regiment, advances up main San Leonardo-Ortona road, crosses the river, proceeds to San Leonardo road junction, deploys, and advances along road to the objective.

t. T.E. Melvin reports that he cannot go any further on the left of the railroad tracks. He is instructed to proceed along the road from that point. Soon after, his tank is destroyed by a road demolition charge of some 200 lbs. of T.N.T. All crew members are instantly killed. The tank is blown to pieces. Some of the parts, i.e. gear box, tracks, etc., are thrown 60 to 70 yards in all directions. The tank is lifted some 20 feet in the air, coming to rest on its hull, on the opposite side of the road.

Killed in action today:

Lt. T.E. Melvin
D-36692 Tpr. E. Kemp
F-89465 Tpr. J.B. Hughes
A-103251 Tpr. A.J. Rau
K-38655 Tpr. G.B. Steinhoff

The other tanks then proceed to the right of this demolition, and strike the minefield. Three tanks have their tracks blown off in this field: Capt. R.C. Yelland's (Cyclops, previously named Cobalt), Sgt. R. Huard's (Commando), and Sgt. Hector Bilodeau's (Canada).

The remainder of the Squadron continues the advance to the objective: the road junction. Nos. 2 and 5 Troops are sent forward approx. 200 yards to act as Guard Troops. 'C' Squadron is supporting 'B' and 'D' Companies of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment during this action.

During the afternoon, Sgt. T. B. Cuthill, i/c of Recovery tank doing recovery work on 'A' Squadron tanks, is instantly killed, when a mortar lands by the side of his tank. All members of his crew are outside their tank at the time, and all receive injuries:

Injured this day:

M-60299 Pte. P.W. Durant (later dies of wounds)
D-94 Pte. E.A. Hart
H-85033 Pte. N. Wonchaluk

At 1800 hrs, a message from H.Q, 1st C.A.B. states that three German parachutists escaped from Corps night of December 19-20. Probably heading north. They are of over-average height, and may be in Italian uniforms.

excerpt

Among the forty types of anti-tank devices employed by the enemy was the Tellermine, "a flat, cylindrical metal body with a pressure cover to set off the main igniter", which packed a ten-to-twelve-pound charge. Some were encased in wood or plastic, which made them difficult to detect, while others were detonated by a ratchet system, set to explode after a certain number of vehicles had depressed the mechanism.

Source: by Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

DECEMBER 21

'A' Squadron is ordered to withdraw from the objective at first light, as it is drawing enemy shells, and considerable casualties are being suffered by the infantry.

The left flank to Via Grande on the 'B' Squadron front still remains open. Heavy shelling and considerable enemy sniping are reported from this left flank. The day is spent checking the area for mines, and putting bogged down vehicles back into action.

'C' Squadron goes forward at first light in support of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in the advance to Ortona.

Editor's Note

This marked the beginning of what Col. Jefferson, C.O. of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, later called "the town fighting proper."

Plan of attack: Ortona is to be divided into four sectors, numbered clockwise, and 'C' Squadron is to eliminate enemy opposition in the town, by shelling from prepared positions outside town.

No. 1 Troop, under the command of Lt. F. Simard, advances to the lower-left sector of Ortona, in support of 'D' Company of the Edmontons. Our continuous shelling of the outer edges of the town destroys numerous M.G. posts. The Troop is later relieved by No.2 Troop and one tank (Champion) of Field H.Q. No further progress is made in this sector.



Bren carrier

No.5 Troop is then called up to support 'B' Company, and to take up positions on the right side of the road. The Troop manages to penetrate the lower right segment of the town to a distance of about 200 yards. From this position, it is able to successfully shell Sector 2, at first indiscriminately, then only at targets pointed out by the infantry.

No.5 Troop is withdrawn at 1600 hrs, and No.1 Troop, under Lt. F. Simard's command advances along the road to a position approx. 100 yards south of the first square. Lt. Simard's tank strikes a mine, which damages its left track. Working under fire, Lt. Simard and his crew manage to hook a tow chain to another tank of the Troop, and are able to have it towed to a place of safety.

At 1930 hrs, Capt. Frank Johnson is informed that his 'C' Squadron, in support of 'B' and 'D' Companies of the Edmontons, is to attack and capture the first town square from the right flank.

During the day, the R.C.R.'s are being continually harassed by a sniper in a house, and the infantry are unable to deal with him. At 1615 hrs, the infantry commander approaches Major R.L. Purves, and requests that a tank be used to eliminate the nuisance. The tank, Vanguard, with Lt. J.R. Purcell acting as crew commander, and the infantry officer riding in the co-

driver's seat to direct the fire, proceed to destroy the house with H.E. At a given signal, a section of infantry rushes the wreckage, but finds no resistance left.

'A' Squadron joins Companies of the P.P.C.L.I. to protect them against a possible counter-attack from Ortona. A-1 Echelon moves up. A-2 Echelon remains in Lanciano area. R.H.Q. area is occasionally swept by enemy M.G., and shelling continues heavy. And 'B' Squadron's left flank remains open.

DECEMBER 22

Capt. J.A. Armstrong, 60 L.A.D., and Lt. Lamb, of attached Engineers, perform a remarkable job of tank recovery and mine clearing.

'A' Squadron moves down main road to Ortona and harbours on the outskirts. Heavy shelling. D-36464 L.Cpl. W. Turnbull receives shrapnel wounds in the leg and is evacuated.

At 0730 hrs, No.5 Troop of 'C' Squadron, supported by one tank from F.H.Q., advances and shells the right sector of ORTONA.

**Killed in action today:
D-36464 L.Cpl. W. Turnbull
Sgt. J.W. Marchand
Tpr. W.W. Warren**

excerpt

Very few residents were still in Ortona in December 1943. The Germans had removed large numbers of able-bodied males to work as slave labour in northern Italy or in Germany, while a great many others had fled to the mountains... The harbour had been wrecked, blocked by sunken vessels and the moles breached.

And the paratroopers had sealed all side streets with rubble, in order to channel the attackers along the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. The central square, Piazza Municipale, had been turned into a killing ground; surrounding buildings filled with machine-guns, anti-tank guns, and mortars carefully sited to lay down a murderous cross-fire... "Everything before Ortona," General Vokes later commented, "was a nursery tale."

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

At 0830 hrs, No.5 Troop enters the first main square. Tanks are so positioned that they are able to cover all streets leading into the town and eliminate sniper and M.G. positions that are harassing the Infantry.

The Town Major for Ortona appears again on the scene and enquires of Capt. F.A. Johnson whether the town is now clear. He had made his first appearance the day before, and would have entered the town, had he not been stopped by Capt. Johnson. This remained a daily occurrence till the town was finally cleared.



Sherman tank at Ortona

Army Film Unit representatives, photographers and correspondents now also appear on the scene and calmly begin to take pictures of the Infantry-Tank assault. Sgt. J.W. Marchand's tank is covering the main street through town and is supported by Capt. F.W. Johnson on the left. Enemy M.G. and sniper fire is exceptionally heavy in this sector, and Sgt. Marchand receives a neck wound from a sniper's bullet. The Sgt.'s crew informs Capt. Johnson of the casualty and he leaves his tank to assist the wounded man to a place of safety and renders first aid. This scene is captured by photographers, all unknown to the parties concerned. But Capt. Frank Johnson is later asked by the other officers of his Squadron, whether this scene, so coolly portrayed, was put on for the benefit of the photographers, or an actual scene under fire.

Recollection

The scene was captured by an Army photographer, and the photo subsequently appeared on the front page of an English tabloid. Actually, the main square was too broad to be captured in one photo. So the photographer snapped two photos to take in the whole scene. With the result that Sgt. Marchand is shown walking in the first photo, and being treated for his wound in the second. Even the sniper on the roof of a building across the square can be seen in the first half.

Source: Regt. war diary and personal reminiscences.

At 1200 hrs, No.2 Troop is ordered to advance up the main street. They move up approx. 200 yards and are stopped by a pile of rubble, only 25 yards from the 2nd town square. Because of persistent sniping and enemy grenades thrown from concealed positions, the Infantry is unable to go forward and, at 1700 hrs, the tanks are withdrawn.

At 1900 hrs, an "O" Group is held again at B.H.Q. of the Edmonton Regt, and plans for a direct assault up the main street of ORTONA are made for tomorrow. Burial services for Tpr. W.W. Warren are held at LANCIANO today. Tpr. Warren died under mysterious circumstances while in the town on the night of December 21/22.

DECEMBER 23

Lt. N.H. Bier's Troop and Lt. R.H. Heggie's Troop, of 'A' Squadron, are ordered into the town of ORTONA: Lt. Bier in support of a Company of the Seaforth of Canada, and Lt. Heggie in support of a Company of the L. Edmonton Regiment. Both tank Troops remain in town throughout the night.

At 0800 hrs, 'C' Squadron's No.4 Troop, under the command of Capt. R.C. Yelland, advances up the main street of ORTONA from first town square, crosses the rubble pile that held up the advance the previous day, and enters the second Main square. Opposition from a concealed A/Tk gun holds up further progress for three hours. This A/Tk gun is finally destroyed by the tank commanded by Sgt. Roger Huard, at 1100 hrs. The remainder of the Squadron and the Infantry are now able to move forward and occupy the Square. The Squadron is withdrawn at 1630 hrs.

Other casualties suffered during this action:
D-36407 Cpl. Paul Lachance (wounded)
D-36516 L.Cpl. A.P. Carrière (wounded)
C-6250 Cpl. M. Walker (killed in action)
A-4419 Tpr. D.A. McPherson (died of wounds later)
D-36055 Sgt. J.W. Chapman (died of wounds later)

DECEMBER 24

'A' Squadron relieves 'C' Squadron in the fighting in ORTONA, and support the Edmontons and Seaforths in the attack. The Troop commanded by N.H. Bier, working with the Seaforths, is held up all day by determined opposition and impassable streets. Lt. R.H. Heggie, with 'B' Company of the Edmontons, attempts a push along the esplanade, but is held up by huge piles of rubble.

When the enemy, in strong positions in upper stories of the buildings on the esplanade, begins to use "Beehives" and flame throwers on both tanks and Infantry, both pull back to the start of the esplanade. And our tanks spend the remainder of the day systematically shelling these buildings.

Major E.W. Smith and Capt. Maraskas are severely wounded; and Tpr. A. Shaver is killed, when an enemy H.E. (high explosive) shell strikes a pile of 6-pounder Anti/Tank ammunition. Major Smith and Capt. Maraskas are outside their tanks discussing tactics with Infantry Commanders at the time.

Killed in action:

Tpr. A. Shaver
B-83414 Tpr. J.J. Donaldson (Getting out of tank)

Wounded in action:

Major E.W. Smith
Capt. Maraskas
G-899 Tpr. R. Duguay (with Major Smith)

The Three Rivers Regiment's Nos.2 & 3 Troops are withdrawn from the town at dusk, and No.4 Troop enters and remains on guard in the Square.

'B' Squadron area is heavily shelled during the day, and is under continual sniping. But work on recovery of bogged tanks goes on, and Squadron reorganizes.

'C' Squadron is relieved by 'A' Squadron inside ORTONA, and the entire Squadron carries out needed vehicle maintenance.

At 0830 hrs, Major R.L. Purves receives a message from Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth to despatch three R.H.Q. tanks to an ideal position from which to shell the esplanade, as well as a tunnel and fortified buildings along the beach. It is decided to send the CO's, the Adjutant's and the I.O.'s tanks on this shoot. R.H.Q. tanks, assisted by a troop of RCA 17-pdr A/Tk guns, are able to render valuable support to the forces fighting in the town.

Editor's Note

Some of this 'supporting' fire was so dangerously close and creeping closer, that Captain F.W. Johnson corrected the C.O.'s coordinates, redirecting part of the firing out to sea.

Source: Frank Johnson

At 1515 hrs, reinforcements for the Hasting & Prince Edward Regiment are heavily shelled in the area, and suffer many casualties.

Major Purves is told that the R.H.Q. tanks are to remain in the area, where they can again assist by firing on targets chosen by the forces fighting in the town.

Special Christmas fare and NAAFI rations for the Regiment will not be drawn and consumed, till such times as the regiment has been relieved; thus giving the Squadrons a chance to partake of them when the situation has eased.

Bread, Christmas cake, oranges and apples are delivered for Christmas Day consumption. But no mail has arrived yet, and Christmas in Italy promises to be a gloomy one.

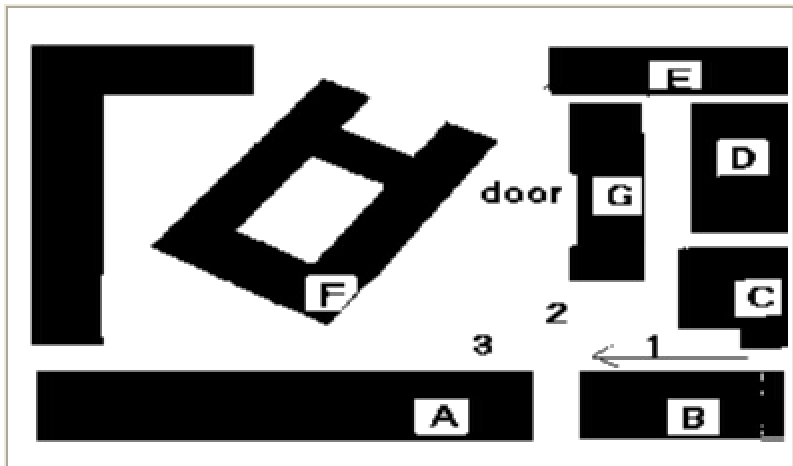
War or no war, Christmas Eve must be celebrated. That, at least, is the thought of Major R.L. Purves and his tank crew. Dusk finds all members huddled inside tank, drinking the next day's ration of rum, and consuming a Christmas cake received by one of the men. For a brief moment, war is forgotten. Faces look relaxed. But, a few minutes later, the celebration is over. One party goes back to wireless watch, while the other does vigil over a lone tank harboured on a lonely road bracketed by enemy machine gun fire, mortars and shells.

DECEMBER 24

Re the assault and capture of the Piazza Municipale in Ortona: A lieutenant of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment wrote this account of his platoon on the day before Christmas 1943.

excerpt

“We had worked forward till, at about 1000 hrs, we held the houses marked A and B on the diagram (below). Here we could observe the piazza municipale and exchange fire with German paratroopers in the church (F) and school (G), and the blocks marked (D) and (E).



“I had a plan that showed that the only entrance to the school was the main door facing the church, and a small door at the far end. We could not get through the main door without coming under murderous fire from the church (F) and the school (G) itself. The alley toward (E) was a deathtrap, its entire length being swept by fire from both (D) and (E). Our anti-tank guns could have knocked a hole in the end wall of the school large enough for a man to squeeze through, but it was essential to obtain fire superiority, to win the firefight, before any movement took place. This was going to be tricky; the enemy knew all our likely positions, and completely dominated the square.

“We decided to make a direct assault on the school, supported by tanks, with smoke if necessary. A troop of three Three Rivers Regt. tanks was made available and, between us, we worked out a plan to cope with the enemy machine guns.

“One of our problems was the huge block of rubble obstructing the entrance to the square between (A) and (B). This was overcome by the tanks discovering a satisfactory by-pass. Zero hour was set for noon.

“The first tank came rumbling up the street to position (1). At a range of 30 yards, it blasted down the side of the school with its 75mm gun. This tank then moved to position (2), a second tank to position (3), and a third to position (1). The tanks at (2) and (3) covered the church with machine gun and 75mm fire, while the tank in position (1) covered the street leading to (B). The firefight was won and the stage set for my platoon. So much dust had been kicked up by the gunfire and falling masonry that smoke was unnecessary and, without further preliminaries, the first section dashed across the street, struggling over rubble; entered the school; and started clearing the building. The tanks knocked down part of the front wall of the church and silenced the machine gun post there.

“After what seemed an interminable time, though it probably was no more than a half hour, the section leader signaled all was well. I ordered a second section to move to the house at (C) to control the back of the school and bring fire down the street toward (G). I hoped, in this way, to maintain fire superiority once the tanks withdrew.

“With the remaining sections, I dashed across to the school. Everything was under control. The section leader had his men at the windows and, though he had not as yet searched the cellars, the main floor was clear. There was no upper story. The section leader said he’d had little difficulty clearing out the few Germans left in the school. We had caught them by surprise and the tank shells had driven them from the exposed end of the building.

“Once the section had gained a foothold, it moved rapidly forward, using grenades and tommy guns, clearing each room as it advanced. The enemy put up little opposition and succeeded in evacuating the building from the rear exit, taking most of their casualties. We searched the cellars rather gingerly and found no Germans. The sun was beginning to set by the time the building was cleared; and the tanks, which were running out of ammunition, were ordered to withdraw.

“In this action, my platoon sustained only one casualty. Success could not have been obtained without the invaluable assistance of the (TRR) tanks.”

Source: Lt. Murray O'Dell's "Bogie Wheels" booklet

DECEMBER 24

Wounded today:
G-899 Tpr. Rémi J. Duguay

Editor's note

On this Christmas Eve, Major Alex R. Campbell of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment penned the following poem:

Prayer Before Battle

When, 'neath the rumble of the guns,
I lead my men against the Huns,
It's then I feel so all alone and weak,
And scared.
And oft I wondered how I dared
Accept the task of leading men.

I wonder, worry, fret and then – I pray,
O God who promised oft
To humble men to lend an ear,
Now in my troubled state of mind
Draw near, O God, draw near,
Draw near.

Make me more willing to obey.
Help me to merit my command.
And if this be my fatal day,
Reach out, O God, Thy helping hand
And lead me down that deep, dark vale.

These men of mine must never know
How much afraid I really am.
Help me to lead them in the fight,
So they will say, "He was a man."

Major Alex Campbell was killed in action on Christmas Day, leading a gallant and successful charge.

DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day. Area heavily mortared. (Nice folk, these Nazis)

'A' Squadron -- Nos.2 & 3 Troops again in town. No.4 Troop, in town all night, returns to harbour area.

No.2 Troop, still operating with the Seaforths, advances only slightly in the left half of town. No.3 Troop, supporting "D" Company of the Edmontons, assists the infantry in an attack on the large square, astride the main road, in the north end of town. Entrance to this square is blocked by a rubble pile, which forms a natural tank obstacle. Lt. R.H. Heggie manages to get a hull-down position on this rubble and supports "D" Company. The company, unable to consolidate, withdraws at dusk. The Three Rivers Regiment's No.2 Troop returns to harbour; No.3 Troop remains in town overnight.

Our 'B' Squadron, with the Royal 22nd Regiment, is playing a holding role. A call for assistance from the Indian Division, operating on the left, is answered by our Squadron. The Indians are going into the attack, with VIA GRANDE as their objective. Lt. R.H. Johnston's Troop and Capt. D.K. Dawson's, advance to the high ground in area, and engage targets on the left flank. From this position, they are able to render valuable aid, destroying several M.G. positions; and one Pz Kw MkIV tank is knocked out by Capt. Dawson's gunner.

'C' Squadron is again in Ortona in support of the Seaforth H. of C. No.1 Troop, under the command of Lt. F.W. Simard, advances to the 2nd Main Square, turns left, then, proceeds to the hospital-church Square. These buildings and the square are shelled, and covering fire given, while the Infantry advances and occupies the buildings. The tanks remain in the square, answering calls for fire. At 1230 hrs, No.2 Troop, under the command of Lt. H.S. Bigelow, relieves No.1 Troop and remains in square; providing a firm base for the Infantry. Troop is withdrawn at 1630 hrs.



During the morning and afternoon, our R.H.Q. tanks inflict considerable damage on the esplanade, tunnel and beach buildings. The fort on the extreme end of the esplanade also receives a severe pounding by our 75's.

R.H.Q. personnel celebrate Christmas in a manner befitting the occasion. At the supper table, turkey is the only item missing; but seven chickens and two pigeons prove inspired substitutes.

Sgt. L.E. McCauley, of our Regimental Medical Section, is seriously injured in the face, when the ambulance, in which he is riding, strikes a Tellermine, and turns over.

Also wounded today:
A-4177 Tpr. Lorne E. McCauley

DECEMBER 26

At 0805 hrs, Lt. R.H. Heggie of our 'A' Squadron, and "D" Company of the Edmontons, move over the rubble pile which has been lowered during the night by pioneer troops, and advance into the 2nd Town Square under cover of smoke. The plan of attack is for our No.3 Troop to cover left side of square with fire, and for the Infantry to advance and clear all buildings on the right. At 0845 hrs, 'Able' tank of No.5 Troop is hit by a portable anti/tank gun sited in the second-storey window of a building on the right of the square. Two members of Troop are wounded:

B-89006 J. Gallagher (co-driver)
D-36654 J. Morrison (driver)

Their tank is mechanically impaired and is withdrawn to the rubble pile, in order to evacuate the casualties. It remains in this position and continues firing until its 75mm goes out of action, and the .30 ammo is exhausted. At this point, the crew evacuates and helps fasten a towing cable to the tank. But the rubble pile makes it impossible to salvage it. Meanwhile, the remainder of the Troop continues firing on the left of the square till their ammo is also spent, when they are relieved by No.4 Troop, under the command of Lt. D.O. Knipfel.

Lt. Knipfel's Troop has been in the square approx. 30 minutes, when his 'Able' and 'Baker' tanks are hit by the same type of A/Tk gun. Then, under cover of smoke, the enemy succeeds in bringing up another A/Tk gun on the left sector of the square and, this time, knocks out 'Able' tank of No.4 Troop. The tank is evacuated.

DECEMBER 26

Major R. Houston, 'A' Squadron's O.C., informs Captain F.W. Johnson, 'C' Squadron's O.C., that the Battle Captain's tank, commanded by Sgt. J.W. Chapman, has been immobilized by a "Beehive" presumably thrown from a second-story window; while proceeding north on the Esplanade (between the waterfront buildings and the Adriatic Sea). He needs help. Capt. Frank Johnson, realizing that the crew cannot be safely evacuated under the intense fire, suggests that a tow cable be attached and that the tank be towed back to safety.

Reminiscence

Tpr. R.D. Gareau, of 'HQ' Squadron, was in the area with his scout car. He volunteered at once to help rescue the tank and its four-man crew. A plan was quickly made as follows: a tow cable was attached to the front of my tank. Gareau then offered to walk on the sheltered side of the tank with the free end of the cable, and attach it to the rear of the disabled tank.

While my tank advanced the 40 yards to the disabled tank, I covered the second-story windows with my .38 S & W pistol, as the buildings were too close to be covered by my tank's Browning machine guns. Gareau, meanwhile, in a cool-headed manner, attached the tow cable and, when the tank reversed, walked beside it as it pulled the disabled vehicle to the relative safety of the square.

A "beehive" had been lobbed on top of Sgt. Chapman's tank, seriously wounding Chapman. He was given immediate first aid and

evacuated. He unfortunately died of his wounds two days later. Following the battle, a recommendation was made that Gareau be awarded the MM for his selfless action. Not only had he possibly saved three lives, he had certainly aided in the recovery of a tank under fire. But the recommendation was turned down by the Regiment's C.O., on the grounds that Gareau had merely done his duty.

Source: F.W. Johnson

Editor's Note

For Major Frank Johnson, this incident was particularly disturbing, as he and Chapman had been Boy Scouts and close friends in Three Rivers before the war and, in addition, had played basketball in the same league.

Killed in action:
Sgt. Chapman's

Wounded:
A-4244 Cpl W.J. Steep
D-36514 Tpr. C. Stowe

No.2 Troop of 'A' Squadron, under Lt. W.H. Bier, supporting the Seaforths, advances along the left sector of town to the square bordered by the school and church. At 1500 hrs, No.3 Troop returns to the square from which "D" Company of the Edmontons had withdrawn earlier in the day, and supports 'A' Company of the Edmontons with fire, from the rubble pile. This attack is successful.

Major J.C.P. Mills spends the day huddling with officers of the P.P.C.L.I., and making a recce of the town.

R.H.Q. tanks again fire on targets along the esplanade and beach area during the morning. Contact with the advance Company of the Edmontons is kept by No. 18 set. But the Company is unable to observe effectiveness of fire.

'C' Squadron again enters town in support of the Seaforths. No.1 Troop, under the command of Lt. F.W. Simard, advances again to the hospital-church square. It's learned that the enemy has infiltrated during night, recapturing the hospital and church buildings. Supporting fire is given to the Infantry, and H.E. fire is brought down on these buildings. By 1200 hrs, the Seaforths have reoccupied them.

During the afternoon, Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth goes into town and contacts the C.O. of the advance company of the Edmontons. A definite fire plan is arranged. At 1420 hrs, a smoke signal will be triggered from the town. Five minutes later, a flare will be sent up, which will be the signal to bring fire to bear on all buildings and movement to the right of the smoke signal.

Lt.-Col. Booth returns to R.H.Q. to observe and direct fire.

At 1415 hrs, Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth instructs the Intelligence N.C.O.L./Sgt. E.J. Luchuck to recce a suitable harbour area for 'B' Squadron; then contact Major R.L. Purves to have moves laid on; since Major J.C.P. Mills, the O.C., is on recce in Ortona. Capt. R.F. Major is informed of C.O.'s instructions at 1545 hrs, and arrives in new harbour area at 1600 hrs.

Our 'C' Squadron's Nos. 4 & 5 Troops are left in the square to prevent the enemy from re-infiltrating and recapturing the square. This is the first time that 'C' Squadron leaves tanks on guard in the town during the night.

Also wounded today:

A-4244 William (Bill) J. Steep

D-36654 J.D.H. Morrison

D-36514 C. Stowe (second time)

D-71158 J. Dupuis

D-76216 L.M. Anderson

DECEMBER 26

The last major battleship the Scharnhorst, was sunk, by the British Royal Navy, at the Battle of the North Cape.

Source: National Post, Canada

DECEMBER 27

The Three Rivers Regiment's 'A' Squadron remains in the harbour area. 'C' Squadron moves up again into Ortona. No. 2 troop acts in a static role and gives sporadic covering fire as required. While in the town, a tank of No.2 troop strikes a mine but is recovered.

At 1100 hrs, the hospital doors suddenly open, and over 100 civilians pour out, unharmed. They had remained underground

during the whole three days the Squadron had continually shelled the building.

During the night December 26 to 27, L/Cpl. J. Collins receives shrapnel wounds in the leg while on guard duty.

R.H.Q. tanks are active again during the morning. A quantity of H.E. and A.P. are fired into the tunnel near the beach, where it is reported the enemy has a large-calibre gun secreted. Personnel from the Army Film Unit are in attendance.

At 1500 hrs, Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth arrives with instructions that tanks are to fire from 90 to 100 rounds into the fort at the extreme end of the esplanade, as it is believed that there is considerable enemy opposition in that sector.

At 1540 hrs, enemy aircraft are quite active. Twelve M.E. 109s fly in low over our area. They are engaged by our A/A defences and driven off, but not before they release several bombs. No pertinent damage is reported.

Killed in action:
L/Cpl. J. Collins

DECEMBER 28

'A' Squadron remains in harbour area. Vehicle maintenance is carried out.

Strong rumours of a German withdrawal from Ortona during the night. At zero hour (0830), the P.P.C.L.I. attack, supported by 'B' Squadron. After removing heavy demolitions and minefields, the attack clears to the outskirts of town. The Infantry and tanks advance with little opposition. Exploitation beyond that point is delayed by blown bridges. And our 'B' Squadron, minus Lt. R.H. Johnston's Troop, withdraws to the south end of town.

Two Troops of 'C' Squadron move once again into town. But, when they learn that the enemy has withdrawn, they also pull back to their harbour area.

At 1030 hrs, three M.E. 109s fly again over R.H.Q. area. They drop bombs, and machine-gun; but no casualties are suffered by our Unit.

**Killed in action today:
C-58432 W.W. Warren (age: 24)**

**The following are wounded by shells later in the evening:
Lt. R.H. Johnston
B-19037 Sgt. A. Abbott
K-45274 R.J. Watt**

DECEMBER 28

excerpt

Canadian troops fought their way through a wall of fire to oust a German division from this Adriatic seaport today. Flame-throwers have been rushed to the 200,000 Germans now estimated to be fighting to save Rome.

Like so many Italian towns in the wake of warring armies, Ortona is a ruin. But the shattered and burnt-out wreckage of buildings is ideal for the German de-fenders -- in this case, hardened Nazi Waffen-SS -- who had to be winkled out one by one by infantrymen with tank support.

However, Ortona fell late this afternoon. The remaining Germans have retreated to hill positions northwest of Ortona, which has been a key objective in the Eighth Army's drive along the eastern coast of Italy. It is the eastern anchor of Field Marshall Kesselring's defensive Gustav Line.

But the Allied advance is slow. Each valley running from Apennines to the sea has to be fought for. There are hundreds of valleys, and the few roads available have been heavily mined by the retreating Germans. Heavy rain and snowstorms are other problems.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

Editor's Note

Not only have the roads been mined; they've also been as always prebracketed for very effective shelling.

DECEMBER 28

At 1030 hours, three enemy fighter-bombers (M.E. 109s) drop bombs on, and machine-gun, our area. No casualties suffered. During the night, our 'C' Squadron sends two troops into

Ortona, to discover that the enemy has withdrawn lock, stock and gun barrel.

Ortona's streets were not what anyone would call good tank country, but the TRR gave stalwart support throughout the battle. For the most part, tanks served as mobile pillboxes, firing HE rounds to knock down walls and destroy machine-gun posts; while suppressing snipers with machine-gun fire.

They provided cover when the infantry had to venture into the streets, brought ammunition forward, took out casualties, and on at least one occasion deliberately crashed into a building to crush an anti-tank gun crew. All the while, they had to contend with anti-tank guns, mines and snipers who took great relish in picking off crew commanders or crews foolhardy enough to dismount. They were also plagued by grenades, and 'beehive' charges lobbed from the upper stories of ruined buildings.

The Germans finally withdrew on the night of December 27, bringing to an end the most ferocious battle the Canadians had yet experienced. In a week, the TRR crews had become masters of the art of armoured warfare in built-up areas.

Source: John Marteinson & Michael R. McNorgan, authors of an illustrated history: "The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps."

DECEMBER 29

'A' Squadron is now at rest and doing tank maintenance.

'B' Squadron is again in action supporting the P.P.C.L.I. The Infantry advances across the gully beyond Ortona, to a position approx. one and a half miles north. No serious opposition. Contact with elements of 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade. Some shelling and mortaring during night.

All tanks now harboured in a designated area. This area is shelled during the night, but no casualties.

After eight days of continuous and fierce fighting in the town of Ortona, the enemy has been cleared from it, and there's a steady stream of civilians moving along the road back to town. Some are carrying a few personal belongings, and others come in hopes that something salvageable remains amid the wreckage of their homes.

DECEMBER 29

excerpt

From a distance, Ortona has the appearance of an old Roman ruin. 'The Turret(t)', a TRR publication, accurately describes Ortona as seen on the day our troops forced the fighting through and beyond the town.

"Mingled with the bodies of the Nazi soldiers, in the rubble of what was once a cluster of homes, shops and offices called ORTONA, are the bodies of civilians trapped and held in the town by the German refusal to evacuate other than 'according to plan.'

12th C.A.R. tankmen, trained to fight their machines in open country in the early stages of battle, lose tanks to cunningly concealed guns hidden in every available building on the outskirts of town. Land mines leave some trackless. Snipers from upper stories 'pot' without let-up. Machine guns take toll of supporting infantry.

Then, the picture changes. With the adaptability for which Canadian troops are famous, 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR) tanks teach the enemy the price of evacuating Ortona 'according to plan.'

House by house and street-by-street, our machine guns take Ortona. 75's blow upper stories to bits. Tanks deliberately crash into cellars, back out again and advance, leaving crushed German gun crews in their wake.

"Now I know what Stalingrad must have been like," a tank commander is heard to say.

Source: regimental War Diary

DECEMBER 29

During the period December 15 to December 29, the Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.A.R.) suffers the loss of 12 killed and 21 wounded. Five Shermans are destroyed and a dozen more damaged.

excerpt

The infantry later described the contribution of the tanks as "invaluable in spite of the cramped surroundings." They were used by the attackers, both singly and in small numbers as assault guns or

as pillboxes. They were also used to carry ammunition and mortars forward to the fighting troops and to evacuate wounded over bullet-swept ground. An appreciative Col. Jefferson described their work as “wonderful.”

Source: D.G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

The Canadians had proved themselves the finest forged offensive weapon.

Source: military correspondent, The Times of London

DECEMBER 29

Relieved by the 11th Canadian Armoured Regiment, our whole Unit moves into billets in various sections of Ortona. A massive overhaul begins: new tanks arrive to replace those that were destroyed, and new personnel to replace the dead and wounded.

Even in the midst of war, some courtesies prevail, if only for a few. From War Diary:

Message from H.Q., 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade: All officers are cordially invited to “open house” at Brigade Tac HQ, New Year’s Day, between 1400 and 1600 hrs. Brig. B.H. Hoffmeister, D.S.O., and officers of HQ, 2 C.I.B. at home New Year’s Day, from 1600 hrs, to Officer Commanding and Squadron Commanders of the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR).

DECEMBER 31

Civilian casualties (in Italy) from Allied air raids in the last three months are 6,500 dead and 11,000 wounded.

Source: American “Chronicle of the Second World War”

anecdote

Waiting on the outskirts of Ortona for a call to duty that never came during the week of vicious house-to-house fighting, our Recce Troop elected to billet on the ground floor of a two-storey huddle of attached homes for a number of good reasons:

- 1) The ‘lean-to’ back stables and the second floor provided some protection against the sporadic shelling or mortaring;
- 2) the farthest end had already been demolished by shell or bomb; so, on

the lame theory that lightning doesn't strike the same place twice, it was some further assurance of safety; and
3) there were several barrels of untapped wine sharing the living space.

After judiciously sampling the fermented grape, we set out to add to our creature comforts and found a heater in the ruins of a building nearby. But an enemy fighter-bomber chose that exact moment to pay us a visit.

We dropped the heater and scuttled for the basement. After the 'all clear', we returned to find the heater's outer shell badly cracked. "Not to worry," said ex-miner Bill McCallum, "I'll find me some cement and repair it like new." He soon came back with a box of grey powder. "Are you sure it's cement?" asked a dubious Vern Norring. "Trust me. I know my cement," said ex-miner McCallum.

Some time later, in spite of sporadic mortaring, the stove was repaired and a fire lighted. We crowded around in happy anticipation. But, with the welcome warmth billowed a thick yellow smoke that sent us scrambling -- choking and coughing -- for the fresh air outside.

The 'cement' was old sulphur. But a salvo of mortars sent us scurrying right back into the yellow billows for as long as lungs and eyes could hold out. And this frantic to-and-froing went on till the mortaring stopped.

Only the fact that we couldn't see for gushing tears kept us from finding and drowning Bill "I know my cement" McCallum in one of the wine barrels. The emptiest one, of course.

Source: Jack Partridge

anecdote

Somewhere in the ruins of Ortona one of us discovered a cache of apple cider. This, because it followed hard on more than 8 days of continuous fighting, led to a revel that lasted till just short of 'veille.' With the result, that, if anyone did hear the call to a 'surprise' church parade, no one answered it. Not one, that is, from the ranks of revellers that rumour, and the sounds of revelry, had swelled to include virtually everyone within earshot. Lt. W.A. Street, having thoughtfully arranged for this parade before the "toppest brass", was so incensed by the 'underwhelming' attendance, that he tracked down the cache of applejack and diluted it to the last drop with petrol. A rather poor mixer.

Source: Fernand 'Tony' Gendron

WINTER 1943

West of Ortona: Our Regiment's troops bring food, by backpack, on skis or snowshoes, to isolated villages.

Concentration Area: Lanciano for the winter. Each Regiment of the First Canadian Armoured Brigade has a long period of holding static positions during the monotonous phase of the Italian campaign.

Source: 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade War Diary

DECEMBER 31

It rains all night, and snow is reported in the Lanciano area.

War Chronicles 1944

JANUARY

In 1944, RCAF Flight Lieutenant Richard 'Dick' Audet destroyed 5 German planes in 10 minutes... This year, British and Indian troops, with some Canadians, finally drove the Japanese invaders from Burma... Lt. Gen. Henry Duncan Graham Crerar was appointed commander of the 1st Canadian Army – the largest field formation ever assembled by Canada.

JANUARY 3

The whole town of Ortona has been under continuous shelling for three days now. Today, the buildings occupied by our R.H.Q. are practically destroyed, resulting in the death of 1 man and the wounding of 8 others. So H.Q. is moving into a large Catholic church already occupied by 'B' Squadron.

Killed today:

G-37078 Tpr. Neri J. Pitre (died of wounds)

Wounded today:

M-17389 A.F.M. McCallum

D-46811 R.J.A. Poulin

M-63293 A.J. Williams

B-61393 M. Davidson

C-6252 E.C. French

B-38007 R. Harrison



JANUARY 4

**Wounded today:
D36689 J. Kennedy**

JANUARY 5

Editor's Note

It should be mentioned that success in war, particularly that of a tank unit, is and has to be the result of teamwork. And many members of that team are attached from other specialized units such as fitters from the 60 L.A.D. who worked with our own, sappers from the Royal Canadian Engineers, and signalmen from the Signal Corps.

The following CP Cable dispatch from war correspondent Douglas Amaron will help illustrate the importance of the attached personnel and our own specialized tradesmen.

Canadian tank recovery men who bring Shermans in under fire, and make repairs in a battlezone workshop, are putting back into action a high percentage of tanks disabled by enemy fire or mines, or bogged down in mud.

During the Moro River battle, which ended when Canadian troops captured Ortona...a large number of tanks were recovered, and many of them have returned to action.

Night and Day

Battle experiences of the 'repairmen' match those of the troopers inside the tanks. Work goes on night and day, up forward and behind the lines, with a different situation each time a tank has to be recovered.

During the first day of Ortona street fighting, a (TRR) tank was disabled when it ran over a mine.

Repaired Under Fire.

Snipers were only 100 yards away. But, with one recovery tank providing cover with its guns, another moved up alongside; and the damaged track was repaired. A (fighting TRR) tank only 200 yards down the street was set on fire (brewed) while the repairmen were working.

(By the way,) the recovery men don't stick to Shermans when bringing in disabled tanks. German tanks, too, are sometimes salvaged, chiefly for their armour, which is useful in repair work.

JANUARY 8

**Wounded today:
M-27283 Alex Melnychuk**

Editor's Note:

The mention of someone wounded, even though no particular action is mentioned, may surprise you, the reader. So I should explain that we were always within range of enemy gunfire, even when in reserve, resting and refitting.

This was the result of our C.O.'s considered policy of keeping us alert, and so less likely to be caught off guard or in too much of a cluster upon return to the so-called front line. This policy paid off with a few virtually inevitable exceptions, if you noted the many shellings or mortarings we did survive without casualties.

JANUARY 15

At 0400 hrs, our 'B' Squadron moves from Ortona to "Tank Village." The plan is to reach bridge at 0445 hrs, when covering fire from Artillery will begin and last twenty minutes. At 0505 hrs, 'B' Squadron completes takeover from the 14th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Calgary).

JANUARY 16

The H.Q of an Indian Infantry Brigade moved into "Tank Village" this morning, and intensive shelling of the village began at once and continued without let-up for 48 hours, when the Infantry Brigade H.Q. is moved out.

JANUARY 16

Lt.-Col. E.L. Booth, Commanding Officer of the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR), prepares a plan with the Brigade Commander of the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade to provide maximum tank support during the attack by the Cape Breton Highlanders Regiment and the Perth Regiment across fords onto high ground overlooking the Arielli River.

The attack is to be preceded by a heavy artillery barrage. Our 'C' Squadron will support the Cape Breton Highlanders on the right, and our 'A' Squadron will do the same for the Perth Regiment on the left.

At 1600 hrs, 'A' and 'C' Squadrons move to Assembly area. 'A' Squadron tows the Perth Regiment's Anti-Tank Platoon, and their guns, to Phase II objective. A-I Echelon moves to Ortona and occupies areas vacated by our 'A' and 'C' Squadrons.

JANUARY 16

Having contacted Lt.-Col. Johnson of the 48th Highlanders and determined the extent of cooperation desired, Capt. D.K. Dawson and Capt. D.C. McCallum of 'B' Squadron move forward to an O.P. and survey the route over which a planned diversion is to take place.

JANUARY 16

All long day, Kittyhawks bomb enemy guns and positions heavily.

JANUARY 17

At 0530 hrs, No. 4 Troop of our 'B' Squadron, with Lt. N.M. Krolman in command, carries out a diversion to attract the enemy's attention to itself in the 48th Highlanders' area. This is successful and Troop returns to harbour at 0630 hrs.

Two companies of Perth Regiment begin their attack on the axis of the road through the ford. At 0600 hrs, 'A' Squadron's Nos.1 and 2 Troops move into position along the crest of the ravine overlooking the road to the ford. Nos. 3 and 4 Troops stand in reserve, with Anti-Tank guns hitched on. As soon as visibility permits, the leading Troops thicken up firing into the valley and on the ridge in front, taking on known enemy machine gun positions and possible tank, anti-tank and other positions in and around the various buildings along the line of advance and on the objective.

No.2 Troop Leader, Lt. N. Bier's tank (Atlas) hits mine and loses a track and a bogie. Crew remains with tank until it's recovered three days later. And Cpl. R. Bower, No.1 Troop, loses two fingers, when his hatch is blown shut by a mortar blast.

At 1515 hrs, the remaining tanks, with Capt. R.C.Yelland in command, are ordered down the road leading into the valley – to cover the Engineers and Infantry sweeping the road for mines. The Perth Regiment's attack has bogged down. And the Engineers are unable to clear the stretch of road (to the ford and beyond) of mines; because, even though they have adequate tank support and covering fire, the enemy has had sufficient time to find cover and mortar the area from undetected positions; and the mortar fire has increased considerably in density and accuracy.

On the right, the Cape Breton Highlanders' attack, with our 'C' Squadron in support, bogs down for all the same reasons. One 'C' Squadron tank also hits a mine, blowing a track and bogie. Another tank is stopped when a shell lands on its rear deck and damages its carburetor and wiring. Though under heavy fire, both tanks are recovered. This is achieved by means of a feint attack by our other tanks, aided by Artillery fire and smoke, which drew the enemy's fire away while the recovery proceeded. The damaged tanks were in full view of the enemy and, up to then, under continual fire aimed at 'brewing' them up, and/or preparing the ground for a tank-destroying patrol after dark.

Shortly afterwards, No.3 Troop, under command of Lt. R. Heggie, is ordered down the same road, in an attempt to locate and silence enemy snipers and MG positions. This is found to be impossible, and the Troop is ordered back.

The tanks return to their original positions, and Nos. 3 and 4 Troops, standing in reserve, continue to shell, and machine-gun the enemy, as directed by the Infantry and our own observation. At 1600 hrs, Lt.Col. E.L. Booth, together with the C.C.R.A. and our 'A' Squadron's O.C., tee up another attack at 1630 hrs, supported by a heavy artillery barrage. Lt. D.O. Knipfel's No.4 Troop, with Capt. R.C. Yelland in command, is assigned the task.

The attack proves successful. Part of a Company of the Perths reaches its objective. And our 'A' Squadron crosses the first ford and gets into position on the high ground, where it can cover the Perths to the best advantage possible. It is decided not to tow up the anti-tank guns until the Infantry positions are consolidated. The whole of our 'A' Squadron consolidates on its feature by 1700 hrs, and prepares to stay the night.

Although detailed plans are made to renew attacks come

morning; at 2300 hrs, our Regiment is ordered back to Ortona by 0500 hrs.

Wounded today:
Lt. J.R. Purcell.

JANUARY 18

At 1000 hrs, our 'A' Squadron is ordered back to the front line -- to a defense position with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. Squadron is in position by 1300 hrs.

JANUARY 26

Martial law is proclaimed in Rome.

JANUARY 30

After the Sangro and Ortona battles, Field Marshal Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, KCB, DSO, stated: "...If you want a job done, get the Canadian Armoured Brigade."

FEBRUARY 12

Monte Cassino: Fierce opposition stops the US 34th Division less than 300 yards (270 metres) short of the town of Cassino.

excerpt

The Anzio landings were designed to break the deadlock at Cassino. (But)...the Allies have been forced back three miles to their final defensive line.

Source: American: "Chronicle of Second World War"

FEBRUARY 14

Lt. Col. E.L. Booth is promoted to Brigadier and leaves us. The Regiment's new C.O. is, very temporarily, Lt. Col. J.F. Bingham. A member of the general staff, he has come to serve out his mandatory one month in action, in order to qualify for promotion to brigadier.

Editor's Note

As it happened, we spent that month recouping and refitting. At any rate, our Regiment enjoyed a long, deserved rest.

excerpt

For 700 years, the great monastery of St. Benedict has dominated the Liri valley. Today, it is a shattered ruin after a day and a night of blasting by 600 tons of bombs dropped by 142 B-17s, B-25s and B-26s.

The destruction of the historic monastery will be controversial. Yet there is no controversy among Allied troops fighting for every yard of ground in the valley below and Allied commanders are anxious to break through to relieve the five divisions coming under renewed attack at Anzio.

It was Lt-Gen Sir Bernard Freyberg, whose newly formed New Zealand Corps has the task of assaulting the heights, who asked for the monastery to be bombed on the grounds that it was being used as an observation post for German artillery. US generals were against bombing; and the decision was taken only when General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, the supreme Allied commander in the Mediterranean, flew over the monastery and thought he saw radio aerials. He was wrong. The monastery was not occupied by Germans, though they had been there to help the monks remove books and manuscripts for safekeeping in the Vatican.

After the aerial bombardment, the New Zealanders and the 4th Indian Division began their assault tonight -- only to be repulsed by German paratroopers. Ironically, the Germans are now moving into the wrecked monastery, which makes a better defensive position.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

FEBRUARY 28

Seriously injured in an accident today:

A-43007 Sgt. Leslie A. Riley
H-64959 J.A. Warren
B-60712 David L. St. Andrews
B-62171 H.R. Chenoweth

Editor's Note

We had accidents, inevitably, through our six years of active service; and the one mentioned above hurt the greatest number in a single incident. But we were, in the main, a lucky regiment. As Napoleon is reputed to have said, when an officer was recommended to him for promotion to the rank of general: "know he's a good officer; but is he lucky?" We were both good and lucky! And our good fortune was perhaps most in evidence when our 'A' Squadron's return to billets in Worthing, after participation in one of the Spartan Schemes, was delayed, and a land mine exploded in that very area in the short meanwhile. Also, when our Regiment lost the chance to be the support tanks on the Dieppe Raid. The Calgary Regiment 'won' the toss, when our respective C.O.s flipped a coin for the honour. And, while the loss of even one man is a tragedy, the fact that we only had 7 killed and some 15 wounded in the nightmarish, street-bound 8 days and nights of the Battle of Ortona, borders on the miraculous.

FEBRUARY 29

Plans for Second Front overshadow Italian campaign. As the rain teems down on frustrated Allied troops before Cassino, a major question mark hangs over the whole Italian campaign. "Overlord", the invasion of Normandy, is due to take place in May. "Anvil", the diversionary landing in the south of France, is timed to coincide with the main thrust in the north.

anecdote

At Villa Grande, Italy, in January 1944, nine chickens somehow managed to crowd into a 'recycled' 4-gallon gas can, over a fire that we of 4 Troop, 'B' Squadron had going. The chickens also came plucked and cut into serving portions, which was very co-operative of them indeed. So we of 4 Troop decided that, to be fair, and so that each happy diner would get his fair share, we would eat whatever got stuck on the end of a stick, as we took turns poking blindly into the steaming can for a piece to eat.

I realize that the odds are overwhelmingly against an outcome such as mine. But yours truly did truly skewer nine necks, one after a blessed other. And it was, a case of eat chicken neck or chicken out. Believe it or not, I acquired a taste for chicken necks that persists to this day. Guess it qualifies as an acquired taste, like black olives.

Source: Orton Geiger

MARCH 11

Lt. Col. J.F. Bingham's promotion to brigadier is announced. And he leaves the Regiment after only 25 days.

The Regiment welcomes its third C.O. in less than a month: Lt. Col. Fernand Caron. Lt. Col. Fernand Caron began his career with the Three Rivers Regiment as a lieutenant in 1940. He has, since then, climbed every rung of the ladder within the Regiment: troop leader, squadron adjutant, Squadron leader, regimental 2 I.C.

Editor's Note

Lt. Col. F. Caron will command the Regiment to the end of the war. He is only 25 years of age when he becomes C.O. of the 12 C.A.R.)

MARCH 15

Monte Cassino: The third Allied offensive opens with a bombardment, which destroys Cassino town, killing 140 civilians and 96 Allied soldiers. In four horrific hours today, 775 Allied bombers flattened this pleasant valley town. The attack represented more than two aircraft for every one of the 350 German defenders -- five tons of bombs for each soldier -- such is the Allied determination to break the deadlock.

excerpt

The Allies reckoned that no one could have survived the bombing -- let alone the 195,969 shells that followed. Yet the New Zealand 6th Infantry Brigade came under intense defensive fire when it clambered over the debris into the town. A new assault is also being made on the Cassino monastery.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MARCH 20

excerpt

The new commander of the First Canadian Corps, Lt-Gen Edson Burns, better known to his troops as "Smiling Sunray" because of his dour, unchanging manner -- is a formidable intellectual and the complete antithesis of his predecessor, Lt-Gen Henry Crerar. The outgoing, dynamic Crerar has left for Britain where he will join

General Montgomery in D-Day planning. Lt.Gen. E. Burns commanded the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, part of the 1st Canadian Corps.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MARCH 23

Monte Cassino: The unsuccessful Allied assault, spearheaded by the New Zealand Corps, is called off.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MARCH 25

excerpt

After a week of bitter fighting around this bomb-shattered town in central Italy, the Allied offensive, aimed at dislodging the Germans from the monastery, has been called off. Last night, the Gurkha, Essex and Rajput Regiments were evacuated from their position on Hangman's Hill -- 440 yards from the monastery. The losses sustained in this abortive attack have been severe. The 2nd New Zealand Division has lost 63 officers and over 800 men dead, wounded or missing, while the 4th Indian Division lost 1,000 men and 65 officers (dead, wounded or missing).

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MARCH 30

The 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade is relieved of its operational role on the Adriatic Sector of the Eighth Army front and moves across central Italy to a training area on the Volturno River, near Viticuso. Here it is first under the direct command of Eighth Army, then, later, of the 13th Corps. Preparations are put in hand immediately for an intensive course of infantry-cum-tank training, for the part the Brigade is to play in the forthcoming operations against the Gustav and Hitler Lines.

The Brigade is directed to set up infantry-cum-tank schools, and to work in conjunction with 78th Division and 4th British Division. Initially, the Brigade is informed that it will support 4th British Division in the actual attack. Later, this decision is changed, and the Brigade is placed under command of the 8th Indian Division. The 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade has

previously fought with this Division on the Adriatic coast; and Major General Russel, General Officer Commanding, appreciating the value of the friendships then formed, asks our Brigade to support his Division.

The 8th Indian Division is not due to move from the Adriatic coast till about April 20, so that, until that time, training continues with the units of the 78th Division and 4th British Division.

For this purpose, the 11th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Ontario) is affiliated with the 4th British Division; and the 14th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Calgary), with the 78th Division.

MARCH 30

The Three Rivers Regiment (12th CAR) is at this time in a counter-attack role on the Cassino front, and is only able to carry out a very short training program with the 4th British Division. And it has no opportunity to work with its affiliated 21st Indian Infantry Brigade of the 8th Indian Division. This proves a definite handicap for both formations in action.

APRIL 1

anecdote

Italy -- Prata Sannita -- North of Cassino. Little activity in the regimental area of Prata during this April Fool's day. Of course, the day did not pass without the usual bit of tomfoolery. No.1 Troop of 'C' Squadron managed to get the Duty Officer, Lt. W.J.A. Wallace and S.S.M. Tom Gilmore involved in a prank. A lifelike dummy, carefully collapsed at the roadside, prompted the two to rush down to render first aid. They came back looking rather sheepish.

Source: 'Chicken Anon'

APRIL 1

Our Regiment, minus 'A' Squadron and No.3 Troop of 'B' Squadron, is still concentrated in the PRATA-SANNITA area.

'A' Squadron has moved to area under command of the 78th British Division. No.3 Troop of 'B' Squadron has taken up positions under command of the 10th Brigade, 4th British Division.

The Three Rivers Regiment (12th CAR), minus 'A' Squadron, is now under command of the 4th British Division and is to support plan of Division Command; ensuring the security of Belvedere feature, and preventing enemy penetration into the Rapido valley within the Division's sector.

Editor's Note

The 1st Canadian Infantry Division has asked over and over again for the rightful support of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade. We learned to fight so efficiently together, and -- as a result -- with far fewer casualties all 'round. But the Eighth Army H.Q. knows when they are on to a good thing, and seldom relent. We have pulled so many chestnuts out of the fire for them!

Tasks assigned: 'A' Squadron (TRR) under command of the 78th Division, and 'C' Squadron (TRR) in support of the 12th Infantry Brigade, are in a deliberate counter-attack role. Our 'B' Squadron, minus No.3 Troop, is in Regimental reserve and ready to move to fire positions overlooking the approaches to St. Elia in the event of an enemy breakthrough in that sector.

It is now receiving routes forward, to be able to reach selected fire positions within 6 hours of order to move. RHQ Tac. is to move to the INFERNO valley. Our RHQ tanks are to remain with our 'B' Squadron.

Administration: Our 'A' Squadron's "F" Echelon is to be supplied with food, water and petrol by the 12th Brigade, while the 10th Brigade will do the same for No.3 Troop of 'B' Squadron. Remainder of Regiment will be supplied by the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC).

R.H.Q. Tac is to send a jeep to AQUAFONDATA daily for petrol, water and rations. RHQ is to be established at Inferno Valley, and maintain one (radio) set on continuous listening watch as of now.

At 0430 hrs, 'A' Squadron (TRR) reaches appointed area. Inferno Track in very bad condition, especially from Cervaro. Four tanks are casualties, having gone off the road and turned over. All are recoverable. Immediately upon arrival, a very thorough job of camouflage is undertaken; as area is on a forward slope -- in full view of the enemy observing from MONASTERY HILL and MOUNT CAIRO.

excerpt

This track from Cervaro on, was nothing more than an improved mountain path, and was half washed away in places by the heavy rains. Four of 'A' Squadron's tanks toppled off the track, but were recovered next morning by a New Zealand recovery unit. 'A' Squadron's harbour was in full view of enemy positions on Monastery and Castle Hills, as well as Mount Cairo. Source: Capt. Rennie H. Heggie, TRR

At 0500 hrs, two tanks of No.3 Troop, 'B' Squadron (TRR), reach area, but are not allowed to proceed to destination until last light 1-2 April, as they would be under enemy observation. The remaining tank of the troop -- a road casualty -- will not be brought up until dusk.

At 0800 hrs, Major R.C. Yelland, O.C., 'A' Squadron, TRR, leaves to liaise with the 78th Division. Returning at 0930 hrs, he proceeds to recce an area at rear of the CASSINO MONASTERY. Here, one Troop of his Squadron is to take over three diesel-powered Shermans of the 20th New Zealand Armoured Regiment.

Rather than risk having the enemy learn that tanks are opposing him in this sector, N.Z. tanks will remain in position. Our Regiment (12th CAR) will only relieve the crews, switching them every three days.

excerpt

The 20th New Zealand Armoured Regiment had been able to move Troop up the precipitous path from the village of Cairo, on the Rapido Valley floor, to a position some 1500 yards northwest of the main Monastery buildings. It had been decided to leave the tanks in this position, and to have any relieving formations provide crews for them.

Accordingly, at 2200 hrs, on the 1st of April, the personnel of No.1 Troop of 'A' Squadron, with Troop Leader Lt. Coristine, moved by jeep-train to relieve the New Zealand crews. The Infantry in this sector were men of the 38th (Irish) Brigade of the 78th Division. Supplies for the Troop had to be brought in after dark by jeep-train via Cairo and along the paths that barely clung to the mountainsides. These paths were well registered by the enemy, and the slightest noise brought down a hail of mortar fire.

Source: 1943-45 History of the TRR by Rennie H. Heggie

anecdote

It fell to my lot on two occasions to truck the three crews taking over the three New Zealand tanks in static and secret position on the mountainside. We went, of course, by night and not all the way. I drove at full speed along the valley floor, as far as the first and last sheltering bluff. And all along, the Germans were close enough to hear my motor in the relatively quiet darkness, and greet us with a brace of well-bracketed shells. The relieving crews would proceed barefoot the rest of the uphill way, so as not to alert the Germans to their presence and to the 'sitting' tanks. As for me, my return -- again at top speed and with the relieved crew aboard -- was urged on by exploding shells, thankfully far enough behind my tailgate

Editor's Note

Only 3 men manned each of the three tanks for the 3-day shift, as there was no need for either drivers or co-drivers. Only the crew commanders, gunners and loader-operators were required for the 3-day shifts.

APRIL 1

Little activity in the Regimental area of PRATA during the day. At 1700 hrs, the usual softball game is played and sports training carried out. This time, it's Sergeants vs Corporals, and a very fast and furious game it is. Corporals win.

At 1915 hrs, the film "Hurricane" is shown outside the Auxiliary Services tent. A high wind with a flurry of rain in our area gives the film a realistic touch.

No.3 Troop, 'B' Squadron (TRR), now rejoined by the missing tank, leaves for forward area with guides of the 12th Infantry Brigade. Approx. one and one-half miles along the road from Terelle, an enemy patrol is intercepted by the infantry and driven off before it can begin sowing mines along the road.

After dark, Lt. Col. Caron and L.O., Lt. D.O. Knipfel return thoroughly exhausted from receiving our future positions up in the mountains above VENAFRO. "We have been in the Inferno," they said. "There you are continually under enemy observation. It's very hot, and the road (The Inferno Track) cuts through solid rock. It is a mountain climber's dream. A killer!" Lt. Knipfel's Daimler could not manage its hills.

Notes from our Intelligence Officer, 'Ace' Beach:

Sometime in January, the French forces had hammered out a bulge in the much vaunted Gustav Line to the north and northeast of Cassino toward Belmonte and Atina. But, in so doing, they exposed themselves on three sides to direct enemy observation and fire. The normal route from Aquafondata to S. Elia, which they held, was of little use: to drive it by day was suicide, and not much safer by night. Yet the several battalions holding the vital ground had to be supplied.

So French engineers tackled the job and "The Inferno Track" was born. The line of the Track was a natural gorge and canyon, which ran down from Aquafondata to Pratalungo and Portella. On Italian maps, it was called the "Inferno" and the name was well deserved. The Track must have been a veritable fury of foaming rapids and steep waterfalls, when the snow on the Apennines melted in the spring. Only desperate army engineers would consider putting a road through such a place. The French engineers blasted, drilled and chipped their way down the sheer rock gully.

Huge camouflage nets were hung across the canyon to hide the working men from prying eyes on Monte Cairo. The road went through: a master piece of improvised army engineering, and a nightmare for the drivers thereafter. All windshields were ordered either down or completely muddied over, and vehicles allowed passage through at 2-min. intervals. Little else but jeeps attempted passage, as hardly anything else could climb back up its steep gradients or edge through some of the narrow slits between the 100-foot-high walls of bare rock.

Where the Track ran along the edge of a precipice, in full view of Mt. Cairo, huge nets were hung across the way like the curtain on a vast stage. There were three such curtains along the Inferno Track, and numberless treacherous spots. Finally, you reached a more respectable stretch, a hundred feet wide and sand-bottomed. This was known as Hove Dump. Here, ammo, petrol and various other supplies were parked.

It was "Jeep Head" for the long convoys of jeeps, which assembled here each night to take supplies to the men above Cassino, in front of Terelle, and below Belmonte. Also, all along the Inferno Track, wherever the roadside widened, were foxholes and tents occupied at various times by French, British, Polish, Anzac, Canadian or American troops. Quite a spot this

Inferno, where our 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR) tanks held the line for 12 infernal days.

APRIL 2

At 1000 hrs, R.C. services are held in the chapel of the PRATA monastery, and C. of E. services in the Echelon area. At 1230 hrs, Capt. Ian Grant leaves, with a small advance party, for the laying up (i.e. rest & tank clean up) area.

At 1330 hrs, 'C' Squadron proceeds to Staging Area, arriving at 1600 hrs.

At 1350 hrs, Lt. H.D. Beach, and Signals Officer Lt. N.S. Benvie, leave for 78th Division H.Q., and then for a further recce of an R.H.Q. area in the INFERNO VALLEY. Area considered not suitable.

At 1430 hrs, L.O. arrives at R.H.Q. from H.Q., 13th Corps, seeking information re the Three Rivers Regiment's planned moves. Henceforth, applications for moves and timings are to be made to H.Q., 4th British Division by 1600 hrs on the day preceding moves.

Normal activity at our 'A' Squadron, taking care not to be seen by enemy O.P.s on neighbouring heights. Area shelled twice during day: Road junction shelled by approx. 6 guns, estimated to be 210 mm. Twenty shells land in immediate area from 0500 to 0515 hrs. Two jeeps are damaged. Same junction shelled between 1500 and 1515 hrs. Approx. 35 shells. No damage reported.

At 2000 hrs, R.H.Q. ordered to move at 0630 hrs, 3 April.

Schedule as follows:

Reveille	0530 hrs.
Breakfast	0600 hrs.
Move	0630 hrs.

APRIL 3

Advance elements, including small working party from Echelon, leaves on time. Our Regimental Orderly Room and Officers' kitchen to follow at 0900 hrs. Main party of R.H.Q. delayed by 30 minutes, finally moving off at 0700 hrs. Portions of INFERNO TRACK under direct enemy observation. So windscreens and any smooth surface that might cause a glare or reflection are

covered over or removed. Party arrives in assigned area at 0900 hrs. Area is convenient but rather crowded. We are within 100 yds of the 4th Division H.Q., with protection of high hills on either side. But the gorge is narrow, and vehicles have to be strung out along floor at convenient places and camouflaged.

Schedule and restrictions re INFERNO TRACK:

By day: two-way access for individual vehicles at 5-minute intervals, with windshields lowered to prevent sun-flashes. No convoys of more than ten vehicles permitted.

By night: from dusk to 2200 hrs, -- individual traffic either way, from 2230 to 0200 hrs -- west to east -- only convoys or individual vehicles; from 0300 hrs to first light -- individual vehicles only, either way.

The NORTH Road must be cleared of all traffic by first light. When a break-down occurs and quick recovery is not practical, and if vehicles following it are in danger of being observed and subjected to shellfire come daylight, said vehicle is to be abandoned and pushed over edge.

S.P. Guns (possibly 105 mm) shell road junction near 'A' Squadron from 0700 to 0710 hrs: 15 H.E.s. No damage reported.

At 0800 hrs, Major R.C. Yelland and Capt. F.W. Simard leave to recce area where a second troop of our 'A' Squadron tanks are to be positioned to support the 38th Brigade in the village of Cairo, and as a reserve force. Role: to support forward troops in event of counter-attack, and to cover possible enemy tank approaches in 78th Division area.

More shelling from 1000 to 1030 hrs: approx. 35 H.E.s from guns presumed to be 210 mm (pretty large). No damage again this time.

excerpt

Throughout the whole of this period, which the Three Rivers Regiment spent in these positions, the shelling was frequent and fairly regular. 'A' Squadron's area came under fire from 210s more than once. In spite of this, casualties were light: two killed and one wounded.

Source: 1943-45 History of the TRR by R.H.Heggie

APRIL 3

At 1400 hrs, remainder of R.H.Q. (kitchen and Orderly Room) arrives at INFERNO. Within minutes, the kitchen staff is busily preparing a meal for a hungry mob.

APRIL 4

Italy -- Inferno -- 1100 hrs -- Sgt. Bill Alderson arrives at the regimental headquarters in Inferno to act as Administrative Sergeant of R.H.Q.

At 1400 hrs, Lt. Col. F.L. Caron and Major G.J. Gray leave to attend an Orders Group at HQ, 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade.

'A' Squadron's area of the harbour is shelled three times during day: First, 12 large-calibre mortars land with no resulting damage. Then, 8 H.E.s from a 210 mm gun. Finally, 6 H.E.s from the same gun. No damage inflicted.

At 2200 hrs, No.1 Troop of 'B' Squadron leaves Staging Area, arriving at assigned position, with the help of guides from No.3 Troop, at 0100 hrs. During the move up, Capt. D.K. Dawson's tank is hit on the road by a 155mm shell. Most of the kit stowed there is lost, and the top plate is pushed into the sponson. But no injuries. Upon arrival, Capt. Dawson liaises with the 6th Surrey Regiment and calls on The 12th Brigade re counter-attack role.

Intercommunication by both line and wireless has been established between our 'C' Squadron and the 12th Brigade. Water rationing reminiscent of Sicilian days is back, because water trucks are not allowed up. Water is transported by jeep in "boiled out" petrol cans, and ration is 100 gallons per day for our whole squadron.

APRIL 5

At 0900 hrs, Lt. Col. F.L. Caron recce's a possible infantry-tank training area. Suitable area found south of VITICUSA.

At 0930 hrs, Maj C.L. McDougall recce's area of Aquafondata for his Squadron.

At 1000 hrs, Lt. N.S. Benvie goes to 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, where he procures four no.19 radio sets and sixteen 170 amp/h batteries.

At 1300 hrs, 'B' Squadron minus 2 Troops, plus RHQ tanks move to AQUAFONDATA. Role: to be regimental reserve and prepare to move to fire positions overlooking NE and NW approaches to ST. ELIA. Will be supplied with food, water and petrol by the 10th Infantry Brigade. Our 'A' Squadron area is shelled from 0610 to 0615 hrs: fifteen 105 H.E.s from two suspected self-propelled guns. And from 1920 to 1930 hrs: ten 210 mm H.E.s. No casualties.

APRIL 6

At 0700 hrs, Brig. W.C. Murphy arrives to breakfast at our RHQ. After which, Lt. Col. F.L. Caron accompanies him on an inspection of the camp area, as well as of our 'A', 'B' and 'C' Squadrons.

At 0800 hrs, about 30 Poles storm into our 'green valley' to pick out suitable gun sites.

At 0930 hrs, our 'B' Squadron (minus 2 tps), plus RHQ tanks, moves to infantry/tank training area.

At 1000 hrs, two officers, one from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, and the other from the Fusiliers Mont-Royal Regiment, come to see Lt. H.D. Beach about situation in this sector.

At 1100 hrs, Sgt. 'Bill' Alderson arrives in the Inferno to act as Admin. Sgt. for Regimental Headquarters.

At 1700 hrs, Lt. N.S. Benvie procures 700 feet of much needed telephone cable from the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade. Signal personnel under Lt. Benvie have been trying all day to establish W/T communication between our squadrons. Only 'A' and 'B' Squadrons are contacted. The four tanks with Capt. F.W. Simard and Lt. N.H. Bier are shelled for the third time today: about twenty shells of heavy stuff. Well-prepared foxholes prevent casualties.

APRIL 7

At 0900 hrs, Lt. Col. F.L. Caron visits G.I. (Brit.) Div., 100 yds down the valley, to arrange Infantry-cum-Tank training in 'B' Squadron area. The 6th B.W. are the first Infantry Regiment (of the 12th Brigade) to undergo the training.

At 1000 hrs, Major G.J. Gray (2 i/c) arranges with AQ 4th (Brit) Division to procure enemy "beehives" for training purposes.

Editor's Note

A "beehive" was an explosive charge that the enemy could attach to our tanks magnetically; either by throwing it and hoping its 3 magnets would grab on, or -- more often -- by applying it directly by hand. And its 'shaped' explosion would penetrate even a turret's thick armour.

At 1100 hrs, the 13th Corps' Camouflage Officer calls on our C.O., Lt. Col. F.L. Caron to discuss methods for better camouflage. Our Regiment is to receive 35 tank camouflage nets.

Enemy continues to harass our 'A' Squadron's 4 forward tanks, lobbing some 30 heavy H.E. into area.

Thanks to the initiative and ingenuity of Sgt. S.S. Sarson, 'A' Squadron also completes a series of relatively successful experiments, using non-magnetic 'paints' to protect tanks against the enemy's "beehives".

At 1600 hrs, Lt. N.S. Benvie finally establishes W/T communications with all our Squadrons and 'B' Echelon. For the latter, it was necessary to post two intermediate stations on mountaintops.

At 1830 hrs, Lt. D.O. Knipfel, now "Camp Commandant" at RHQ, issues instructions that men are to be properly dressed at all times; beds to be neatly folded, and kits properly laid out in the morning. Communal fire for heating water in the morning, to be lit by last guard. Supper to be served at 1730 hrs, instead of 1815 hrs.

At 2200 hrs, 2/4 Hamms (28th Bde, 4th Brit Div) move into the line, and the seven tanks with Capt. D.K. Dawson, and Lts. H.

Brady and M.R. Badgerow are now in support of the above-mentioned regiment.

APRIL 7

Wounded today: Sgt. Hector Bilodeau (loses an arm)

APRIL 8

The 10th Brigade (4th British Division) was relieved last night, and the 28th Brigade (4th British Division) took command of the sector. So our 'B' Squadron's 7 forward tanks are now under command of the 28th Brigade.

Our C.O., Lt. Col. F.L. Caron attends a day-long 13th Corps discussion at VENAFRO, with Squadron Leaders A/Major C.L. McDougall, R.C. Yelland and F.W. Johnson. Others in attendance: C.O.s and O.C.s from the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, the 6th Armoured Division (Brit), the 25th Tank Brigade, the 2nd New Zealand Division, the 4th (British) Division, and the 8th Indian Division. The conference was open at 1000 hrs by Lt. Gen. Kirkman, G.O.C. of the 13th Corps.

Main points for discussion were:

- 1. The role of the tank**
- 2. Infantry/Tank intercommunications**
- 3. Inf/Tank cooperation, including:**
 - (a) Tank recognition (distinguishing features of Sherman);**
 - (b) Recognition of own infantry - by flag or 77 smoke grenade (its distinctive white smoke);**
 - (c) Target indication for tank shoots -- by 3 bursts of Bren tracer;**
 - (d) Tankman indication of enemy A/T gun: A shot in general direction after attracting attention of Infantry;**
 - (e) Intercom between tank crews and Infantry - via the Infantry telephone on rear of tanks, the no.38 wireless set in co-driver seat, and the L.O. from the Infantry Brigade on Sqn Leader's telephone -- for direct contact.**

'A' Squadron's four forward tanks are shelled twice during the day by 105mm and 170mm guns. Only casualty: one mule.

At 2200 hrs, Lts N.M. Kralman and K. Hodson, with fresh crews, relieve Lts M.R. Badgerow and H. Brady at the forward positions, where Capt. D.K. Dawson has one RHQ tank. A slow,

obnoxious rain and harassing shellfire make the line of Jeeps an eerie parade.

Also at 2200 hrs, A/Major F.W. Johnson, Capt. Smith of 6th B.W., Lt. J.K. Wallace, Lt. B.G. Waldron and 2nd Lt S. Hall recce the approaches to Cassino for possible counter-attacks or future operations.

At 2400 hrs, 'A' Squadron's No.3 Troop, led by Lt J.B. McKay, relieves 'A' Sqdn's No.1 Troop led by Lt J.P. Coristine via S. MICHELE road and PORTELLA junction. First part by jeep, then, on foot. Relief completed without incident.

excerpt

The first of the 'tank-going' maps (defence overprint maps), and aerial photos of the Gustav and Hitler Lines made their appearance. These later became available in sufficient quantities to supply each Troop Leader with a set. A far cry from the days at Termoli when only the Squadron Leaders had maps, and those were either of 1:50,000 or 1:10,000 scale.

Source: 1943-45 history of the TRR Cpt. R.H. Heggie

APRIL 9

Easter Sunday. Weather: sunny till noon, then rain by mid-afternoon. Heavy rain overnight. At 1130 hrs, The C.O. of 6 B.W. visits our RHQ and arranges with our C.O., Lt. Col. F.L. Caron, to meet on the morrow to discuss the Infantry-cum-Tank training, which is to be carried out by his unit and our 'B' Squadron.

At 1400 hrs, Lt. Col. Caron, accompanied by Maj. G.J. Gray, inspects HQ Squadron. Finds it shipshape.

Our 'A' Squadron has a relatively quiet day, except for our forward tanks, which got their usual lacing from enemy guns over the mountain to the north. No casualties.

Our 'B' Squadron is planning the "attack" and "run" for the Infantry-cum-Tank training exercise slated to begin tomorrow with 6th B.W. (minus 1 Company).

At 1400 hrs, H/Capt. M.A. Minville, chaplain of 12th CAR, says Mass at 'C' Squadron. At 1500 hrs, chaplain also says Mass for

R.C. personnel at 'A' Squadron. And at 1600 hrs, chaplain says Mass at 'A' and 'B' Echelons.

APRIL 10

At 0900 hrs, 'B' Squadron (minus 2 Tps), plus RHQ tanks and 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade's HQ Squadron tanks, began this morning the initial "marrying up" of our 'A' Company with the 6th B.W. In this regard, the Three Rivers Regiment (12th CAR) has developed, as a result of its long and thorough battle experience in Sicily, Termoli and Ortona, a regular drill for this most important phase of battle: the coordinated planning and cooperation of Infantry and Tanks.

excerpt

Today, Capt. Whiteford and No.4 Troop of 'A' Squadron passed under the command of 78th Division -- to support the 38th (Irish) Brigade. And No.1 Troop returned to the forward tanks to relieve the crews of No.3 Troop. Source: 1943-45 History of TRR by Capt R.H.Heggie

APRIL 11

At 1400 hrs, three men from our Recce Troop proceed to 11th C.A.R. area to pick up our Regiment's first cut-down Stuart tank (nick-named "Honey"). These Stuarts will replace all the Recce's Universal carriers as quickly as they are available. It is thought they will prove much more useful in the work of reconnaissance (recce), inter-com, and carrying supplies -- for which they are normally used.

Recce Troop: The birth of a new Troop begins for our Unit today, with the drawing of the first of the new General Stuart M343 (modified for Recce). Personnel of the old Recce Troop, who have had no regularly-assigned active role since their commendable work in Sicily, are to man the new vehicles.

Tpr. F.E. McTaggart of 'A' Squadron -- 4th Troop, who was with the tanks at Mount Cairo, was instantly killed, when a shell landed 10 feet in front of one of the tanks.

'B' Echelon is given a brief introduction to shellfire on the Cassino front, when enemy guns open up, aiming for the 3.7 cm guns immediately behind the Echelon area. Our own batteries

then open up and silence the 'intruder' before he does any damage.

At 1440 hrs, shells believed to be 105 mm, possibly from a S.P. gun, catch 'A' Squadron by surprise. L/Cpl R. Potheary is killed; Sgt. H.K. Mugridge is wounded.

At 1445 hrs, Lt. Col. F.L. Caron sets down the following regulations re 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment's traffic in the Inferno:

- 1) one 60 cwt truck and one 5 cwt jeep will pick up supplies at 'B' Echelon;
- 2) only transport operating from HQ will be four 4 cwt jeeps;
- 3) from 'C' Squadron, only one jeep is allowed for transport;
- 4) only one 15 cwt will bring supplies over the Inferno Track each day.

At 1630 hrs, Camp Commandant Lt. D.O. Knipfel reports tersely: "My area was shelled with about six 17cm H.E. shells. No casualties."

Killed in action:
Tpr. F.E. McTaggart
L/Cpl R. Potheary
Sgt. H.K. Mugridge

APRIL 11

Today, Maj G.J. Gray is made responsible for an extensive anti-malarial and anti-dysentery campaign – to be started at once. 2 i/c's of our Squadrons (Capts E.V. Walters, D.S. Whiteford, D.C. McCallum and A.K. Woods) are responsible for duties in this regard; with RMO Capt. W.H. Clare as chief advisor.

Lt. Col. F.L. Caron has determined that the Three Rivers Regiment shall be tops in sanitation, too. Capt. Clare, MD, visits the three fighting squadrons and supervises the oiling of the stagnant water holes in the camp area.

APRIL 11

Lt. Col. F.L. Caron's Safari bed, which got mixed up with the kit of A/Major T. Smith (deceased), was finally returned after 8 months.

APRIL 12

Our C.O., Lt. Col. F.L. Caron, instructs the RTA, Capt. J.L. Dubreuil, to have all our tanks fitted with No.38 wireless sets, except those with No.18 sets or an extra No.19 set. The No.38 wireless set is to be placed in the hull, to the right of the co-driver.

Also all tanks are to be fitted with a spare 'Infantry telephone' pair of headsets, on the rear of the tank. These measures, it is hoped, will greatly facilitate infantry-cum-tank intercommunications.

Infantry-cum-tank training continues in a most satisfactory manner. A 'Mine Lifting' school has been established at S. Salvatore. Ten members from our Recce Troop, and 6 from each of our Squadrons are to attend. Course will last from Friday morning on April 28 to Thursday noon on May 4th.

APRIL 12

The following letter has been received by Brig. W.C. Murphy, ED, from Lt. Gen. C.W. Allfrey, CB, DSO, MC at Headquarters, 5th Corps, dated March 30, 1944:

Editor's Note

"Things were awkward" is a nice way to say that the 78th Division was within a mile and a few hours from being pushed into the sea.

And the aforementioned "Canadian tanks" were 'A' and 'C' Squadrons of the Three Rivers Regiment. Our promised rest, after our five grueling weeks through Sicily, was rudely interrupted when heavy seas kept the Ontario Regiment from landing to the rescue of the beleaguered 78th Division; and the Three Rivers Regiment was summoned to save the Division and the day.

APRIL 13

Major F.W. Johnson, OC of 'C' Squadron, sets the new dress regulations:

- a) All personnel, working on vehicles or 'fatigue', must wear denims, properly buttoned;**
- b) Balance of personnel must wear:**
 - I – B.D. (battle dress) trousers**
 - II – web belt and cross-straps**
 - III – shirts, open at neck**
 - IV – sleeves rolled**
 - V – boots and anklets**

APRIL 13

Tpr. M. Leclair of 'C' Squadron has been awarded CEM for 12 years service in his Majesty's Canadian Forces.

APRIL 13

The 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade has been issued a small number of special 'tank going' maps, 1 to 25,000 scale, to be used in planning. They include the Cassino, Terelle and Pignataro sheets. Inferno Track no longer closed. (It was never very open!)

APRIL 14

Capt. W.H. Clare, unit M.O., pays 'goodwill' visit to our Squadrons, taking with him necessary instruments for vaccinations, inoculations, and examinations; and hears a number of exclamations.

Hon. Capt. M.A. Minville, regimental R.C. chaplain, and 4 ORs, set out to pick site for new cemetery. Site having been picked, they all joined in to mark off the plot with large stones.

According to crews of the New Recce vehicles (Honeys), they have been very well fed while attached to 11th CAR. (They had bully beef just once a day!)

The following special ammo arrived and will be held by 'B' Squadron until ordered to use it: 2 rounds of 75 mm 'Smoke' (white phosphorus), and 30 bombs (2" tank) 'Smoke' (white phosphorus). It is claimed both types give instantaneous white

smoke -- for emergency camouflage purposes... They may be used experimentally in the present Infantry-cum-Tank training.

APRIL 14

Back in Prata Sannita, it was proposed, by various members of our Regiment, that we obtain, if possible, a purely regimental shoulder 'flash'. One was then, designed by our C.O., Lt.Col. F. Caron, and a sample copy is made by L.Cpl. E. Lavergne, our regimental painter. The sample was sent to the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade for their permission and approval.

The proposed 'shoulder flash' features a blue background edged in red, with THREE RIVERS REGIMENT in gold across it, and CANADA, also in gold, in the raised portion above.

Today, our idea and subsequent effort were rewarded, when a letter granting permission was received from the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade.

APRIL 14

Our regimental Intelligence Officer received the following reminder re War Diaries:

"The original and duplicate copies of the Diary will be forwarded on the first day of the succeeding month to the Officer in command of 2nd Echelon. The triplicate copy may be retained for a period of three months. But, unless it is needed for a specific purpose, it should be sent with the Original and Duplicate copies."
or

"They may be submitted by forwarding the Original and Duplicate copies of one month together with the Triplicate of the previous month; e.g. MARCH Original and Duplicate, FEBRUARY Triplicate. This method will minimize the risk of losing one complete set of diaries for any one month."

Instructions that War Diaries shall be forwarded on the first day of the succeeding month seem a little optimistic however, particularly if the unit concerned is in action.

APRIL 16

'A' Squadron – Light shelling of harbour, but there were no casualties.

Volleyball game: 'A' Squadron's team played 'C' Squadron's and came off second best. Score: 21– 13.

Major G.J. Gray visited 'A' and 'B' Echelons; then paid a visit to the 2nd New Zealand Division which is taking over this sector. After which, he proceeded to 'B' Squadron re the Victory Loan and the coming Sports Meet.

'A' Squadron's status is affected today by the Warning Order that 78th Division, to which it is attached, is being relieved by the 2nd Polish Corps between April 24th and 28th.

APRIL 24-25

The Three Rivers Regiment (12th CAR) relieves the 20th New Zealand Armoured Division at Cassino.

anecdote

At some point in the relief operation, three crews of 'C' Squadron simply took over three New Zealand tanks in place. These sat behind one arm of an L-shaped building, while German tanks stood behind the other. Neither could deploy from there without getting hit; with the stalemate result that the inner corner of the "L" became a 'neutral zone' latrine by common and desperate agreement: One did NOT fire on anyone he found there, who was also answering the call of nature.

At another point in the same operation, a German medic came forward, waving a white flag, and asked for morphine and other medical supplies for his wounded. These were provided. True to his word, the medic returned the favour when he finally received his own.

Source: Vern Dowie

MAY 1

Rev. J.L. Wilhelm named Chaplain to the 5th General Hospital.

excerpt

The system of carrying sappers in 'Honey' tanks, with two Honeys under command of each Squadron as the basic distribution, is of considerable assistance. It enables the selection of lines of approach, which the enemy regards as even more unlikely than he otherwise might. A great deal can be done with explosives, carried in the Honeys, to overcome natural obstacles.

Source: Overseas History -- First Canadian Armoured Brigade

MAY 5

Italy: General Alexander orders Allied units to break through the Gustav Line on May 11.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MAY 7

Major G.L. MacDougall, Battle Capt. D.K. Wallace and Lts. A.G. Waldron and M.R. Badgerow were given the "fire positions" for their tanks, which were to support the crossing of the Gari River with direct fire.

anecdote

With our turret-less, open-hull 'Honey' tanks crammed to their gunnels with either 75 mm shells, or 4-gallon cans of petrol (in my case it was shells this time), we were ordered to camouflage our tanks very thoroughly. For good reason: We were on the side of the hill that was in full view of the Germans -- from their observation posts in the ruins of the Monte Cassino monastery.

Cpl. Prieur and I worked at the camouflaging with such single-mindedness that dawn caught us with our slit trenches very shallowly dug. And we had to lie in them the whole long day, in the broiling sun, inching our heads just enough to sip from the hot water bottle next to our face. The ruse worked. So did our camouflage. The enemy never spotted us. But we were very happy when darkness finally allowed us to stand up and stretch. Until 2300 hrs, that is, when all hell broke loose.

Source: Vern 'Spud' Norring

MAY 11

At 2300 hrs, the silence of the Liri valley was broken by 1600 guns, ranging in calibre from 25-pounders to Long Toms. The horizon behind us was man-crafted thunder and lightning. The sky above us was alive with the deadly whispers of shells. Mostly ours. Sometimes, a large shell would lose its driving band and sort of 'corkscrew' through the shredded night – to abort too short of its intended target; tightening throats and sphincters. Especially, if you were busy waiting.

excerpt

Canadian tanks played a critical role in the attack across the Gari. Although the Canadian Corps was relegated to reserve status, the First Canadian Armoured Brigade was part of the spearhead, supporting the 8th Indian Division.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day-Dodgers"

MAY 11

This is it! A month's harrowing and detailed planning and preparations are fused, and wait only for the match to set about one and a half thousand guns roaring. The signal is given! Some 80,000 men, and hundreds of tanks, smash into the enemy's Gustav Line. This Line is a continuous series of mountain ranges and low, narrow valleys, guarded by natural strong points over-looking the passes. The valley running from Minturo to Alfedena, our particular sector, is the Liri River valley: Low and broad, it runs almost due East-West, with the Liri River flowing through its southern edge.



This pass is dominated by the heights of Monte Cairo to the north, the monastery on Monte Cassino being one of its key points, and by the high ground south of Apollinare and S. Georgio to the south. In general, it is low, rolling ground, somewhat varied in character, well served with rough, narrow tracks lined by trees and ditches, and rather English in appearance. Gently rising ground in the north and west results in a series of small streams, in the greatest number to the west of Pignataro, running diagonally across the valley to the Liri River. At this time of year, these streams are mostly dry, but their steep banks make for difficult tank country.

In these valleys, the nights are usually marked by heavy mists, which may last 2-3 hours after sunrise. Drainage in the area is good, but roads and tracks rapidly become unusable after rain. However, they dry up equally fast.

MAY 12

At sunrise, the tanks began their attack, supported by 3,000 aircraft. When the moment came to storm the Cassino heights, the Poles lost a fifth of their strength within the first 90 minutes of battle, and were forced to withdraw when communications failed.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MAY 13

Three major assaults have failed to dislodge the Germans from the Gustav Line. But today the biggest army yet -- British, Polish, American, Canadian and French Colonials -- is advancing on a narrow front and pushing northwards against stiff German opposition.

Today, the French Moroccan soldiers of General Juin's Corps Expéditionnaire Français took Monte Faito -- where the German 71st Division obeyed orders to fight to the last man. On their right flank, the 8th Indian and 4th British Divisions launched assault boats into the fast-flowing Rapido River and established bridgeheads under fierce German fire.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

Wounded today:

A-4373 'Len' C. Johnston (lost both legs)

B-6456 S.S. Sarson

MAY 13

Recollection

After midnight, with the dark sky filled with whispering shells homing in on enemy positions somewhere ahead, my driver Vern 'Spud' Norring and I joined in supplying the Shermans in action. Our Honey tank's open hull was filled with extra shells.

First, we followed the cleared path through a minefield, stopping and starting, advancing very slowly towards whatever lay across the now Bailey-bridged River. During one halt, I saw our newest lieutenant step over the white tape into the orchard beyond. We all yelled a warning, but our voices were lost in the din. Suddenly, there was an explosion and his body arched above ground and collapsed -- so broken it was obviously lifeless -- at the foot of a fruit tree. It happened just as our convoy lurched forward another few yards.

Then, before any of us could scramble out of our vehicles to make doubly sure the officer was dead, the civilian driver of a French ambulance parked deep in the orchard waved everybody back. Then, he calmly tucked a stretcher under his left arm and walked through the mine-field towards the body, as if strolling through a park.

He bent over the body, his cigarette glowing in the dark; checked for a pulse in the young officer's neck; gave a Gallic shrug; and strolled as casually back to his ambulance.

Source: Charlie Prieur

MAY 14

“Moved across Gary River...subjected to extreme “88” shelling... Mike Krawchuk – wounded by shrapnel.”

Source: from personal diary of Lt. Murray O'Dell, 2 Troop, 'A' Squadron.

MAY 14

The Three Rivers Regiment's 'C' Squadron crosses the Gari River at 0100 hrs. Rest of Regiment follows suit at 0600 hrs. Our 'C' Squadron attacks westward with 3/15 Punjabs, and reaches objective southwest of San Angelo. Our 'B' Squadron then pushes through, with the Royal West Kents, to a feature 800 yards northwest, and destroys 2 anti-tank guns along the way.

MAY 14

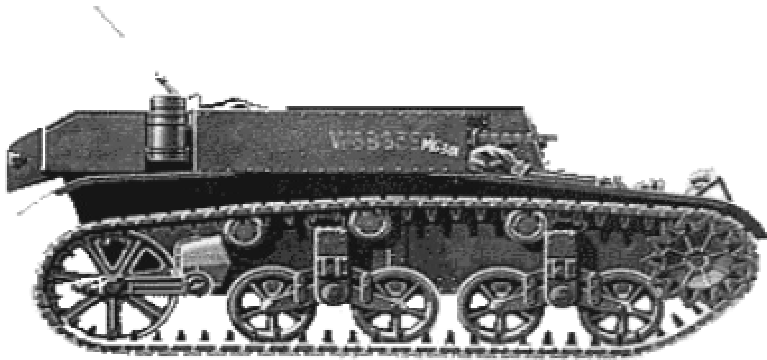
anecdote

I joined the Three Rivers Regt. around the last week of April 1944. On May 14, the night before I was posted to 'C' Squadron, I was searching the ground for a place to bed down for a good night's sleep. A small tree stood in the way of my first choice, so I decided on a spot some 40 feet away. During the night,

I was shocked awake by a shower of stones and clumps of earth. A large shell had exploded right where I had originally intended to bed down. Another shell then blew up a petrol dump about 500 feet away.

A hot welcome to a hot Regiment. At 0430 hrs, the next morning, a truck picked me up to join Lt. B.G. Waldron's Troop. I was replacing Corp. Ernie Davis who had been killed the day before.

Source: Gerry Killoran



Honey armored carrier

MAY 14

The 'Honey' tanks (Stuarts, without turrets) of the Recce Troop were loaded with ammunition or 5-gallon cans of gasoline which were to be dumped across the Gari River as soon as possible after "H" hour. The Honeys then began a shuttle system across the river until complete 'refills' were available along the West Bank. The Sherman crews drew from this dump as fighting progressed.

Source: Brigade War Diary

MAY 14

The British XIII Corps consolidates a bridgehead over the Rapido River... It takes heavy casualties when it finds its way blocked by a mass of pillboxes, barbed wire and minefields.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

excerpt

There seemed to be Germans everywhere in the valley. Repeatedly, the Three Rivers tanks would reach their objectives, only to be called back to help the embattled infantry clear a stubborn machine-gun post.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

MAY 14

The ‘bollix’ of the day: Brigade announces over the R/T (Radio/Telephone) to all Regiments, that “the Second Front has been established at several points, and all is going well. This was good for an extra 1,000 yards today, but proves a big letdown when it is confirmed that it is only an Echelon rumour.

MAY 14

‘A’ Squadron moved into action with 1-5th Mahratta Regiment... No. 2 Troop in reserve...instrumental in taking a number of prisoners... Sgt. J. Leslie killed while on day’s objective.

Source: From personal diary of Lt. Murray O’Dell, 2 Troop, ‘A’ Squadron

**Killed in action:
Sgt. J. Leslie**

**Wounded:
D-6994 J.S. Genest
H-63869 M. Krawchuck**

MAY 15

The Free French take San Giorgio and Ausonia, as the German Gustav Line starts to crumble.

Source: American “Chronicle of the Second World War”

MAY 15

‘A’ Squadron and 1/5 Mahrattas gain “Fingers” crossroads.

The enemy has been up to his old tricks again. He never seems to realize that the abuse of a good thing will boomerang sooner or later. Lately, the red cross and white flags have been used for purposes other than those laid down by International Law. Relieving troops, carrying supplies, and gaining time have all been done under the guise of the flag of truce. The British 10th Corps has therefore laid down the following policy:

- a) No truce will be permitted.**
- b) Any enemy envoys, whether carrying Red Cross flags or white flags, will be halted or challenged. If they do not wish**

to surrender, they will be ordered to withdraw to their own lines.

c) Subordinate commands, having been informed of this policy, will implement it without reference to higher authority.

MAY 16

After three days of fighting, the Eighth Army has still failed to break out into the Liri valley, its principal objective.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

excerpt

A sharp counter-attack at dawn nearly took the Three Rivers Regiment by surprise, but it was driven back. "Increasing numbers of prisoners were taken, most of them being 'dead beat' from what they had been through... When you got close to them, they would generally throw up their hands.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

MAY 16

Even though within range of the enemy's big guns, H/Capt. M.A. Minville said Mass at 'A' Squadron at 0930 hrs, at 'C' Squadron 1030 hrs, and at 'B' Squadron at 1630 hrs.

Died of his wounds today:

K-37136 L/Sgt. Edward C. Clark

Wounded today:

C-41332 R.C. Campbell, MM (stays on duty)

L-30000 J.L. Rogers

B-19514 J.W. McConnell

C-58164 J.H. Young

C-100732 R. Page

D-36568 Gordon Turnbull

B-67818 Richard E. Walker (remained on duty)

C-5393 T.M. Williams

B-61837 L.J.A. Fallu

MAY 17

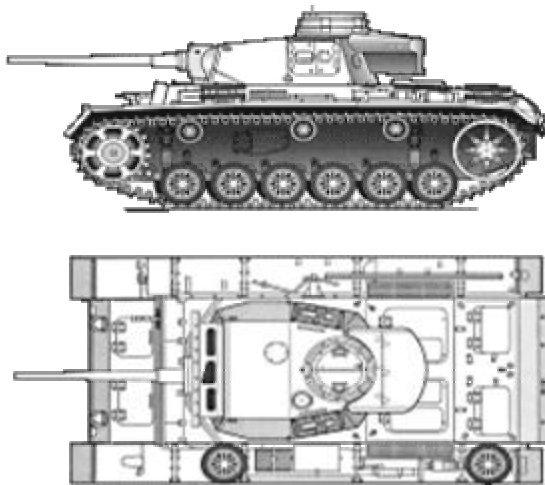
The Three Rivers Regiment takes a number of objectives with the 1st Canadian Division, and forges through the Gustav Line on the way to the Hitler Line.

Editor's Note

You will note, as you read through these Chronicles, that our Unit was always but once part of the 'fer de lance' that broke through.

excerpt

Re the Hitler Line: The fortifications, about 800 yards deep, consisted mainly of weapon-pits for machine guns and rifles, concrete shelters, portable steel pillboxes, and observation posts for all weapons. From a distance, the defences were almost invisible, hidden behind orchards, olive groves, copses of small trees with thick undergrowth, and standing crops.



Panzer Mark IV

The enemy had cleverly cleared their fields of fire. An anti-tank ditch (in reality a string of craters 15 to 30 feet wide) covered most of the front, along with barbed-wire entanglements of varied depth, interspersed with trip wires and mines. Adjoining each of the subterranean bunkers, 150 or more yards apart, was a 'Tobruk' weapon-pit. This was an underground concrete chamber with a circular neck-like opening projecting a few inches above the ground. A metal track inside the neck provided for the rotation of an anti-tank

turret or machine-gun mount. More ominous was something new in Italy: Panzerturm.

Turrets removed from older-model Mark III and IV tanks were installed atop a base of bricks and re-inforced concrete. Each turret mounted a long-barrelled 75 mm anti-tank gun, a machine-gun and a rocket projector, manned by a specially trained 3-man crew; and each position was protected by a brace of self-propelled guns. Of the 18 such miniature fortresses strung along the Hitler Line, 8 were in the Canadian sector.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

excerpt

The advance resumed on the morning of the 17th, and things went much better when the Royal 22nd Regiment went into action, supported by tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment. Many prisoners were taken.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

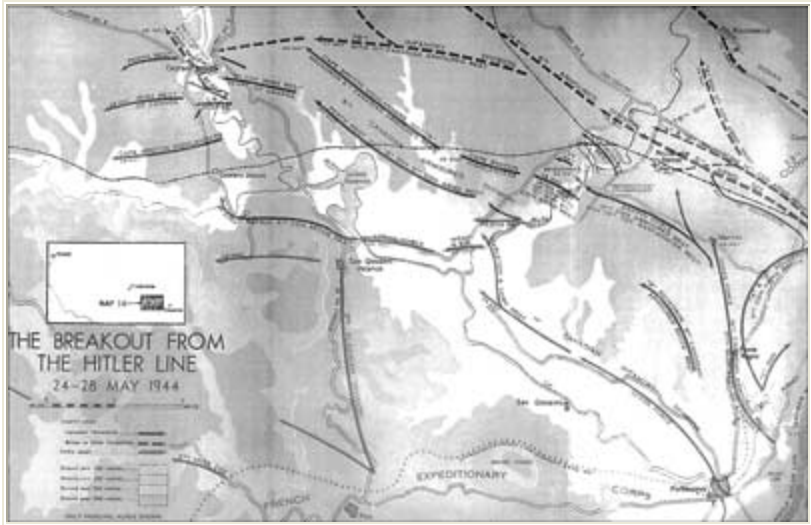
MAY 18

Road to Rome is opened as Cassino finally falls. The Polish flag flutters today over the ruins of the ancient monastery, which has become a symbol of German resistance and has repelled successive Allied attacks since the beginning of the year. In the valley below, troops of the British Eighth Army have at last occupied what is left of the town of Cassino itself.

MAY 20

After the Liri battle, Gen. Sir Oliver Leese, BT, KCB, CBE, DSO, stated:

"... The First Canadian Armoured Brigade is the hardest hitting and finest armoured formation I have ever had the pleasure to command. I rate the First Canadian Armoured Brigade as the best armoured formation in the Mediterranean theatre."



MAY 21

It is learned that 1st Canadian Corps is to make the initial breakthrough in the Adolph Hitler Line in the area north of Pontecorvo. The Three Rivers Regiment reverts from under command of the 1st Canadian Division to under the command of the 1st Canadian Corps, where they are to act as Corps reserve - and hopefully a well-deserved rest.

MAY 21

Wounded today:
A-102086 W.T. McDaniel

MAY 21

Italy: The US 3rd Division seizes the key city of Cisterna; Hitler authorizes a withdrawal to the Hitler Line, west of Cassino.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

MAY 22

Editor's Note

Well, a change is as good as a rest! "It is learned that the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR) is to be employed in a special assault role, carrying the Royal 22nd Regt on their tanks, and crashing through the Hitler Line; after the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade and 25th British Tank Brigade have softened up the enemy. This plan is later modified to include the West Nova Scotia Regiment. Source: 1st Canadian Brigade War Diary

anecdote

Sometime, during the battle through the Hitler Line, we had grown short of ammunition. So the ammo truck had backed up to the rear of my tank, and my crew and I had stacked all the ammo on the back deck. Now, as we began to transfer it all inside the hull, Jerry started to shell us, and the shells were falling damn close.

Fortunately, we had on arrival dug a slit trench to the side of our tank. Unfortunately, the pick and shovel were still on the ground. When I slid down the side of the tank into the trench, my suspenders caught on the shovel hooks, and I stayed suspended in mid-air for about 30 seconds, till the buttons on my pants gave way. It was by far the longest 30 seconds of my life. Source: Harold Dumontier

MAY 22

A signal honour and well-deserved, Major Pat Mills, longtime O.C. of 'C' Squadron, was presented a D.S.O. by King George VI at Buckingham Palace, today.

MAY 23

General Vokes decided to commit his divisional reserve units, the 'Van Doos' and the Three Rivers tanks, to the Carleton front. Together, with the West Nova Scotia Regiment, they would pry open the Hitler Line. When the Three Rivers Shermans finally appeared, it was not even necessary for them to stop. "As they rolled into our position through the wrecks of the Churchills, we just waved them on, got up and started forward," recounted one 'West Novies' officer. "Our aim was clear enough -- to get forward out of that hell hole."

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

'C' Squadron of the Three Rivers Regiment is assigned to support the Royal 22nd Regiment (the "Van Doos") and confers on details of attack. 'A' Squadron does the same with the West Nova Scotia Regiment (the "West Novies"). Then, at 1630 hrs, these two tank squadrons and the two infantry regiments cut their way forward through a graveyard of burning Churchills, over concrete pill boxes, and through the Adolf Hitler Line. Fearing encirclement, the Germans retire precipitously from the so-called impregnable line.

MAY 23

Killed in action:

**Major Reginald C. Yelland
B-61841 W.J. Wright (also wounded 5 months before)
D-36517 Sgt. Eric Frederic Wright
A-58361 Ralph Trombley
D-36105 Adrien Becotte**

Wounded:

**Lt. Frank W. Faulkner
F. (Fritz) Lund (second time)
Glen L. MacDougall
D-36273 Sgt. Tom Gilmour
A-43022 Borden J. W. Scott
K-65631 J.E. Newell
G-877 Hugh M. Scott
B-67936 Elmer L. Grasley
B-19112 F.T. John
B-67944 Samuel Lee
D-36600 Eric Ladouceur**

Recollections

Right after the "Van Doos" and the 'A' and 'C' squadrons of the TRR broke through their sector of the Hitler Line, they found themselves vulnerably scattered; having battered their way around the burning (British) Churchill tanks, over crouched-in-concrete 88s, and through minefields and barbed-wire. The C.O. of 'C' Squadron reasonably asked permission to pull back and regroup. "No, push on! Push on!" barked our C.O., Lt. Col. Fern Caron. "You've got'em on the run!" ... Which was exactly what was happening.

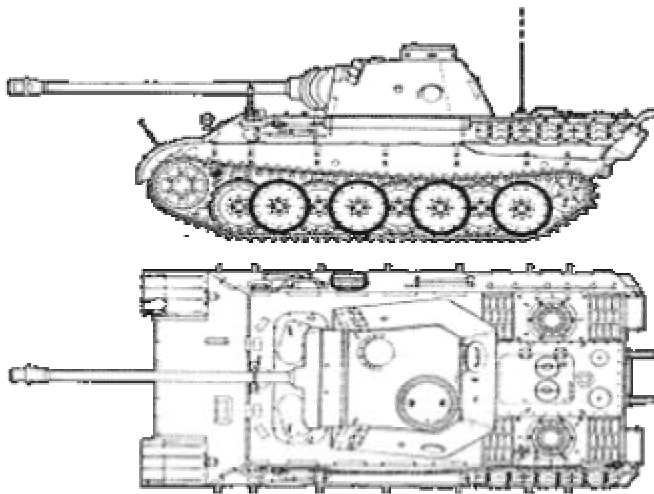
And which also reveals how on top of the action he was from his command Jeep. Just a little beyond, a battered barn was strangely NOT burning. A few of the Van Doos reconnoitered it and found a German soldier trapped under a large beam. "How do you feel,

Fritz”, asked one of them. “I would feel a whole lot better, if you got this bloody thing off me,” said the German in flawless English with a marked British accent. Turned out he had been studying at Oxford before he was called back to Germany.

Source: Vern Dowie

excerpt

At first light of the 23rd, the Squadrons moved to the Forward Assembly areas from where they were to push forward in a special assault role, carrying the “Van Dooos” on the tanks after 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade and supporting tanks of the North Irish Horse Regiment had ‘softened up’ the positions. Unfortunately, these areas were too far forward and extremely ‘hot’. From here (our) Squadrons could see over thirty of the British Churchill Tanks burning fiercely, while the few as yet unhit were firing at the well-placed anti-tank guns. These guns soon turned their attack from the Churchills and, in as many minutes, destroyed two of ‘A’ Squadron’s tanks.



Panzer Mark V

Major Yelland, the Squadron Leader, and his turret crew were killed in one tank; and the turret crew of the second tank suffered the same fate. Lt. Homer-Dixon was wounded in the back while out of his tank trying to rescue one of the crews. ‘A’ Squadron pulled back a short distance and then moved over to the left to join up with the West Nova Scotia Regiment. Capt. Whiteford, second in command, took over as Squadron Leader.

'B' Squadron pulled into fire positions when the enemy counter-attacked the Seaforth Regiment's position with tanks. Major Macdougall, the Squadron Leader, was wounded by shrapnel while out on a foot recce and turned the command of the Squadron over to Capt. MacCallum. Shortly after this, Lt. Krolman's tank was hit by A.P., killing both him and his gunner. Lt. Faulkner of 'C' Squadron was injured, and Lt. Cameron (also of 'C' Sqdn) destroyed a Pz Kw Mk 1V before the Squadron pulled back to lock step with the "Van Doos".

At 1630 hrs, 'A' and 'C' Squadrons of the Three Rivers Regiment, with the "West Novies" and the "Van Doos" (respectively), cut their way forward around the still-burning Churchills, past the concrete pill-boxes and anti-tank guns, and through the Adolf Hitler Line. By 1830 hrs, the two Squadrons had come against the Mortino River to find it an obstacle with no apparent crossing. A fine job of searching by our Lt. Bier soon brought to light a possible route into the ravine and up the other side, and the tanks and Infantry occupied the high ground before the Pontecorvo road that ran north to Highway 6. The Seaforths of Canada and the P.P.C.L.I., and tanks of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division followed through and quickly spread out to give flank protection.

Source: Capt. R. Heggie's "1943-45 History of the Three Rivers Regiment"

excerpts

Almost every (German) unit holding the Hitler Line was afterwards written off by the enemy command.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

A key commander of the German forces was the Tenth Army's Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin, a Rhodes scholar and former Benedictine monk who commanded the XIV Panzer Corps.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, "The D-Day Dodgers"

MAY 24

Wounded today:
Capt. Norman A. Dickens

MAY 25

'B' Squadron, along with the Carlton and Yorks and the 4th Canadian Recce Regiment, establishes a bridgehead over the Melfa river.

**Wounded today:
Arnold R. McCourt**

Editor's Note

Arnie, as crew commander, ordered his driver to round a corner very quickly so as not to present too much of a target, and his tank rammed into a knocked out German tank. Arnie's face smashed onto the edge of crew commander's turret hatch, knocking out most of his front upper teeth, and a number in his lower jaw.

MAY 25

For his actions, Tpr. Raoul St. Louis was awarded an M.M.

Official citation

"On 25 May 1944, when the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment was supporting an Infantry attack across the River Melfa, Tpr. St. Louis was the driver of 15 cwt. Armoured-ambulance. A bridgehead was established across the river and the ambulance was called forward to evacuate Infantry casualties. After Trooper St. Louis had completed one trip, the enemy commenced shelling the whole river valley.

Despite intense machine gun, mortar, and shellfire, which continued throughout the afternoon, Tpr. St. Louis drove his ambulance with coolness and determination and at great personal risk. This ambulance was the only one which attempted to cross the river during the afternoon, and Trooper St. Louis, realizing the urgent need of the wounded, recrossed the river 5 times in the heavy barrage to evacuate approx. fifteen men. The gallant and purposeful manner in which Trooper St. Louis carried out his duties under the most dangerous conditions undoubtedly contributed to the saving of many lives."

Editor's Note

Several eyewitnesses reported also that as Raoul St. Louis first made his way to his vehicle, a bullet ricocheted off his helmet. He staggered back, tore open his shirt to reveal the crucifix hanging from a chain on his barrel chest, and climbed into the ambulance to begin his several hours of rescue.

Trooper William Robert Meads, the Medical Orderly with Tpr. Raoul St. Louis' ambulance, was also awarded the M.M. for his actions on this day.

Official Citation

"On 25 May 1944, Trooper Meads was the Medical Orderly in a 15 cwt. ambulance of the 12th Canadian Armoured Reg't which was taking part in an Infantry attack across the River Melfa. After the crossing had been established -- the only attempt to cross during that afternoon -- he went on five trips across the river. During each trip, under continuous mortar, artillery and machine gun fire, he carefully attended to the needs of the wounded without thought for his own personal safety, and assisted in the evacuation of approx. fifteen men. Trooper Meads' determined devotion to duty under the most perilous circumstances was in the highest traditions of the service and contributed to the saving of a number of lives."

MAY 25

Change in command: Lt. R.C. Kahnert replaces Lt. Bier, who is transferred to 'B' Squadron as Battle Captain.

MAY 25

Wounded today:

B-48574 Tpr. R.J. Watt

B-61739 Arnold R. McCourt

H-63703 Tpr. C.G. Munro

MAY 25

Canadian Army Major J.K. Mahony a former reporter for the Vancouver Province, wins the Victoria Cross for holding a bridgehead over the Melfa River in Italy despite sustaining severe injuries.

Source: National Post, Canada

MAY 26

Between May 14 and 26, the Three Rivers Regiment counts 20 men killed or wounded, 17 tanks lost to mines or anti-tank shells, and 7 more immobilized by mechanical troubles.

MAY 28

During the advance from Rome to Florence, the Three Rivers Regiment successively supported, among others, the following Allied Forces: the 78th, 4th, 5th and 6th British Divisions; the New Zealand division, the South-African and Indian Divisions, as well as the 231st Independent Brigade from Malta.

MAY 31

Canada now contributes a greater proportion of its population of 11,500,000 to the Allied war effort than any other country. Its 500,000-strong army has left its dead in Hong Kong, Italy and Dieppe. Its 600-vessel navy (only 15 ships strong in 1939) has taken over half the escort burden on the Atlantic convoys.

JUNE 1

excerpt

With Rome's fall imminent, the Germans drew up elaborate plans for the Gothic Line. Areas considered vulnerable to tank attacks were to be protected by Panzerturm, the concrete-emplaced tank turrets that had proved so effective at the Hitler Line; fortifications were to be built at all key points, "even on those mountain fronts which are considered almost inaccessible." Extensive minefields would shield the entire line, along with a four-mile dead zone, or Vorfeld, created "by lasting demolition of all traffic routes, installations and shelters."

However, the Germans needed time to complete the construction of the Gothic Line, and they hoped to buy that time by manning a series of incomplete defensive positions. Furthest south was the Albert-Frieda Line, which centered on a large lake (Lago Trasimene) about midway between Rome and Florence, where the legendary Carthaginian general, Hannibal, had won a great victory over the Romans in 217 B.C.

The German commander-in-chief issued instructions that Army Group C would "stand and defend the Albert-Frieda Line. Every officer and man must know that, upon reaching this line, delaying

tactics will come to an end and the enemy advance and breakthrough must be stopped.”

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

JUNE 4

The great bulk of Kesselring’s men are heading north to new defence lines, pursued by advance elements of the British Eighth Army.

Source: American “Chronicles of the Second World War”

JUNE 4

Rome falls to the Allies.

JUNE 5

Soldiers of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, part of the British 6th Airborne Division’s 3rd Brigade, make an advance overnight landing before D-Day.

JUNE 5

The Liri campaign had, as always, been costly. Between May 15th and the 4th of June, the 1st Canadian Corps lost 789 men killed, 2,463 wounded, and 116 taken prisoner. On the other side of the ledger, the Corps had captured more than 1,400 Germans, and killed and wounded a great many others, while smashing one of the enemy’s strongest defensive positions, and advancing forty-one miles.

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

(Before, throughout and after the Liri Campaign), “Gen. Tommy Burns re-peatedly appealed to have the First Canadian Armoured Brigade returned from the British XIII Corps (to rejoin and support the Canadian infantry), but his requests were refused.”

Gen. Leese considered it to be “the most experienced armoured brigade in Italy and therefore in great demand. This was”, said Burns, “a sincere tribute to the Canadian Armoured Brigade’s effectiveness, though one that I failed to appreciate.”

Source: Daniel G. Dancocks, “The D-Day Dodgers”

JUNE 5

Soldiers of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, part of British 6th Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade, make an advance overnight landing before D-Day.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 5 TO 6

An armada of 6480 cargo ships and landing craft sets sail for the Normandy coast, shielded by 6 battleships, 23 battle cruisers, and 122 destroyers. Code-named Overlord, this vast fleet's mission is to land 200,000 men and 150,000 tons of munitions on 5 different beaches across a 90-kilometre front.

Editor's Note

One-tenth of the front-line troops were Canadians, not including a substantial percentage of the supporting naval and air forces. But there's been little mention of this noteworthy fact in the free world's media to this day!

JUNE 6

"D-Day"... The Normandy invasion begins.

JUNE 6

The Régiment de la Chaudière was one of the very few invasion units to reach its objectives on this epochal day.

anecdote

Casualties from the Hitler Line action were evacuated to Caserta, North Africa. I had suffered a busted eardrum and some shrapnel wounds, on the 24th; so I joined the stream of disabled. At base hospital, I was assessed as Medical Category E, i.e. to be evacuated back to Canada. All the casualties in my ward received the same category, and were extremely happy at the prospect of getting home at last. (Remember: many of them had been away from Canada almost three years, and also in virtually continuous action for about a year!)

On the morning of June 6, 1944, the long-awaited Normandy landings took place, and a concurrent announcement was made that 'there would be no further reinforcements for the Central Mediterranean Forces.' So all medical tags were promptly changed to Category (A) or 'return to unit as soon as possible.' At least, the pill was sweetened a bit, in that we did return to our own units, and not to some other regiment.

Later, in Holland, I met one of the infantry lads, and we had quite a laugh about the extreme flexibility of military medical decisions.

Source: Arnold McCourt

JUNE 7

'C' and 'B' Squadrons, with 'A' in reserve, are held up by large demolitions at Subiaco. Repatriated British POWs meet us.

Source: Lt. Murray O'Dell's personal diary

JUNE 7

Twenty-three Canadian POWs are executed by their German SS captors, as Canada's D-Day contingent moves inland.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 8

Bailey bridge built over Subiaco gorge. Advance continues to below Arsoli.

German forces withdraw along the Adriatic coast.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

The 12th SS Hitlerjugend Panzer Grenadiers murder Canadian POWs as the Allied forces move inland from the D-Day beaches. Six Winnipeg Rifles and a Red Cross stretcher-bearer are shot in the temple; 13 more Canadians are executed within 100 metres of the command post; seven more are found nearby, and 40 men of the Winnipeg Rifles and Cameron Highlanders are marched into a field, ordered to sit together with the wounded at their centre, and machine-gunned. Only five escape.

Source: National Post, Canada

JUNE 9

Arsoli cleared of enemy with support of our tanks under Capt. Frank Simard's command.

JUNE 10

Our Regiment moves along Highway #5 to harbour near Tivoli. Some of our personnel taken to Rome for a day's leave, and our Chaplain, Rev. J.L. Wilhelm arranges an audience with Pope Pius XII for 6 of our R.C.s.

JUNE 14

Tanks moved on transporters (scamels) to area south of Capenia, off Highway #3.

JUNE 15

The Three Rivers Regiment (12 CAR) is now supporting the 4th British Division.

JUNE 19

The Three Rivers Regiment is now supporting East Surrey Regiment. Moved by transporters north of Viterbo... Also supporting 2nd Kings of 27th Brigade.

JUNE 24

**Wounded in action:
T.E. Fecteau**

JUNE 24

'B' Squadron supports the 2nd Somerset Light Infantry through Strada, to the high ground one mile to the north, against heavy opposition.

**Killed today:
Bill Tyo
John Grimstead**

**Wounded today:
Cpt. Donald C. MacCallum
Lt. Jack R.B. Purcell (2nd time)**

A-102086 W.T. McDaniel (second time)
A-104919 W.H. Dicker
H-63864 R.C. Haimes

Missing in action:
D-134782 D.J. Price
L-54912 W.L. Pollack
B-67937 John J. Grasley

Injured in action:
B-67933 Charles A. Giroux

anecdote

It happened just before the near-disastrous battle at Lago Trasimene. It was raining hard and had been for some time. Bill Alderson, with his usual clever anticipation, had straddled a narrow creek with a stretcher, and laid himself down to sleep. But he woke up to find his feet were dangling in water. (OK, you would let your feet hang out, too, if they smelled like Bill's!)

Anyway, never short of alternatives, Bill remembered that our C.O. Fern Caron was away up front and his 'caravan' was not. That is, the two-room truck that contained the C.O.'s office and bedroom had a vacancy. So Bill entered it gingerly, probing blindly in the dark to situate himself. Slowly, cautiously, he found the flimsy bedroom door and knocked ever so gently on its frame.

When there was no gruff "Who goes there?" or maybe even a shot in the dark, Bill inched forward towards the bed, still probing blindly; keenly aware that if the bed were after all occupied, he would be the first sergeant in our Regiment ever to be hauled up for conduct unbecoming a supposedly 'straight' member of the forces. Finally, when, his fingers found nothing but blankets, Bill gratefully slipped in between them and slept the sleep of the just. And got away with it!

Source: Bill Alderson himself

Aside

It was Lt. Farrow's first day in action. What an introduction!

Source: Capt. Ian Grant

JUNE 25

'B' Squadron last night lost 5 men: the complete crew of Lt. W.H. Prince's tank. They are believed to have been taken prisoner, based on the following last radio message from Cpl. Doug Howie: "We've fired everything we had. Even our 'Veri' lights. Here they come." The other members of the crew are Cpl. A.C. Grasley and Tpr.s. W.L. Pollack, D.J. Price and W.H. Dicker. These are the first men of the 12 Canadian Armoured Regiment to be lost as prisoners of war.

anecdote

When my tank was disabled, I took over Cpl. Doug Howie's; he took over mine, which was to be rescued by our regimental recovery crew. But the intense enemy fire kept the infantry from catching up with us, and we were ordered to withdraw. The enemy surrounded the marooned tank after dark.

When Cpl. Howie's crew ran out of ammo, and the tank's exterior equipment began to burn, they had to bail out and were taken prisoner. All survived their imprisonment.

Source: Bill Prince

anecdote

At the fateful battle at Lake Trasimeno, Capt. W. Prince was our troop officer and, although I don't recall 'charging through', we did end up on the hill ahead of the British infantry. Capt. Prince's tank had thrown a track. So, being surrounded by German troops, the other two tanks positioned themselves so as to protect one another.

Cpl. Doug Howie (another Oshawa boy) was our crew commander and, near the end of the day, he and Capt. Prince exchanged tanks. When we were ordered to pull out, Doug Howie asked permission to return with the other tanks after making his guns inoperative. Permission was granted, then, withdrawn, for whatever reason. We were gone less than five minutes when Howie came on the air, saying they were surrounded and being taken prisoner.

Needless to say, when we arrived back at a farm-house and found the British infantry there, we were quite pissed off and let them know what we thought of them. After this incident, Lt. Lunderville became our Troop Officer and Sgt. Jack Harris, our crew commander.

Source: Bill Tweedie

JUNE 25

'C' Squadron and 2/4 Hampshire Regiment push their way through Vaian.

anecdote

From Monte Cassino to Lake Trasimeno, Hank Hassel and Jack Forsyth (driver and co-driver) and I were the mainstay of our tank crew. Sgt. J. Glaister (recently transferred from the Ontario Tank Regt.) and new gunner Cameron now completed our crew. On June 24, our corporal's tank was hit, killing the driver Bill Tyo and co-driver John Grimstead.

Our own tank was also disabled by an 88 H.E., putting us out of action for two days. But we still attended a meeting at Battle Capt. Grant's tank. The meeting proved short and hectic, because of heavy shelling. During one such interruption, Jack Forsyth upset a half-gallon can of water in the scramble for cover, also upsetting a thoroughly drenched Capt. Ian Grant.

Source: Gerry Killoran

JUNE 25-26

During the night, at about 0200 hrs, there is quite a rumpus up in 'C' Squadron's area. The enemy counter-attacks and walks right into a houseful of about 20 infantrymen. The 'Jerries' yell: "Hands Up! You belong to us now; come with us and we won't shoot you." He takes about 12 -- the rest escaping out back windows. Apparently, the Infantry have no FDLs (Forward Defensive Lines) or else they are very poorly trained. This exposes our 'C' Squadron tanks to almost anything the 'Jerries' decide on. There is a great deal of firing, and 'C' Squadron has one tank 'brewed up' by a bazooka (panzerfaust).

At about 1000 hrs, 'B' Squadron moves ahead with its seven tanks (5 Baker is unable to budge); and, cutting right, halts at a position that dominates the road.

'A' Squadron then moves up through LOPI village and on to ground overlooking GIORELLA. Co-operation with the Infantry is NIL. The big reason is that the 28th Brigade was cut up rather badly at the Gustav Line, and has green reinforcements. In one company alone of the 2nd Kings Reg't, there are 90 reinforcements!

At about 1900 hrs, an attack tees off on the Villa of Giorella. Tanks are a few minutes late across the Start Line, and Infantry

is cut up by small arms fire. 'A' Company has one officer left, its Company Commander.

However, two more companies go in and, by last light, practically all resistance in the village has ceased. 'A' Squadron has a couple of brew-ups. Two men are killed, including Cpl. K.C. Barland who was to leave for England in 3 days to attend an officers training course.

Editor's Note

Lt. Murray O'Dell was wounded but remained on duty.

'A' Squadron has one killed and about seven wounded (4 minor) during the day. 'C' Squadron is hard hit: One stray mortar shell lands in the centre of a group around one of the carriers. Captain E.V. Walters is killed, and the carrier driver Tpr. W.C. Reich is also killed. Lt. J. Garfinkle is seriously wounded, and six others as well. The Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.A.R.) is suffering more casualties than in the battles for the Gustav and Hitler Lines. And personnel and tank re-inforcements are very short, mainly because the tank railhead is about 200 miles back at Cassino, and transporters and road space are very limited.

Editor's Note

Tpr. Bernard Eager was first reported missing. Then was found with 13 bullets in him -- none fatal.

JUNE 25

Killed in action:

**Cpl. K.C. Barland
Captain E.V. Walter
Tpr. W.C. Reich
Malcolm Delaney**

Wounded:

**Lt. J. Garfinkle
Elmer N. Bowerman
D-36535 Dieudonné Lauzon
B-74048 Tpr.. E. Sims
G-918 Gerald H. Abell (2nd time)
H-37668 K.G. Abbott
B-61528 W. (Bill) R. Dewars
A-46 W. Harris**

Here are the squadron set-ups:

'A' Squadron OC: Acting/Major A.E. Woods
Acting/2 i/c: Capt. F.W. Simard
Acting Battle Capt.: Lt. R.H. Heggie

'B' Squadron A/OC: Capt. N.A. Dickens
2 i/c: Capt. R. Crooks

'C' Squadron OC: Major F.W. Johnson
2 i/c: Capt. Ian Grant
Battle Capt.: G. Anderson

JUNE 25

Capt. N.H. Bier returns this morning to his Battle Captain post, in the absence of officers of any sort, let alone experienced ones.

anecdote

Here's an anecdote written by 'Roly' Kahnert as a tribute to the 114 killed in action in our Regiment: "So Long Steve!"

Tpr. Malcolm Stevensen joined our Regiment in June 1944, after the costly Battle of Lake Trasimeno. He was assigned to replace a man in 'A' Squadron's #2 Troop as co-driver of the tank commanded by Thor Olson, senior sergeant of the Regiment. After a poorly organized combined night attack -- past a town called Tuori (just west of Arezzo) -- our Squadron harboured for the rest of the night on a rocky hillside, off a narrow dirt road. However, that road gave out just a little further on.

Come dawn of July 7, I, as Troop Leader and Lt. Murray O'Dell left the tanks to 'recce' on foot and found a way forward. But, on our way back to the Squadron, we heard some enemy shelling. A brief barrage: six rounds of H.E. at the most.

It was an American make, with "Donated by the Society of Friends" printed on its side: The driver was hatless, dressed in the American summer uniform, and looked like the character actor: Slim Summerville. He said: "Hi, fellas. I heard you need help."

We told him it was too late; our man was dead. His face quickly changed, and he said something like: "Gee, I'm sorry. But don't you worry; I'll take good care of him." We wrapped Malcolm in his blanket, placed him on a stretcher, and gently slid him into the back of his ambulance. As the driver slowly moved off, someone called out: "So long, Stevie." Bert Merdock, his gunner-

op, was crying.

"Why did it have to be you, Steve?" we wondered. He was the youngest in our Troop. Only 19. But, if we believe the Canadian Legion invocation we say so often, we must remember him still as the young, smiling, capable young trooper who "never caused any trouble." He has reached the goal of all of us. And I believe, when I recall his smiling face, he's telling me he is in the presence of God.

After Steve's death, our Troop seemed to pull even closer together. We became more protective of each other. Almost like a family. Malcolm Delaney, our other wounded man, died the following day. After that, no more deaths in No.2 troop, although a few guys had to be hospitalized.

A few weeks later, I talked to Major Glass, the Medical Officer in charge of the forward Casualty Station, where our two men had been taken. I remarked that Malcolm Stevenson had been brought to them by an American ambulance, and that the driver was a member of the Society of Friends (or Quakers). He said in surprise: "We never had any American ambulance here -- the nearest Americans are many miles west of our area!"

Then who was this friendly non-combattant helper? Where did he go after taking Steve to the Medical Unit? Or do you believe, as I do, that in wartime and moments of great tragedy, we mortals are sometimes helped by beings from a higher level?

JUNE 26

**Also killed in action today:
Capt. E.V. Walters**

Also wounded today:

Lt. James Garfinkle

D-36323 Sgt. 'Hank' J. Dodds (remains on duty)

L-34253 Monte C. Witbeck

C-6121 Tom C. Woolner

A-4270 R.D. Dunlop

D-71081 William (Bill) Howarth

F-32373 G. Petit

B-61825 J.D. Steep

B-67968 George C. Wilson

B-144415 D.R. Bramhill

B-48798 A.H. Brigham

B-83375 Dave T. Dodds

B-61529 J.J. Green

K-74713 J. Heide

JUNE 27

It seems that the enemy has been taking advantage of our rather loose wireless communication conversations. During the Gustav and Hitler Line shows, security was universally good. However, since the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade went into action at Vaiano, it (security) has been practically NIL. Intentions have been given in clear: times of attack, objectives, details of casualties. Jerry has had ample time to act on "our" information, and has done so on several occasions.

When we have called for smoke, he has laid down a screen on another front. When we've called for ARTY, he has laid it down on another hill; thus confusing the issue considerably. When we have given intentions for the morrow, he has thickened up on the objectives we gave. Today, the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade begins a campaign to tighten up, and it is energetically driven home in our Regiment.

Wounded today:

J.P.E. Walsh
Edward (Ted) Harnett
F-50080 G.J. Cameron

JUNE 27

Each night, over the air to the CO's tank "DEFIANT," comes a strange lot of jumbled figures and bits of information; quite unintelligible to the enemy. But, to Sgt. Bob Pay, loader-operator of the tank, it means a great deal -- besides the work it entails. It gives all squadrons' requirements in food, petrol, ammo, men (officers, fitters, etc.), and spare parts (bogies, etc.). Then Sgt. Pay relays this "Supplies Demand" to 'A' Echelon via Sgt. Charlie Lines on the Admin. Net. The supplies are loaded on trucks and taken up to a rendezvous where, if it is not too 'hot' up at the front, a guide meets them and they proceed to their respective Squadrons. This way, too, hot meals are brought up to the fighting men when conditions permit.

If there is shelling and/or mortaring up at the front, men and supplies are picked up at the rendezvous and delivered by Recce's Honey tanks. And Lt. Street's Recce Troop has been doing a most commendable job. They sometimes go day and night, carrying in re-inforcements and supplies, and carrying out casualties. Sgt. Gwyl Jones, Sgt. Kilbourne and Sgt. Bob Gladnick and their crews have been doing fine work.

JUNE 28

Today proves a hard day for the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank). At 0830 hrs, large numbers of the enemy are reported withdrawing east from Giorella. It presents an excellent target, but 13th Corps decides it is too close.

'C' Squadron cuts the Casamaggiore-Castiglione lateral road and runs into heavy opposition. 'B' Squadron moves in to help. However, as the 10th British Infantry Brigade is in process of relieving the 28th British Infantry Brigade (both part of the 4th British Division), there is no attack till about 1000 hrs. 'A' Squadron supports the 1/6 Surreys into Casamaggiore.

At 1100 hrs, 'B' Squadron with 2 DCLIs are on the move. Only slight opposition is encountered. By 1210 hrs, they report Infantry held up at SELVELLA on a forward slope. Artillery shakes this up and, at 1500 hrs, tanks and Infantry are 1000 yards east of Giorella and 500 yards south of the main lateral road. By last light, they have reached high ground, where they consolidate for the night.

At 0300 hrs, 'C' Squadron prepares for battle. The Squadron has 14 fighting-fit tanks, 2 M.10 Tank Busters, one Medium Artillery FOO (Forward Observation Officer), and one S.P 105mm FOO.

At 0530 hrs, Major F.W. Johnson moves his squadron forward. Noticing that there is no Infantry about, he reports the fact. The Infantry L.O., in the co- driver's seat, then informs him that Zero Hour has been postponed to 0630 hrs. This is unfortunate, because the tanks have already shown themselves; thus giving the enemy an ample hour in which to prepare for us.

However, at 0630 hrs, the attack proceeds. By 0800 hrs, the first objective is ours and the tanks press on to the "Bentley" objective by 1100 hrs. But not without cost: Panthers and S.P.s, from the high ground on the left, 'A.P.' 8 of our tanks, 5 being brew-ups. Major F.W. Johnson's tank sustains several hits and is stopped in its tracks. He tells the driver to advance, but it's no go. Seeing enemy paratroopers all about, he radios Capt. Ian M. Grant to take over the Squadron, and orders his crew to evacuate. Immediately they hit the ground, they are forced to hug a ditch because of the heavy small arms crossfire. Major F.W. Johnson buries his official papers; then, peering over the edge, he observes his own tank gun slowly traversing towards them. He figures the 'Jerrys' must have taken it over. So, helping his wounded man, they all up and double through a

wheatfield over to a house. There, with one Tommy gun, a P.38 and a grenade they find, they hole up till dark; then, make their way back.

On the “Bentley” objective, only 50 Infantrymen and 3 of our tanks are able to fight on (and one of the tanks is immobilized and can only fire straight ahead).

Capt. I.M. Grant, now in command, holds the ground. The enemy’s counter-attacks, with armour, are beaten off again and again.

Editor’s Note

War diaries are necessarily very sketchy, due to pressures of time and field conditions. With the result that, the human dimension, and individual heroics (an almost inherent part of battle) are usually missing in the dry accounts of each day’s happenings. So the following personal details and Official Citation, while exceptional, will serve to illustrate what can lie behind as bald and terse a statement of fact as the previous short paragraph.

On this day, Capt. Ian MacDonald Grant of ‘C’ Squadron learns he has been given the immediate award of a D.S.O. This, for a Captain, is a very great honour, very close to a V.C. (in fact, a V.C. had been recommended). He is due all honour and congratulations. This award is made for exceedingly good work and outstanding bravery in the Lake Trasimeno Line. Here is a verbatim account of that action, from the Citation itself:

Official Citation

On 28 June 1944, at about 0900 hrs, ‘C’ Squadron of 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR) was in support of Bedfs and Herts Regt of the 10th Infantry Brigade, with as objective the immediate high ground. The taking and holding of this ground was essential to the success of a later attack by ‘A’ Squadron on Casamaggiore.

Starting from the road running from Casamaggiore to the Cemetery, the two forward troops had to cross about a mile of rolling country heavily defended by German paratroopers and tanks. The two reserve troops and reserve infantry were pinned down on the start line by fire. But the Squadron Leader, and the Squadron 2 i/c Capt. Ian Grant, with 2 Troop right and 5 Troop (minus one tank) left, under heavy A.P. and H.E. fire, reached the reverse slope north of the second ravine, in the heart of the Trasimeno Line. Here, the force came under intense fire from the left and rear, and from the right flank. The Squadron Leader’s tank, and two tanks of 5 Troop and one tank of 2 Troop were hit in rapid succession, and eventually, they were all ‘brewed up.’ Captain Grant immediately turned in the

direction of the heaviest fire and engaged a German Panther, firing seven rounds and forcing the German to withdraw. Realizing that the Squadron Leader was out of the battle, Captain Grant took over and re-organized his command, which now consisted of three tanks, one of which was immobilized but able to give supporting fire.

With this small force, he pressed forward the attack, shepherding the infantry, who had suffered heavily through murderous fire -- to covered positions near the house at M.R. 355934, where he directed fire on German positions for two hours. At about noon, a counter-attack came in, supported by four Panthers which were seen moving east along the lateral track towards the house and which had already begun to strafe the F.D.L.s of the British Infantry.

Captain Grant decided to meet this attack by taking up better fire positions on the crest of the high ground to the west, from which the approaches could be commanded; fully aware that by doing so he must expose himself to fire from the unprotected right flank. The third tank was unable to move due to mechanical failure. But Captain Grant, with the Troop Leader of 2 Troop, moved out and took up positions on the left and right of the track respectively, leaving the third tank to cover the right flank.

The two forward tanks then put down a fierce and continuous fire on the approaching enemy, with such good effect that the enemy was forced to keep his tanks behind cover and to withdraw his badly mauled infantry. Having failed in his first attack, the enemy then attempted to infiltrate through the crops, still supported by his tanks.

To meet this new threat, Captain Grant left his tank and proceeded on foot, under heavy fire to find the enemy who had formed into small groups widely dispersed among the standing crops. Continually exposed, and, by this time, a target for snipers and mortars, Captain Grant narrowly escaped injury and death time and again. Despite the danger, he persevered for five hours, locating the enemy group by group; leading his tanks from one fire position to the next; and personally directing their fire with such telling effect that the counter-attack collapsed. So aggressively did Captain Grant pursue the enemy, that the battle was literally carried against the attacker who finally retreated, leaving many dead and wounded behind. Later in the day, Capt. Grant set out on foot to observe 'A' Squadron's attack on CASA MAGGIORE, and to identify a tank, which the infantry had seen in the area. With continued disregard for his own safety, he crawled out to a position of observation south of the house and identified a well-camouflaged Panther at approx. M.R. 345926 which occupied a commanding position on 'A' Squadron's left flank.

Realizing the seriousness of this threat to the 'A' Sqdn attack, he returned to his tank and, with cool deliberation, moved it out into open ground. Then, in plain view of the Mk V, he opened fire and forced it to withdraw -- together with a second tank; the two moving northwards in the direction of NARDELLI. Anticipating another counter-attack, he returned to his former position. As the German tanks moved into his area, he attempted to manoeuvre into a position from which to fire, but they did not come in view. Rapidly estimating their position, he called for artillery fire, causing them to disperse rapidly northward. Captain Grant continued to hold the ground under continuous fire until reinforcement tanks and infantry arrived at 2300 hrs. The cool daring, initiative, complete disregard for his own safety, and superb leadership displayed by Captain Ian Grant in the face of terrific odds and under murderous fire was of the highest order and resulted in the objective being gained, the piercing of the TRASIMENO Line, and the collapse of at least two counter-attacks; while undoubtedly saving 'A' Squadron and its accompanying infantry from heavy losses in tanks and men. Further, his personal example was such an inspiration to the men under his command that they were able to carry the fight over nearly insurmountable obstacles into the very centre of a heavily defended locality.

Tpr. Vern Dowie, who was Capt. Grant's "cool-hand Luke" gunner throughout this action, remembers: "that, upon locating one of the offending enemy tanks, he decided to save time by firing the H.E. already in the breach -- before loading an A.P. A happy decision. The H.E., which "bull's-eyed" on the ring between the enemy tank's turret and hull, seemed to shake up the enemy tank crew enough to keep them from firing back immediately. However, when Vern's next A.P. simply bounced off the front of the enemy's tank hull like a rocket, Capt. Grant promptly and wisely ordered his tank into hull-down position in a nearby bomb crater.

During this action, too, his driver, C.M. Morris, who had a brother-in-law serving with the British Regiment that our Unit was supporting, actually saw him killed. And, although he and Bob Palmer, his loader-operator, had stuffed their tank with 17 more 75mm shells than their normal complement of 35, and with 22 more belts of Browning ammo than the regulation 28; and although Capt. Grant and Bob Palmer had supplemented this with scrounged ammo from nearby knocked-out but as yet 'unbrewed' Shermans -- at the height of the action, Vern Dowie ended that long day with only two smoke rounds and half a belt of Browning bullets left.

anecdote

Cpl. 'Tony' Gendron, who was running in supplies in his Recce 'Honey' tank that day, remembers that his Recce tank and at least 5 others, were ordered to race up and down the battlefield and flatten the tall crops; thus 'smoking out' the hidden enemy paratroopers. He also recalls that his tank hit at least one paratrooper in the process, and saw others meet the same fate under other racing 'Honeys.'

'Tony' also recalls that he and other Recce tank crews brought well-deserved hot meals (their first meal of the day) to the remaining Sherman crews at 2300 hrs.

Editor's Note

The following anecdotes will also help to flesh out the bare bones of the War Diary's account of this fateful day.

anecdote

On June 28, 1944, at Lake Trasimeno, at approx. 5 a.m., the crack of dawn, Sgt. J. Glaister's tank, part of Lt. A.F. Farrow's troop, may have been the first one hit by an anti-tank weapon. The driver E. "Hank" Hassell was killed. So was his co-driver Jack Forsyth. Bob Cameron, the gunner, was wounded in the throat, but not mortally. Gerry Killoran, the loader-operator, was incapacitated for six months by severe injuries to his left ankle and right shin. And Sgt. Glaister sustained a facial injury. Their tank immediately caught fire, and exploded soon after it was evacuated.

Source: Gerry Killoran

JUNE 28

Both Forsyth brothers, Jimmy and John, are killed in action at the Trasimeno Line today, while serving in separate tanks of 'C' Squadron. And B-88122 Bernard M. Eager is reported missing.

anecdote

On that day, the parents of Jimmy and John Forsyth wended their way from Kirkland Lake to the countryside for a two-day rest. A telegram announcing Jimmy's death reached them on arrival there, and they turned back; only to find another telegram at home announcing that their other son John had also been killed in the same action.

Source: Frank Johnson

JUNE 28

T.W.S. Webb does a particularly efficient job of observing Artillery shoots from a position where he is exposed to anti-tank fire.

Meantime 'B' Squadron is ordered up on the right to aid 'C' Squadron and cover their right flank. Battle Capt. N.H. Bier and 2 i/c Capt. W.R. Crooks move up onto the road west of the cemetery. All is quiet, so Capt. Crooks tells Capt. Bier he will move down the road and try to draw some fire. Nosing over a sharp bump, he pauses and is taken aback. A platoon of enemy Paratroopers is marching down the road three abreast. When they see the tank, they halt as if to an order, look stunned, then dive for the bushes. The tank's gun cannot be depressed sufficiently, so the tank moves forward and the gunner gives them H.E.

Still no enemy A.P. fire or otherwise. So 2 i/c begins backing his tank to its original position. It has hardly moved 20 feet when an A.P. passes through both sides of the turret, between Capt. Crooks' legs. Crew evacuates; one man is wounded. Capt. Crooks gets his men into a ditch and leads them to a safer spot. He calls Lt. J. Oliphant to bandage them, and rushes to Capt. Bier's tank, which is also on fire. One member of the crew is badly wounded. He bandages him up and carries him out. After which, the ammo in the tank explodes, lifting off the turret.

'C' Squadron's Forward Observation Officer is also killed in his tank.

Lt. W.S. Webb's tank is A.P.ed and this officer, a fine man, is killed.

Capt. N.H. Bier, one of the Regiment's best-liked officers, and an excellent Battle Captain, also dies at his post -- in his tank.

'A' Squadron moves up this evening and tees up an attack on Casamaggiore with the 1/6 Surreys. 'A' Squadron 'shoots' them from objective to objective, then covers them into town. No TRR and very few Infantry casualties here.

Civilian reports indicate the 'Boche' is pulling out entirely now. These reports are substantiated by the movement, and noise on the other side of town. Artillery is in order. But no one knows the exact whereabouts of the Beds & Herts, so the answer is

negative; presuming, of course, that the Infantry is sitting on the road over which Jerry is retreating.

excerpt

It is our Regiment's roughest day on record, and everyone feels deeply the loss of so many fine officers and men.

Source: regimental War Diary

JUNE 28

Killed in action:

**Lt. W.S. Webb
Capt. N.H. Bier**

Wounded:

**Lt. Clifford B. Anderson
F-30360 W. McDonald
B-62034 Edward F. (Ted) Harnett
D-36424 Joe P. Duffy
D-71078 John 'Knobby' P. Walsh
H-64957 D. Williams
H-1255 A.R. Budd
D-38010 R. Dubé
B-131342 Gerald R. Killoran
M-56997 N.R. Lee
D-111974 Robert G.L. Lee**

JUNE 29

Weather: clear and hot.

Today, there is a rumour that the 12th C.A.R. (TRR) will finally be pulled out for a rest. But an order is given instead to advance. At 0930 hrs, 'A' Squadron moves off and heads for Pozzuolo with the 1st Surreys. Civilian reports indicate enemy pulled out during night, to the north. Another civilian reports that some 40 tanks are moving northwest from Petignano. However, civilian reports are accepted with reservations in military quarters.

By 1050 hrs, Infantry are in Pozzuolo, covered in by 'A' Squadron's guns, and report the place heavily mined and booby-trapped. Tanks follow them in.

At about 1200 hrs, 'C' Sqdn, with acting captain L. Grant as C.O., and Lt. J.R. Hunter as Acting Battle Captain, having brought up three tanks during the night, move up on 'A' Squadron's right.

At 1310 hrs, reports come over the air that Castiglione is clear, and whole enemy line is backing up several miles. Seems that the American capture of Pinbena on the coast, and the Three Rivers Regiment's smashing of the Lake Trasimeno Line at Casamaggiore, have forced a general withdrawal. The 14th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Calgary) has come up during the night and swung left of the main axis. At 1505 hrs, they report Laviano clear.

Our 'A' Squadron observes civilians hanging out their washing and, presuming no 'Jerries' to be there, move up and consolidate with 1st Surreys. This Battalion of Infantry has proved very good, and the close Infantry-cum-tank co-operation is beginning to work very smoothly.

Our 'C' Squadron meanwhile moves up on right, reaches road objective by 1930 hrs, and beds down for night.

Regtl HQ (TAC) pulls up its pegs and moves to a new harbour area on the lateral road between Pozzuolo and Castiglione, this, to keep in close contact with the 10th Brigade H.Q. (just across the road).

Our 'A' Echelon has moved up during the day, to just below Giorella. Should also mention that our Regiment's M.O., Capt. W.H. Clare, moved up from Vaiano to Pozzuolo at noon. He has always had his R.A.P. well forward, and has been doing a most appreciated job.

Our 'B' Sqdn moves to a forward concentration area with the D.C.L.I., and are in place by 2100 hrs. Capt. N.A. Dickens, Acting O.C., liaises with the Commanding Officer of the DCLI; and "O" Group is held late this night. The I.O., Lt. H.D. Beach, takes up maps and gives new officers some chinagraph pencils.

A rather uneventful day as far as any fighting is concerned. General advance.

Our 'A' Squadron advances through Fozzuolo to within 2 miles of Petriano. Our 'C' Squadron keeps pace on the right flank.

anecdote

When Doug Howie and his crew, out in No Man's Land and out of ammo, were captured (the only 12 C.A.R. tank crew ever to be taken prisoner), Armand Desfossés, the carpenter in 'A' echelon, misinterpreted the news and prepared crosses to mark their graves. And he compounded his mistake by stencelling Dowie V. instead of Howie D. on one of the crosses. Vern Dowie found this a mite unsettling, to say the least.

Source: Charlie Desbiens

JUNE 30

'B' Squadron pushes into Petrignano with Duke of Connaught's Light Infantry, completing our Regiment's advance through the Trasimeno Line.

Wounded today:

B-50771 H.T. Nelson

K-45404 J. Watterson

F-32704 T.W. Brushett

K-73496 W.E.G. Hawkins

Battle casualties during operations from June 24 to June 30, 1944

Killed in Action:

Officers

Capt. D.K. Dawson (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron

Capt. E.V. Walters (26 June '44) 'C' Squadron

A/Capt. N.H. Bier (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron

Lt. W.S. Webb (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Other Ranks

Tpr. L. St. Louis (24 June '44) 'C' Squadron

L/Cpl E.E. Franklin (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron

Tpr. F. Reich (26 June '44) 'HQ' Squadron

Tpr. K.C. Barland (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron

Tpr. J.E. Grimstead (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Tpr. E.J. Jones (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron

Tpr. W.W. Tyo (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Tpr. J.R. Forsyth (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron

L/Cpl E. Hassell (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Sgt B.F. Tarling (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron

Tpr. E.R. Desroches (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
Tpr. H.R. Erikson (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
Tpr. C. MacAskill (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Wounded in action:

Officers

A/Major D.C. McCallum (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
Lt. J.R. Purcell (24 June '44) 'C' Squadron
Capt. C.B. Anderson (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Other Ranks:

H-63864 A/Cpl. R.C. Haimes (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
A-102086 Tpr. W.T. McDaniel (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
C-58164 Cpl. J.H. Young (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
H-37668 Tpr. K.J. Abbott (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron
G-918 Tpr. G.H. Abell (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron
K-76908 Tpr. E.N. Bowerman (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron
B-48798 Cpl. A.H. Brigham (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
U-2046 Tpr. T.D. Dodds (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
D-123047 Tpr. A.J. Hubbard (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-74048 Tpr. E. Sims (24 June '44) 'C' Squadron
A-46 Tpr. W. Harris (25 June '44) 'HQ' Squadron
B-67968 Cpl. G.C. Wilson (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-61795 Tpr. P.T. Beishlag (26 June '44) 'B' Sqdn (died later)
B-61529 Tpr. J.J. Green (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-61825 Tpr. J.D. Steep (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
C-6121 Cpl. T.C. Woolner (26 June '44) 'C' Squadron
F-88233 Pte. J.H. Crowdis (26 June '44) 'HQ' Squadron (RCASC)
B-144415 Tpr.D.R. Bramhill (26 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-61528 L/Cpl. W.R. Dewars (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron
A-4270 Tpr. R.D. Dunlop (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron
C-101713 Tpr. C.G. Evans (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron
D-71081 Cpl. W.E. Howarth (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron
L-34253 Tpr. M.C. Witbeck (26 June '44) 'C' Squadron
H-1255 Tpr. A.R. Budd (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
G-51285 Tpr. R.J. Caissie (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
D-38010 Cpl. R Dubé (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
D-36424 Cpl. J.P. Duffy (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
G-56780 Tpr. L.C. Calhoun (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-62034 Tpr. E.F. Harnett (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
F-50680 Tpr. G.J. Cameron (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
D-131342 Tpr.G.R. Killoran (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
D-71078 Tpr. J.P.E. Walsh (27 June '44) 'A' Squadron
D-111974 Tpr. R.G.L. Lee (28 June '44) 'A' Squadron

F-30360 Tpr. J.A. McDonald (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
D-26061 Tpr. A.W. Owen (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
H-64957 A/L/Cpl. D. Williams (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron
A-4504 Tpr. J.T. Forsyth (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron (died later)
K-73496 Tpr. W.E.G. Hawkins (30 June '44) 'A' Squadron
B-50771 Tpr. H.T. Nelson (30 June '44) 'A' Squadron
K-45404 Tpr. J. Waterson (30 June '44) 'A' Squadron
F-32708 Tpr. T.W. Brushett (30 June '44) 'A' Squadron
D-1Tpr. T.E. Fecteau (30 June '44) 'A' Squadron

Wounded – remained on duty

Officers

A/Capt. N.H. Bier (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron (killed later)
Lt. J.M. O'Dell (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron

Other ranks

K-74713 Tpr. J. Heide (24 June '44) 'C' Squadron
D-36323 A/Sgt. H. J. Dodds (26 June '44) 'HQ' Squadron F-76945
A/Cpl. J. Hoffen (26 June '44) 'HQ' Sqdn (RCASC) F-32373 Tpr.
G. Petite (26 June '44) 'C' Squadron
M-56997 Tpr. N.R. Lee (28 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-130154 Tpr. E.F. O'Brien (28 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Battle Accidents

B-67933 Sgt. C.A. Giroux (24 June '44) 'C' Squadron
D-36484 Tpr. W. Kay (26 June '44) 'A' Squadron

Missing

A-104919 Tpr. W.H. Dicker (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-67937 Cpl. J.J. Grasley (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
C-6310 A/Cpl. D.G. Howie (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
L-54912 Tpr. W.L. Pollack (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-134872 Tpr. D.J. Price (24 June '44) 'B' Squadron
B-88112 Tpr. B. Eager (25 June '44) 'C' Squadron

Recapitulation:

	Killed	Wounded	Injured	Missing	Died/ wounds	Remained on Duty
Officers:	4	5	1	1	2	
ORs:	13	42	2	6	2	6

Vehicle casualties:

During the period 24 June -- 1 July, on the approach march Montefiascone to Citta del Pieve, the following tank casualties occurred:

'A' Squadron -- 1 tank -- ditched
1 tank -- lost idler
1 tank -- broken track

'B' Squadron -- casualties: NIL

'C' Squadron -- 2 tanks -- broken idlers

'HQ' Squadron -- 1 tank -- steering trouble

Note: 15 tanks also had fuel problems, result of running with low petrol levels.

Recent Operations:

'A' Squadron 1 tank - track broken by shellfire -- repaired
1 tank - tipped on side - recovered
1 tank - hit by bazooka
1 tank - hit by A.P. on gearbox - caught fire
1 tank evacuated - clutch trouble
1 tank - sprocket hit by shellfire

'B' Squadron 1 tank - broken final drive - repaired
2 tanks - hit by A.P. - caught fire

'C' Squadron 7 tanks hit by A.P. - caught fire
1 tank - hit by bazooka - caught fire
2 tanks - hit mines - one repaired
1 tank - track cut by A.P. - repaired
1 tank - required major repair on 75mm
1 tank - hub & sprocket hit by H.E. - repaired
2 tanks - hit by A.P. on final drive
1 tank - hit by A.P. - 8 hits, gearbox and hull

JULY 1

After the Trasimeno battle, Lt. Gen. S.O. Kirkam, CB, CBE, MC, stated: "My corps (15th British Corps) has learned all the how of armoured fighting from the First Canadian Armoured Brigade."

JULY 6

'A' Squadron moves with 1/6 Surreys into the mountains northwest of Tuori.

**Wounded today:
A-55185 M.L. Dugal**

editorial

In Maple Leaf, July 10, 1944, signed J.L.M.

"A job well done."

One year ago today, the First Canadian Division and First Canadian Armoured Brigade stormed ashore in an assault landing on the beaches south of Pachino in Sicily to open a new chapter in the Canadian War Book.

Since zero hour on July 10, 1943, when landing craft rolled ashore on a swell that was not suitable for combined operations and the push across Sicily began, many new chapters have been added to the book, each filled with its own saga of glorious deeds. Sometimes, the tales are of the spectacular; many times they are of grim, routine days. Nowhere does there appear the word 'failure.'

It was an untried army which crushed slight Italian resistance on the beaches and commenced chase that hot day. There could have been excuses, if things had gone wrong; for the Canadians, in less than two weeks, had come from the comparative cool of Scotland to a land of stifling, near-tropical heat. They had been on board ship several days longer, without adequate exercise. Excuses were not necessary. The Canadians overcame the climatic conditions as they did the enemy. The infantry pounded many a weary mile along roads inches deep in dust, all the while stirred up into a choking, whirling fog, which penetrated deep in throats until it seemed breathing must become impossible.

For the first four days, there was no serious opposition. Then the Canadian advance ran into Jerry for the first time, and from then on it

was a battle against rearguards. There were several such bitter struggles before Sicily was finally cleared August 17. From this emerged a division and an armoured brigade who had learned much; had become battlewise to the extent that Gen. Montgomery classed them "veterans of the Eighth Army" -- high praise 'longside such famous British divisions as the 50th and the 51st.'

Editor's Note

In point of fact, the Three Rivers Reg't (12 CAR) was the only regiment of the First Canadian Armoured Brigade actively engaged in and throughout the Sicilian campaign.

Today, 366 days later (it's Leap Year), there are many changes in the division and the armored brigade. Comparatively few of the originals of the Sicilian landing are in the fighting lines. Many have given their lives. Many others have been wounded so severely that their fighting days are over.

Still others have passed to different formations to hand down the benefits of their experience. "In their places have come new officers and new men, who have kept the torch high. But it can be said safely that the foundation of all the triumphs of the Canadian Corps in Italy were laid on the morning of July 10, 1943, when the First Canadian Division and the First Canadian Armoured Brigade touched down in Sicily. "They did their job, and they did it well."

JULY 8

It is plenty 'hot' up where our forward tanks are. 'A' Sqn is huddled up in a small hollow. Supplies are taken (by wheeled vehicles) up as far as Tuori. Then the Recce Troop's Honeys unload the precious stuff: food, water, petrol and oil, ammo, fitters, I.M.s, and possibly replacement personnel for the tanks. Then they run the maddest mile of all, from Turori up. They have been doing a mighty fine job!

Troopers Delany and Stephenson, of No.2 Troop, 'A' Squadron, are killed when a shell lands very close. Otherwise, the Regiment is very fortunate and suffers no other fatalities. Lt. G. Anderson takes over as Act/ Battle Captain, when Capt. Heggie is wounded.

During night, the enemy stages a very impressive counter-attack. First, very heavy mortar and shellfire concentrations are brought down on tanks and infantry. Then, small groups of Germans come up close and open up with automatics. This

creates considerable confusion, and a hail of return fire. But it causes no casualties to our Regiment.

JULY 9

Rain in the afternoon and half the night. Guns of 22nd Field Regiment move up and dig their emplacements practically between our Honeys (Recce's Stuart tanks). As a result, Jerry observes the flashes, and our area receives some H.E.

**Seriously injured in a battle accident today:
D-36464 William Ivan Turnbull**

JULY 10

Today is the first anniversary of the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment's (T.R.R.) first day of action... Its baptism of fire was intense air bombardment and some shelling.

The Three Rivers Regiment fought the whole Sicilian campaign, supporting the 1st Canadian Division and the 231st Brigade -- the "Malta Brigade." It was just about an ideal breaking in for an Armoured Unit. It began like a Battle School and ended in some pretty stiff fighting... Opposition was comparatively light until we came up against the 'Boche', about four days in.

In the year since, we have served under the command of five (5) different Corps: the 1st Canadian Corps, the 2nd Polish Corps, the 5th British Corps, the 10th British Corps, and the famed 13th British Corps.



Through a landscape, which would have defied any but 'Canadian' tanks, the TRR has forged all the way up the Appenines from Sicily through Italy (Termoli, Ortona, the Inferno, Cassino) and a succession of formidable defence lines (Gustav, Hitler, Malfa, etc.) to – Florence next. A lot of our officers and men have been killed or wounded (many of our best). Specifically, 91 have been killed and 213 wounded. A heavy cost for a year of hard campaigning – during which we were called to do more than our share.

A number of our most senior officers have been singled out and promoted to lead other Canadian armoured formations. And a substantial number of both officers and men were transferred, in the so-called Pooch Exchange, to lend their battle experience to our 2nd Canadian Corps for the Normandy invasion.

JULY 10

Wounded today:
M-106892 Tpr. J. Maitland

JULY 11

Wounded today:
B-61165 Tpr. W.H. Tooley

JULY 14

excerpt

It is eight weeks since the Allies struck along the Gustav Line from Cassino to the Tyrrhenian Sea, forcing the Germans from what seemed an impregnable position. Since then, they have taken Rome, forced the Germans back over 250 miles (400 km) over difficult terrain, almost destroyed ten German divisions, smashed two German armies and forced their way through two more defence lines. The Allies' relentless advance has been achieved by superior numbers, and the concentration of forces, as at Cassino. But now, as the Allies face the Gothic Line, some American and French troops will be withdrawn for the coming invasion of southern France.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

Wounded today:
Lt. Thomas W.E. Finan

JULY 16-17

'B' and 'C' Squadrons batter their way through the Hilde Line and gain the Arezzo-Florence Highway.

JULY 17

The U.S. Fifth and British Eighth Armies have advanced steadily on both sides of the Apennines. The British XIII Corps, augmented by South Africans, Indians and New Zealanders, took the important rail junction of Arezzo and pressed on towards Florence despite tough defensive fighting by German paratroopers and Panzergrenadiers.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

JULY 18

Wounded today:
B-112456 J.A. Klepey
H-64679 Tpr. E.J. Morency
A-57433 N.R. Campbell

Injured in battle:
H-102632 Tpr. W. Sembaluk

JULY 19

**Wounded today:
R. Gilmour**

JULY 20

**Wounded today:
Lt. Francis A. Farrow, MC
K-49951 L. Briscoe
B-83375 George J. Donaldson**

JULY 21

Following the collapse of the Arezzo Line, 'A' Squadron of the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR), supporting a battalion of the British 10th Brigade, successfully completes its last operation near Ricasoli, where a detachment of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division is taken by surprise and captured.

**Wounded today:
B-113245 E.V. Nelson
L-103429 E.O. Rosner
B-67931 Paul-Emile French
L-67460 W. Kay
D-36397 Ligouri Larivière**

**Injured in battle:
F-30376 B.H. Reade**

JULY 21

The whole of the US VI Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps are assembling in Naples -- leaving fewer than 153,000 men, mostly British, Commonwealth and Polish, to face Germany's formidable Gothic Line.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

JULY 24

**Wounded today:
A-58041 John C. Rupert**

JULY 26

While picking up his laundry today, Tpr. Albert Murdock served as midwife to an Italian signora. The baby, a boy, was christened Alberto after the Ad Sum (TRR) trooper.

JULY 26

Sgt. Don Davidge reports for duty with 'A' squadron's #2 Troop, while Sgt. Thor Olsen takes over as Acting Troop Leader of #3 Troop.

JULY 27

Our Regiment supports the 21st Indian Brigade through Montesportoli to Malmantile and the Arno River.

JULY 27

Wounded today:
B-19568 Tpr. A.J. Wilson

JULY 29

Major W.E. Wood left today to be a battle instructor at one of the Canadian Armoured Corps' schools. Through the action at the Trasimeno Line, he commanded 'A' Squadron, working with the 28th Infantry Brigade and the 10th Infantry Brigade (both part of the 4th British Division). For these 'shows', the Infantry (Brigades) recommended Major A.E. Wood for both the M.C. and the D.S.O.

Source: Regimental War Diary

JULY 31

Wounded today:
B-135048 Tpr. A. Taylor

AUGUST 7

newspaper story

Story written by Ben Malkin, Star-Phoenix war correspondent, dated this date, from Italy, begins:

No pistol packin' padre, Capt. M.A. Minville of Winnipeg, chaplain of The Three Rivers Regiment, nevertheless was able to capture a German prisoner recently, during the fighting around Montevarchi, on the road between Arezzo and Florence.

The padre was in Montevarchi when it was still under fire, when this soldier wearing a German uniform approached him, told him the very common story that he wasn't really a German, that he was a Spaniard who had been living in Germany at the time the war broke out, and had been conscripted to the German Army, and would the Padre be so good as to take him prisoner.

Editor's Note

Padre Minville lived virtually this same scenario a second time a little while later.

Editor's Note

While the above article tends to get a few of its facts a bit screwed up (according to Vern Dowie, our resident accuracy buff), it does mention accurately that the tank named Commodore, driven by Tpr. A. Zarowny, was one of a select few that had landed in Sicily; had since been driven some 1400 miles on its original engines; and that it was hit just once, by an armour-piercing shell, back in Sicily.

AUGUST 10

Polish soldiers reach the Cesano River.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

AUGUST 11

Canadian tanks enter the outskirts of Florence, Italy, with the British Eighth Army, forcing the Germans to evacuate the city.

Source: National Post, Canada

AUGUST 11

Churchill has flown here (Naples) to meet with Tito. He will also learn of a new plan by General Alexander to break through the Gothic Line.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

AUGUST 13

The 8th Indian Division enters north Florence to help the Italian resistance extend its hold on the city.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

AUGUST 15

Allied troops advance to the Gothic Line, between Pisa and Rimini.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

AUGUST 21

RCAF planes hit 2,600 German vehicles around Falaise, France, and the First Canadian Army finally connects with the Poles, rescuing the 1st Polish Armoured Division and trapping the SS in the Falaise Gap which is finally closed. Source: National Post, Canada

AUGUST 25

American troops liberate Paris from the Nazis and free French General Charles de Gaulle makes a victory march down the Champs Elysées.

Source: National Post, Canada

AUGUST 25

The Eighth Army launches a major offensive along the Gothic Line, watched by Winston Churchill. "This was the time I heard most bullets in the Second World War," he recorded later. The offensive has been planned by General Oliver Leese, the Eighth Army's Commander. He has moved his forces from the west of Italy to attack on the eastern flank of the Apennines. The aim is to cross the

Foglia river, break through the newly-completed defensive line near the Adriatic coast, and clear the way for a mass tank breakout into the floodplain of the Po valley. A tough fight is expected. Ten German infantry divisions face the Allies.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

AUGUST 30

Field Marshall Kesselring, a master of defensive strategy, has assured Hitler that the Gothic Line is impregnable. His boast is about to be put to the test. Today the British V Corps and Canadian 1st Corps, supported by air attacks on the minefields, crossed the Foglia river and, despite heavy casualties, attacked the defensive position which the Germans believe to be equal to that of Cassino.

Houses have been razed, trees felled and vineyards bulldozed to create killing grounds for a great rash of concrete machine-gun nests, each carefully sighted to protect its neighbour. Artillery posts have been blasted into the Apennine rock, and deep minefields planted from the Adriatic in the east to the Ligurian Sea.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

AUGUST 31

British and Canadian troops break into the Gothic Line.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 8

The Eighth Army attacks German positions on the Gemmano and Corriano ridges.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 13

excerpt

For 24 hours, it seemed that the Eighth Army was about to break through the Gothic Line at the Gemmano and Coriano ridges, and pour on to the plains beyond. Then it came up against the old adversary: the weather. The rivers are flooding.

Tanks of the 1st Armoured Division stand impotently in the fields of mud at San Savino, while the British 4th Infantry Division has come under heavy artillery and mortar fire, delaying its move up to the start line. The delay has given the German chief, General von Vietinghoff, time to move his infantry into place, closing the gate to the Allies.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

SEPTEMBER 21

After four weeks of bitter fighting, the ancient city of Rimini fell to Canadian infantrymen and men of the Greek 3rd Mountain Brigade today, marking the end of one of the most critical battles of the Italian campaign. The eastern end of the Gothic Line has been broken; and, in the west, the US Fifth Army has begun an equally bloody attack.

SEPTEMBER 25

Today, notification was received that Lt. A.F. Farrow of 'C' Squadron has been granted the immediate award of the Military Cross by the Commander in Chief of the Allied Armies in Italy. Mr. Farrow hails from Alberta and British Columbia. He came to the Regiment on June 26th of this year, and two days later did the good job which earned him this award.

Source: Regimental War Diary

anecdote

On my way to Sassaleone, just below Castel del Rio, I spotted an abandoned tank of the Calgary Regt. It had been pushed aside, to allow the traffic to flow by, and was precariously perched on the edge of a 600-foot drop. We were sorely in need of a battery charger (a Homelight gasoline generator) and I was sure there was one in there to be salvaged.

The Ordinance Corps called it 'cannibalizing', and had long teetered between hauling Renny before a court martial or getting me to transfer my purloining skills to their outfit. Not only was the battery charger in the tank, but the turret was happily rotated just enough to allow for its removal. I shinned into the tank, wrestled mightily with the charger (It was a heavy son of a bitch!), and finally got it out and into my truck.

On the way back from giving the battery charger a good home with our regiment, I looked gratefully for the derelict tank -- to give it a mental pat on the hull. It was gone. I found it rather heavily imprinted into the valley floor way below.

Source: Renny Sparks

SEPTEMBER 28

Canadian troops capture German coastal artillery batteries near Calais, freeing the citizens of Dover from the shellfire from these long-range guns for the first time in four years.

Source: National Post, Canada

SEPTEMBER 30

The Battle of the Scheldt opens as the First Canadian Army drives to open the port of Antwerp to shipping.

Source: National Post, Canada

OCTOBER 13

The rainy season has begun, a month earlier than usual, giving the Germans more time to prepare their defences, along the rivers Liri and Rapido.

OCTOBER 15

‘C’ Squadron supports the attack on Monte Pieve, having forged its way past, first, a battery of American Long Toms, then in quick succession: batteries of British 5.5” and 4.5” guns, and, finally, as it closed on its assigned destination, 25-pounders. RHQ is meanwhile ensconced at Castel de Rio.

excerpt

The Three Rivers Regiment, supporting the 78th Division and the 6th Armoured Division in the Santerno valley, spent Christmas at Castel del Rio, with one troop of tanks frozen in at Gesso and the balance of its forward squadrons at Fontanelice on the Imola road.

Source: “The Canadians in Italy” by Nicholson

anecdote

At dusk, Major Frank Johns on, the squadron C.O., switched from his tank to a Jeep -- to lead the column out of Castel del Rio. As per custom, he left it to his crew, headed by Sgt. Len Kemp, to bring his tank up. As it approached a narrow bridge, Len jumped out to hand-signal the driver forward. Tpr. Poirier started inching forward. But... was it a misread signal? The darkness? Too much tiller? Who knows? The ground suddenly gave way under the tank's weight, and the tank plunged down the cliffside. Tpr. Poirier tried to leap free. But an errant length of spare track detached from the hull and wrapped itself around him. He died quietly, puffing on a cigarette.

Source: Lucien Brunette

OCTOBER 17

All up and down traffic stops for hours on “ACE” Route, due to shelling.

Lt. J.M. O’Dell goes to 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade as L.O. And Lt. H.L. Brady comes back to the Regiment and is posted to ‘B’ Squadron. R.M.O. Capt. W.H. Clare is back with our Unit, preferring to convalesce in the FDLs rather than in Florence. He has pushed his RAP up to Sassaleone.

OCTOBER 17

Brig. R.K. Arbuthnott, A/Comd 78th Div. issues a special order of the day:

I wish every man in the Division to understand that the operation, due to begin tonight, is of the first importance.

The PIEVE feature is one, which the enemy is determined to hold. Its importance to him lies in the fact that, so long as he can hold it, the salient that the U.S. Corps is driving towards BOLOGNA is bound to remain narrow and restricted, and its task of breaking into the plain that much more difficult.

The task of 78th Division is to break this cornerstone of the enemy's defence by capturing MONTE PIEVE, and moving up to MONTE SPADURO. Owing to the nature of the country, once the attack is launched, the result must rest largely with the Regimental officer and soldier, especially of the Infantry. Each one must be prepared to play his part to the utmost, employing every weapon to the full, and all his courage and skill.

Companies and platoons must be prepared to operate by manoeuvre by day, as well as attack by night. Relentless pressure on the enemy (the 334th Division), which you have already met and defeated, must be maintained. Good luck and God speed.

OCTOBER 26

Heavy rains halt the Allied advance in Italy.

OCTOBER 27

Despite huge casualty lists -- more than 20,000 men have been killed, wounded or taken prisoner since Cassino -- the Allied armies here (in Italy) have had little share in the world headlines since the Anzio landings, and are feeling forgotten.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

NOVEMBER 2

The narrow road, formerly just a mule track, from Sassaleone to San Appolinare, is too bad now for even jeeps to climb its extremely steep hills, or ford its one river. So, today, the 12th C.A.R. made a radical departure from its usual means of supply, and resorted to the faithful and unbeatable mule. 'A' and 'C' Squadrons have each been allotted 10 mules from an Italian mule company.

Source: Regimental War Diary

NOVEMBER 9-10

excerpt

Returned from a 48-hours leave in Florence to take over our tanks at Gesso. Move of supplies, etc. carried out by mule train. All our troops are now being supplied in this manner. We woke up next morning to find snow covering the frozen mud.

Source: Lt. Murray O'Dell's personal diary

NOVEMBER 20

excerpt

As the autumn rains turn to driving snow, Gen. Alexander, the Allied commander-in-chief in Italy, has called a halt to the grueling campaign and stood down his armies. British tanks have found the going almost impossible, particularly across hundreds of rivers in the marshy Po valley.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

NOVEMBER 23

The Canadian parliament votes to send conscripted men to Europe, to join the hitherto voluntary Canadian Army.

anecdote

In November & December 1944, both 'A' Squadron and 'C' Squadron were marooned by mud in the mountains some 8 miles short of Bologna. In Gesso, to be specific. And both squadrons were short of vital supplies like fuel and ammo. Jeeps tried and spun helplessly in the goo. So did the carriers who tried. Even the trusty mules couldn't make it. So leave it to Fritz Prévost to figure out a way, and find the men to do it: you, you, and you! He also managed to secure some 30 skiers outfits and, of course, the skis. There are probably mines down there, somebody reminded him. "Yes, but you'll be flying over the snow," said Fritz.

Trouble was, Vern Dowie was one of the 'you and you and you volunteers' and had never skied in his life. "Every Canadian knows how to ski," said Fritz, as he strapped a 5-gal. 'Jerry' can of 'petrol' on Vern's back and launched him down the slope with a brisk push. (Despite rumours to the contrary, he did NOT use a cattle prod!)

Well, Vern is still with us to tell the tale, and nobody set off a mine. "Did you take off your skis to get up the other side?" he was asked. "Hell, no!" said Vern. "Then how did you climb the slope?" "I still don't know!" said Vern, "but I only did it the once. I volunteered for radio watch after that."

Source: Vern 'Spud' Norring, who smartly chose snowshoes instead.

anecdote

Italy had still not surrendered. So, technically, the calf was fair game for liberation and the spit. Ex-cattleman (or perhaps rustler) Dave Williams quickly and painlessly (he swore) ended its hairy existence in the hell of war, skinned it and disemboweled it. Then we draped its carcass over a pole in Capt. Ian Grant's pup tent, unbeknown to him. Trouble was Capt. Grant was also the Allied Military Governor (AMGOT) responsible for government in the town we had captured and now occupied. As such, he was the first person, the bereft farmer -- who suddenly emerged from nowhere -- appealed to, with prayers to heaven and promises of hell. Capt. Grant, with honest and total ignorance of the dastardly deed, swore to the farmer that his men would never do such a thing, while his right hand rested nonchalantly on the upright pole of his pup tent. Imagine his reaction, some time later, when he entered his tent, only to find that it was pre-empted by the calf's carcass. As the farmer was long gone, and Capt. Grant had no more idea where he had gone than where he had come from; and as he was as hungry for fresh meat as the rest of his troop, we dined excellently and enormously, and -- if truth be told -- slept guiltlessly the whole night through, in spite of a minor shelling in the wee hours.

Source: Vern Dowie

Editor's Note

When the British in North Africa captured some of the German 4gallon 'petrol' containers, they were so obviously safer, handier, in short, superior to their own (and therefore our own) thin-tinned square 5-gallon containers that they immediately copied them and called them 'Jerry' cans.

DECEMBER

Rev. Capt. J.L. Wilhelm is named Senior Chaplain to 5th Canadian Armoured Division.

DECEMBER 2

excerpt

On the 78th DIV sector, an enemy withdrawal begins. One troop of 'A' Squadron, 12th C.A.R. moves forward to fire onto Mt Penzola as a preliminary to the night attack to be put in by 6th British Armoured Division. The TRR (12th C.A.R.) is now supporting two Divisions -- namely the 78th British Infantry and the 6th British Armoured. The 26th Armoured Brigade of 6th Armoured Division was moved to the Adriatic coast -- thus 6th Armd Div, with two infantry brigades, were left without Armour support. 'A' Squadron of the 12th C.A.R. is therefore put in support of 6th Brit Armd Div. The Brigade (1st Cdn. Armd) is thus supporting four divisions and is deployed along the whole of 13 Corps front. Whereas the supporting role being carried out by the Brigade is not facing continual heavy fighting, it certainly calls for the maximum in determination and patience on the part of all the forward tank crews. Continually under shell and mortar fire, these crews are often restricted to their tanks for 3 to 4 days at a time -- with little to do other than routine indirect fire which is under Artillery control. This form of warfare -- static -- proves to be as trying and tedious for tank crews as a fast mobile fight. It is interesting to note that the Brigade (1st Cdn Armd) had been in continuous action since May 11 '44, except for one 7-day break after the Adolf Hitler Line battle -- practically 7 months during which at least one Regiment of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade was committed.

Source: 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade War Diary

DECEMBER 4

'A' Squadron of 12th C.A.R. is supporting 6th Brit Armd Div by shelling Mount Penzola. This shoot is directed onto 'concs' (concentrations) from which the enemy is pinning down the assaulting infantry. Good results are obtained, and many direct hits are scored by 'A' Squadron during this shoot.

Source: Brigade War Diary

DECEMBER 5:

'A' Squadron, 12th C.A.R. continues to fire directly onto enemy strong points on Mount Penzola during this morning.

Source: Brigade War Diary

DECEMBER 7

The heavy rain continues and the road situation is complicated even more by landslides... Two troops of 'C' Squadron and Sqdn HQ move up Ace Route to area 500 yards southwest of Fontanelice, in support of the 61st British Rifle Brigade.

DECEMBER 8

'C' Squadron of 12th C.A.R. carried out foot recces to find good fire positions from where this attack by 6th British Armoured Division could be supported with maximum fire power from the tanks.

Source: Brigade War Diary

excerpt

Shortly afterwards, I moved over in support of 'C' Squadron, as it attempted to move into the village of Fontanelici. It had not been cleared of mines, and the O.C. Major Frank Johnson was impatiently waiting for the Brit sappers to do the job. Then he remembered my background, so I was put to work. It was a very ticklish operation. Jerry had booby-trapped everything in sight and out of sight, and had scattered lots of Schu mines and S mines in the rubble as well. A Schu mine is a small box of picric acid designed to blow a man's foot off. An S mine is a cannister of about 350 ball bearings packed around a core of explosives and, on contact, the cannister springs about five feet above ground and explodes its charge.

After a day or so of slow progress, a Brit sapper arrived to give me a hand. I had started by taping out-of-bounds tapes on buildings, shops, and places we did not intend to use. It was also meant to forestall any looting, but our efforts failed. Soon afterwards, an infantry patrol moved in and I heard a loud bang; a rifleman had blown his arm off trying to 'liberate' a pair of shoes in the cobbler's shop.

(Another) shop I had (taped) was a carpenter's workshop. One day we heard an explosion in there, and found an Eyetie lying in a pool of blood. He had tried to open a casket, still standing on a sawhorse, to steal the wood and it had blown up.

Source: And this is only a small part of the event described in Sgt. Gwyl Jones's book: "To the Green Fields Beyond"

DECEMBER 16

A V2 rocket hit the Rex Cinema in the Avenue de Keyser, Holland, at 3.20 p.m. today, killing 567 people, including 296 Allied servicemen.

Source: American "Chronicle of the Second World War"

DECEMBER 18

Wounded today:
Capt. William M. Prince.
C-58256 E.J. Windle
B-67962 Carl J. Simons

DECEMBER 29

Message is received today that two of our NCOs have been given the immediate award of the Military Medal. They are Sgt. R. Jack of 'C' Squadron and Cpl. W. Kay of 'A' Squadron. That of Sgt. Jack is for his most commendable action under fire in the attack on Mt. Pieve on October 5th. Cpl. Kay's award was for outstanding bravery on October 29th near Gesso, where he rescued three wounded soldiers from a minefield.

Editor's Note

Now that we are leaving the Italian theatre of war, it should be pointed out that the Three Rivers Regiment is the only Canadian unit to have supported in action every single allied force in Italy, with the sole exception of the Brazilians who came late into the war and became an integral part of the U.S. forces.

anecdote

In the summer of '44, when we got leaves to Rome, Sandy, our LAD electrician, and I got a 5-day pass to the Eternal City. One evening, we came across two Brazilians in a very heated argument with three signorinas. Indeed, the signorinas were wacking the Brazilians with their purses and screaming some musical but shrill imprecations. Sandy gallantly intervened and, being able to speak both Portuguese and Italian, soon realized that what the guys had said in Spanish didn't translate so good to shell-like Roman ears. After some earnest explaining, the signorinas quieted down. In fact, the last we saw of them, they were walking away arm in arm with the Brazilians. So we can perhaps claim that we supported our Brazilian allies, too.

Source: Orville Brown

DECEMBER 31

Lt.-Col. F.L. Caron, C.O., 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR), appends this comment, in the Regiment's War Diary, on the year just ending:

When 1944 began, we had high hopes of being out of Italy by 1945. But the invasion of the South Coast of France took two Corps from our pool; the Gothic Line was a series of very tough nuts to crack, and the ELAS armed rising in Greece depleted our fighting strength by yet another Corps. The enemy has also sent at least three Divisions elsewhere -- mainly to the Hungarian theatre. But he has almost without exception replaced them with another division or an Italian Republican Division. This, and a clever manipulation of reserves, as well as excellent use of the ground, backed by the weather, have enabled the enemy to establish at least a semi-stabilized and more or less static situation in Italy. But we have come a long way since Cassino...and we shall at least be out of Italy by 1946.

War Chronicles 1945

JANUARY 1

The First Canadian Armoured Brigade has been playing a defensive role here in the Appenine Mountains (some 8 miles short of Bologna) since the onset of winter last October. During this time, small advances have been made and positions battered. Each regiment takes part, as our Brigade supports the 88th U.S., 1st British Division, 6th British Armoured, and the 8th Indian Division.

JANUARY 29

The Three Rivers Regiment has been in the line for the whole four months of winter -- the longest period served by any Canadian unit, it is believed.

Tpr. Paul French of this Regiment is returning to Canada. Under the 'Tri-Wound System', i.e. overseas three years and three times wounded, he is the first to qualify from our Regiment.

MARCH

1Our 'A' Squadron moves back over mountains from harbour, north of Castile Del Rio -- to Borgo S. Lorenzo. Fog, ice, and very cold. Grouzers (on tracks) are being used to good advantage. We managed to squeeze in a few 48-hour leaves in Florence for the crews -- during the two weeks we were in the Borgo area.

MARCH 4-7

Start loading at 1330 hrs. On board and settled by 1630 hrs, TRR 'ships' from Livorno (Leghorn) to Marseilles. Tanks move by rail from here; while the wheeled vehicles convoy across France, by-passing Paris still in the thrall and throes of its liberation.

MARCH 8

Lyon, Dijon, Troyes, Reims... Everyone amazed at the small amount of damage done to this part of France.

Source: Lt. Murray O'Dell

MARCH 9

Our 'A' Squadron reaches Menin at noon, largest city since crossing Franco-Belgian border. Moves into town-square in late afternoon. Meal provided to one and all by Belgian Red Cross. Men billeted with civilians. People unbelievably friendly and courteous.



MARCH 10

Our tanks move to area closer to our billets.

MARCH 11

Start maintenance. Tpr. Maki of 'A' Squadron plays to a capacity crowd, while taking a link out of his tank's track.

MARCH 12

First Canadian Armoured Brigade concentrates in West Flanders, Belgium.

MARCH 13

The whole Regiment billets in Menin, Belgium, for a month of rest, including 10 days of R & R in Britain, which was then being pelted with V-2s.

MARCH 20

The Three Rivers Regiment (12th CAR) is issued twenty new Shermans with 17-pounder guns. Our tank troops change to a 4-tank basis (two with 17-pdrs, two 75MMs).

APRIL 2

First Canadian Army assumes control of 2nd Canadian Corps east of the Rhine. First British Corps, which has served with the Canadians since Normandy, is replaced by First Canadian Corps transferred from Italy.

APRIL 3-4

The 2nd Canadian Infantry Division forces a crossing of the Twente Canal near Zutphen and in the Netherlands. The 4th Armoured Canadian Division crosses at Delden.

APRIL 5-11

The 2nd Canadian Division liberates Zutphen and Deventer, preparing the way for the 1st Canadian Division to cross the IJssel River and advance towards Apeldoorn.

APRIL 11

Americans liberate the Buchenwald concentration camp.

APRIL 12

The Three Rivers Regiment concentrates in Reichwald Forest, south of Cleve, Germany.

APRIL 12

U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt died suddenly today.

APRIL 12

Canadian troops liberate the Nazi concentration camp at Westerbork in the Netherlands.

Source: National Post, Canada

APRIL 14

The Canadian Army occupies Arnhem, Netherlands, completing the liberation of the low countries.

Source: National Post, Canada

APRIL 15

'A' Squadron of the Three Rivers Regiment crosses the IJssel River on rafts, and pushes southward with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade. Our 'B' Squadron pushes through Apeldoorn and runs into enemy rearguard positions on the Amersfoort road. Our 'C' Squadron and the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade fight their way along the Apeldoorn-Barneveld road, destroying two anti-tank guns and taking prisoners.

anecdote

On the morning of May 4, 1945, Hugh Gaffney, one of our dispatch riders, got thoroughly lost looking for a harbour for our tanks, and ended up behind enemy lines. Realizing his mistake, he gunned his motorcycle out of there and into the yet unliberated Dutch town of Zandvoort, where the people greeted him as a liberating army of one.

The mayor even got him to sign the official visitor's book before Hugh managed to hightail it out of there and back into our lines.
Source: Wilson Winegarden and the Brockville Recorder Times

APRIL 15

For his actions on this day, Lt.-Col. Fernand Ludger Caron's skilled and daring leadership of the the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR) from Cassino on through the Gustav Line, the Liri Valley, and the Hitler, Melfa, Trasimeno, Hilde and Grebbe Lines to the end of the war, is belatedly acknowledged with the award of the Distinguished Service Order.

APRIL 15

Official citation

12th Canadian Armoured Regiment was in action on the east bank of the IJssel River in the area of Doesburg. The enemy on the west bank had dispersed his forces along the river, with Doesburg as a strong point. There was a good deal of shelling, and continuous mortaring and sniping of our positions in the area. In spite of the enemy fire, Lt.-Col. Caron was continually among the forward positions personally supervising the employment of his Squadrons and seeking information about the enemy, which he might employ to advantage.

So he was able throughout the day to maintain a continual pressure along the river north of Doesburg, forcing the enemy from many of their positions. At 2000 hrs, he personally directed a fire program from his tanks against Doesburg. This broke the back of the enemy resistance in the area and, by morning, of the 16th of April, patrols were in the town. At noon, over 160 prisoners had been taken. By his energy, good judgment, and disregard for his own safety, Lt.-Col. Caron was able to break up resistance in the Doesburg area, thereby, contributing in a large measure to the success of the 1st Canadian Division drive southward from Zutphen.

Editor's Note

At this late juncture of the war, when it was common knowledge that the end of hostilities was only days away, it required an extra measure of daring and determination to "disregard one's personal safety"; when the prospects for survival were so bright.

APRIL 16

The British entered Belsen, where Anne Frank had died as one of 50,000. The British found 30,000 inmates, about 10,000 dead of starvation -- and 1,500 Hungarian guards still executing people.

Source: Raymond Beauchemin

APRIL 16

The minesweeper Esquimalt is sunk off Halifax, the last Royal Canadian Navy vessel to fall prey to a U-boat.

APRIL 13-17

The 2nd Canadian Division meets strong resistance in the struggle to liberate Groningen. Apeldoorn is abandoned to troops of 1st Canadian Division, supported by the Three Rivers Regiment tanks.

APRIL 17

Lt. W.M. Prince is wounded today at Apeldoorn. So is Cpl. Ken Thompson, blinded in both eyes by a sniper.

excerpt

When the enemy prepared to fight for Apeldoorn, a city swollen with thousands of refugees, the 1st Canadian Division's plan of attack called for isolating the city and infiltrating infantry without employing artillery.

Source: The Spring of Liberation by Terry Copp

APRIL 22

First Canadian Corps halts operations in Western Holland at the Grebbe Line. A temporary truce allows delivery of relief supplies to the population.

APRIL 27

One troop of our 'C' Squadron helps beat off an attack against the Royal 22nd's positions near Amersfoort. An order is received at 2200 hrs that all firing cease at 0800 hrs, Saturday, April 28, along the whole 1st Canadian Corps front.

Editor's Note

A Canadian threat to court martial the German army leaders in Holland as war criminals resulted in an earlier truce in our sector of the war and the chance to feed the starving Dutch, particularly in the largest cities: Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

So ends, for the Three Rivers Regiment, a two-year period of almost continuous operations, during which it was awarded 23 battle colours – more than double that awarded to any other Canadian armoured unit.

The 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (TRR) also has the honour of being the only Commonwealth unit to have “fought alongside all Allied Armies on two European fronts, and to have fought without relief for 5 months and 19 days consecutively.”

anecdote

During the truce preceding V-E Day, part of 1st (German) Paratroop Division was, as nearly always, across no man’s land from the Royal 22nd Regiment. So, when a sergeant major of the Van Doos ventured out to milk a handy cow, he was joined there by a German sergeant major; and they took turns either milking or holding the cudchewing bovine.

Source: Vern Dowie

APRIL 28

Despite the ordered ceasefire on the Canadian front, a German force nearby has decided on a last vicious attack on nearby American troops. The hard-pressed Americans call for help from a couple of Three Rivers Regiment tanks in their vicinity, led by Sgt. D.G. Welland.

Official citation

Sergeant Douglas G. Welland, Canadian Army, for heroic achievement in connection with military operations on April 28, 1945 in Holland. When sorely pressed infantry called for aid to repulse a particularly ferocious enemy attack, Sgt. Welland, with only two tanks remaining in his troop of the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment, unhesitatingly went forward.

Leaving one of his tanks on the road, he went alone across the railway and engaged the enemy. Despite heavy mortar and small arms fire to which he was subjected, he gallantly persisted in his task, and so effective was his fire that the enemy was completely routed. His actions reflect credit upon himself, and the armed forces of the Allied Armies.

Source: Headquarters, U.S. Forces, European Theatre)

APRIL 29

After three weeks of tense negotiation, the German garrison in Italy surrendered unconditionally today.

APRIL 30

Hitler commits suicide in his bunker, bequeathing the leadership of the shattered Third Reich to Admiral Karl Donitz.

MAY 2

A million German troops surrender in Italy.

MAY 3

On this day, convoys -- one every 30 minutes -- began crossing the Grebbe Line.

MAY 8

The German war is at an end.

MAY 9

V-Day. Our Regiment moves to western Holland.

MAY 20-21

The Three Rivers Regiment lines its tanks along roadway in The Hague for Victory Parade.

anecdote

I was on the first draft home after the war: based on a point system which took into account the fact that I had a war bride and I had been overseas very close to 4 years. (In fact, I saw Halifax on June 20th -- 4 years to the day that I bid Halifax goodbye.)

Source: Charlie Prieur

JUNE 9

excerpt

**From the Montreal Daily Star: Crerar Holds Review of Armored Unit 1st Canadian Brigade In Dutch March-Past
By William Boss**

Doorn, Holland, June 9 - Enacting a mighty finale to a saga of action in Sicily, Italy and Holland, Brig. W.W. Murphy's 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade rolled to a symbolic last advance here yesterday, guns firing and Mosquito bombers almost skimming their turrets.

More than 250 tanks and self-propelled guns advanced 28 abreast and 10 deep towards the reviewing stand, where Gen. Crerar, 1st Canadian Army commander stood. They churned the undulating, grass-covered plain north of this town into an immense dust mound.

It was the troopers' last ride. The thunderous roar died as the drivers killed their motors. Then, leaving the gunners manning their 75-mm and their 17-pounder guns, the remainder of the crews leaped from their Shermans and formed up behind the Calgary Regiment guard of honour under Capt. Jim Quinn, already drawn up facing the armor.

It was the sign for Brig. Murphy to leave his place beside Gen. Crerar and march to the centre of the massed troops. Standing between them and the armor, he ordered: "1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, to your tanks, general salute."

While every arm was bent in salute, Private Herb Parsons sounded the Last Post, acknowledged by the tanks, which slowly depressed their guns.

There followed a ceremonial march-past of all units in the brigade. Participants included the 98th Sussex and Surrey Yeomanry, British gunners who supported the brigade through the Italian campaign and accompanied them on the move to Northwest Europe last March.

The arrangements (for this whole review and march-past) were under the overall supervision of Brigade Major D.W. Davidson, and the chief administrative officer, Major Tom McKay; while RSM F.R. "Fritz" Prevost was the parade Sergeant Major.

Fifteen of those battle wagons fought right through from the beaches of Sicily to the final campaign in Northwest Europe. Many others

have been part of these men's lives almost as long. To them they are ore than cast iron and steel. The parting was almost human.

Editor's Note

The aforementioned fifteen battle wagons had to belong to the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank), as it is the only Canadian armoured regiment which actually fought all the way "from the beaches of Sicily to the final campaign in Northwest Europe." Again, the "at least one regiment" was the Three Rivers Regiment (12th CAR).

These men and tanks fought their way through more action than any other formation of the Canadian Army. Up to May 8, 1945, they had fought 532 out of a possible 668 days. They also saw the longest unbroken period of action of any Canadian Army formation -- from June 21, 1944 to February 21, 1945 -- a total of 253 days; during which at least one regiment was committed for the whole period.

Three Armies

They fought with three armies: the 1st Canadian, The United States 5th, and the British 8th. Only a few days ago, a message arrived from Gen. Mark Clark, commander of the 15th (American) Army Group in Italy, recalling (that) "a year ago, the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade engaged in the great fighting of the offensive, which culminated in the taking of Rome. Please convey to all your officers and men for a fact that we of the 15th Army Group recall with admiration the part you played in smashing the Gustav and Hitler Lines."

"We won a great victory here in Italy and now celebrate the final victory of the war. We wish you could have been with us for the final action here. However, we watched your operations in the north with a keen interest, born of a knowledge of your splendid fighting abilities. Your exploits here will not be forgotten."

JUNE 26

Canada joins 50 other nations in the World Security Charter establishing the United Nations in San Francisco.

Source: National Post, Canada

SEPTEMBER 1

Today's is the last edition (Vol. 1, No. 10) of "The Turret" (sic) -- the voice of the Three Rivers Regiment (12th C.A.R.) -- in Europe. Editor-in-Chief: H.M. Brady; Sports Editor: R.H. Heggie; Managing Editor: R.A. Fabi; Squadron Representatives: H.A. Youngston (H.Q.), R.H. Heggie (A); T.D. Dodds (B), J.L. Bruneau and J.A. MacMillan (C). And a special feature this day is the "Lira Lyrics" of Victor Gotro, its original editor.

SEPTEMBER 28

The Three Rivers Regiment (minus a considerable number of its veterans already sent home on a point system) leaves Ostend for the United Kingdom.

NOVEMBER

The Three Rivers Regiment sails to Halifax and proceeds to Trois-Rivières for a homecoming reception.

NOVEMBER 30

The Regiment is demobilized on this day.

Adsum

Honours & Decorations

Maj.-Gen. J.V. Allard, CBE, DSO
Lt. J.A. Allen, MM
Sgt. (later Lt.) J.A. Allen, MM
Capt. J. Armstrong, MC
Lt.-Col. G.G. Bell, MBE, CD
Brig. E.L. Booth, DSO & Bar (killed in action)
SSM J.L. Bruneau, MBE
Sgt. (later Lt.) R.C. Campbell, MM
H/Major J. Carolan, MBE
Brig. F.L. Caron, DSO, ED, CD
L./Cpl. J.W. Collins, MM
Lt. F.A. Farrow, MC
Sgt. F.J. Fontaine, MM
Lt. G. Goodwin, MC
Brig. M.B.K. Gordon, DSO, ED, CD
Major Ian Grant, DSO, CD
Major R.M. Houston, DSO, ED, CD
S.O.B. (II) G.W. Hull, MBE
Sgt. R. Jack, MM
Lt.-Col. F.W. Johnson, DSO, ED
Sgt. G.T. Jones, M.M.
Sgt. W.T. Kay, MM
Lt.-Col. J.R. McLaughlin, MBE, CD
Tpr. W.R. Meads, MM
Major J.C. 'Pat' Mills, DSO
Lt-Col. C.H. Neroutsos, DSO
S.O.B. (I) F.R. Prevost, MBE
Lt.-Col. R.L. Purvis, DSO, CD
Capt. O.L. Roberts, MC
Capt. R.W. Ryckman, M.C.
Tpr. R. St.Louis, MM
Lt.-Col. E.F. Schmidlin, MBE, ED
Major E.W. Smith, MC
Major J.A. Steward, OBE
Lt-Col. J.R. Walker, MC, ED
Lt. Jack Wallace, M.C.
H/Major H.J.L. Wilhelm, MC
Capt. D.G. Wyllie, MBE

Note:

Lt. H.D. "Ace" Beach earned a Silver Star (U.S.) and Sgt. Doug Welland, a Bronze Star (U.S.)

Mentions in Dispatches

Lt. W. Alderson
Brig. F.L. Caron, DSO, ED
S.Sgt. R. Charette
S.O.B. (II) N. Christopherson
Sgt. J. Coates
Major J.G.G. Couture, ED
Sgt. H.W. Curran
S.O.B. (I) J.H. Davy
Capt. L.N. Davis
Major J.L. Dubreuil, CD
Major J. Funnel, CD
Tpr J.W. Harris
Sgt G.T. Jones, MM
Cpl W.J. Kay, MM
S.O.B. (I) C. P. Molière
Lt. J.M. O'Dell
Sgt T. Olsen
Sgt L. Perreault
Capt. H.M. Ross
Sgt. R. Sparks (twice)
Lt. Ralph Willis

Last Post

In proud memory of the men of the The Three Rivers Regiment
(12th CAR) who gave their lives in World War II.

ENGLAND

Tpr J.C. Roy (date unknown) Worthing

SICILY

Tpr E.J. Lloyd (K.I.A.: 15 July '43) Grammichele
Tpr J.H. MacTavish (K.I.A.: 16 July '43) Piazza Armerina
Tpr G.W. Karcameron (K.I.A.: 16 July '43) Piazza Armerina
Cpl. W.S. Hulse (K.I.A.: 16 July '43) Piazza Armerina
Tpr E. Myers (K.I.A.: 17 July '43) Grammichele
Tpr W. MacGregor (D.O.W.: 17 July '43) Grammichele
Tpr J.L. Hamilton (K.I.A.: 21 July '43) Assoro
Lt. D.N. McIntyre (D.O.W.: 22 July '43) Leonforte
Tpr J.W. Norman (D.O.W.: 23 July '43) Leonforte
Tpr K.E. Roder (K.I.A.: 24 July '43) Nissoria
Tpr W.C. Palmer (K.I.A.: 24 July '43) Nissoria
Tpr F. Granite (K.I.A.: 24 July '43) Nissoria
L/Cpl L.W. McCracken (K.I.A.: 24 July '43) Nissoria
Act/Sgt. G.E. Merry (K.I.A.: 27 July '43) Leonforte
Cpl. C. Willoughby (K.I.A.: 30 July '43) Cantenanuova
L/Cpl D. Forrest (K.I.A.: 30 July '43) Regabulto
Tpr J.F. Marsh (K.I.A.: 30 July '43) Regabulto
Tpr D.L. McClure (D.O.W.: 30 July '43) Regabulto
Tpr N. Wright (K.I.A.: 30 July '43) Regabulto
Tpr B.M. Kane (K.I.A.: 5 Aug '43) Aderno
Act/Cpl. J.M.V. Dilio (K.I.A.: 5 Aug '43) Aderno



ITALY

Sgt. R. Leather (D.O.W.: 7 Oct '43) Termoli
Tpr D. McAuley (K.I.A.: 6 Oct '43) Termoli
Tpr G.D. Roebuck (D.O.W.: 6 Oct '43) Termoli
L/Cpl L.H. Royer (K.I.A.: 6 Oct '43) Termoli
Tpr C.R. Taite (K.I.A.: 6 Oct '43) Termoli
Tpr L.J. Venne (K.I.A.: 6 Oct '43) Termoli
Tpr C.W. Davey (D.O.W.: 10 Oct '43) Italy
Tpr W.W. Warren (K.I.A.: 22 Dec '43) Lanciano
Tpr D.A. McPherson (D.I.A.: 29 Jan '44) Lanciano
Tpr G.A. Pears (D.O.W.: 3 Nov '44) Lanciano
Cpl. M. Walker (K.I.A.: 28 Feb '44) Lanciano
Tpr G.B. Steenhoff (K.I.A.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Tpr J.B. Hughes (K.I.A.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Tpr E. Kemp (K.I.A.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Lt. T.E. Melvin (K.I.A.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Tpr. A.J. Rau (K.I.A.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Sgt T.B. Cuthill (K.I.A.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Pte P.W. Durant (D.O.W.: 20 Dec '43) Ortona
Tpr H.A. Shaver (K.I.A.: 24 Dec '43) Ortona
Tpr J.J. Donaldson (K.I.A.: 24 Dec '43) Ortona
Sgt. J.W. Chapman (D.O.W.: 28 Dec '43) Ortona
Pte C.R. Betts (K.I.A.: 8 Jan '44) Ortona
Tpr J.A. Patterson (D.O.W.: March '44) Ortona
Tpr N.J. Pitre (D.O.W.: 3 Jan '44) Ortona
Major E.W. Smith, M.C (D.O.W.: 20 Mar '44) Ortona
Tpr J.C. Nesbitt (K.I.A.: 15 Oct '44) Gesso



Attached Personnel – 60th L.A.D. (R.C.E.M.E.)

L/Cpl R.B. Potheary (K.I.A.: 10 Apr '44) Cassino
Tpr F.E McTaggart (K.I.A.: 11 Apr '44) Cassino
Lt. J.K. Wallace (K.I.A.: 25 April '44) Cassino
Sgt. J. Leslie (K.I.A.: 17 May '44) Gustav Line
Cpl. E.W. Davis (D.O.W.: 14 May '44) Gustav Line
Sgt. H. McKinnon (K.I.A.: 14 May '44) Gustav Line
Lt. A.G. Waldron (D.O.W.: 9 June '44) Gustav Line
Act/Sgt. E.C. Clark (D.O.W.: 16 May '44) Gustav Line
Lt. E. Hodson (D.O.W.: 16 May '44) Gustav Line
Tpr J.T.C. McCartney (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Tpr W. Burnett (K.I.A.: 14 May '44) Hitler Line
L/Cpl R.J. Troughton (K.I.A.: 20 May '44) Hitler Line
L/Cpl G.H. Bennett (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Act/Cpl. T.M. O'Brien (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Cpl. A. Bécotte (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Lt. N.M. Krolman (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Tpr M. Strong (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Tpr R. Trombley (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Major R.C. Yelland (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Tpr W.J. Wright (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Sgt. E.F. Wright (K.I.A.: 23 May '44) Hitler Line
Capt. D.K. Dawson (K.I.A.: 24 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr L. St.Louis (K.I.A.: 24 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr J.E. Grimstead (K.I.A.: 25 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Lt. M.R. Badgerow (D.O.W.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
L/Cpl K.C. Barland (K.I.A.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr R.J. Caissie (D.O.W.: 29 July '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr W.W. Tyo (K.I.A.: 25 June '44) Trasimeno Line
L/Cpl E.E. Franklin (K.I.A.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr F.T. Beishlag (D.O.W.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr E.J. Jones (K.I.A.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr. F. Reich (K.I.A.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Capt. E.V. Walters (K.I.A.: 26 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Act/Capt. N.H. Bier (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr E.R. Desroches (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
L/Cpl E. Hassel (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr H.R. Erickson (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr J.R. Forsyth (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr J.T. Forsyth (D.O.W.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr C. MacAskill (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Sgt. B.F. Tarling (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Lt. W.S. Webb (K.I.A.: 28 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Cpl. R. Dubé (D.O.W.: 29 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr C.C. Evans (D.O.W.: 30 June '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr J.M. Maltman (K.I.A.: 14 Oct '44) Trasimeno Line
Tpr M.J. Stevenson (K.I.A.: 7 July '44) Hilde Line

Tpr L.J. Delaney (D.O.W.: 8 July '44) Hilde Line
Tpr T. Lewis (K.I.A.: 21 July '44) Hilde Line
Tpr E.H. O'Neil (K.I.A.: 21 July '44) Hilde Line
Tpr E.F. Owen (K.I.A.: 21 July '44) Hilde Line
Tpr J.A. Whitaker (K.I.A.: 21 July '44) Hilde Line
Tpr R.F. Whittard (K.I.A.: 21 July '44) Hilde Line
Tpr Z.R. Navis (K.I.A.: 28 July '44) Montesportoli
Tpr P.L. Williams (K.I.A.: 31 July '44) Montesportoli
Act/Cpl. H.E. Dedels (K.I.A.: 17 Oct '44) Castel del Rio
Tpr R. Poirier (K.I.A.: 13 Oct '44) Castel del Rio

Attached Personnel – Ist Canadian Armoured Brigade Assault Troop

Tpr N.J. Boivin (K.I.A.: 14 Oct '44) Castel del Rio
Tpr O.J. Stewart (K.I.A.: 14 Oct '44) Castel del Rio
Lt. L.K. Murray (K.I.A.: 15 Oct '44) Gesso
A/Cpl. T.C. Gargett (D.O.W.: 20 Oct' 44) Gesso
Lt. J.O. Weldon (D.O.W.: 29 Oct'44) San Clemente
Lt. M.V. Faulkner (K.I.A.: 29 Oct' 44) San Clemente
Tpr R.J. Bresee (D.O.W.: 16 Nov' 44) Perugia
Tpr R.J. Dion (K.I.A.: 18 Dec' 44) "Dundee" Crossroads

On way to France from Italy

Attached Personnel: Ist Canadian Armoured Brigade Signals
Sig W.H. Hadlow (K.I.A.: '44) at sea

HOLLAND

Tpr H.L. Monahan (K.I.A.: Apr '45) Dokkum

After the war...

When Fernand 'Tony' Gendron came home in June '45 after four years overseas, his brother-in-law Arthur invited him to spend his disembarkation leave on his farm in Contrecoeur. "I'm sure you can do with a good rest," said Arthur. About three weeks into his rest, Tony grabbed the chance to drive with his brother-in-law into Montreal. "How long will your business take?" Tony asked. "About an hour and a half," said Arthur. "OK," said Tony, "I'll take a walk in Old Montreal ... see if there's been any changes in the last four years." Soon after, our Tony was walking east on St. James with the sun shining into his glasses, when a rather large silhouette of a man suddenly blocked his way. "Three Rivers?" asked the man.

Tony angled himself for a better look and noticed that the man's arm was cut off above the elbow. But he couldn't recall the face.

"You don't remember me, do you," said the man, "but I'll never forget you. I was an officer in the Vandoos." "And how did our paths cross?" asked Tony. "When I lost my arm," said the man, "you applied the tourniquet, gave me morphine, and drove me in your Honey tank to the casualty clearing centre. Have you got a job to go to?"

"No," said Tony, "I'll start looking in a week or so. "Would you like to work for the federal government?" "I sure would," said Tony. "OK, follow me," said the man. Up to his office in a nearby building they went, and Tony filled out an application form. "What kind of work would you like to do?" the man then asked Tony. Our Tony didn't have a clue, but suddenly remembered that a favourite aunt worked in excise duties. "Excise taxes," he blurted. "Good idea," said the man, "you'll be hearing from us." And hear he did, only two days later. "You start Monday," said the man. And Tony retired from that job 33 years later!

SEQUEL TO THE 'A' SQUADRON FLAG STORY

The flag waved proudly above the Squadron leader's tank till it was lost in the mists of legend. At one point, near Nissoria, it had been rescued by Bob Campbell, who found it fluttering bravely on his squadron leader's disabled tank. Now for the sequel: 'A' squadron of the 12th RBC at Valcartier has asked for, and been granted, the honour of bearing the hallowed battle flag wherever they're called to serve.

As luck would have it, Bob remembered it exactly; and his daughter, a graphic artist of note, has reproduced it beautifully. Bob will present it (in an oak case bearing the names of the 12th CAR squadron

leaders who carried the flag into battle) to the 12th RBC's 'A' Squadron during their celebration of their 25th anniversary during the weekend of May 29th.

Editor's Note

'B' and 'C' squadrons were also bestowed battle flags.

Commanding officers of the Three Rivers Regiment



LT COL. H.J. KEATING
E.D.
SEPT 1939-JANUARY
1940



LT COL. GEA DUPUIS
M.C.
JANUARY-APRIL 1940



LT COL. G. VINNING E.D.
APRIL 1940-APRIL 1943



LT COL. E.L. BOOTH
D.S.O.
APRIL 1943-FEB. 1944



LT COL. J.F. BINGHAM
C.B.E.
FEB. 1944-MARCH 1944



LT COL. F.L. CARON
D.S.O. E.D.
MARCH 1944-NOV. 1945

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And of course, the incredible memory of Vern Dowie, best tank gunner.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

Serial	Acronym or abbreviation	Term
1	2 i/c	Second in Command
2	105 mm	howitzer
3	A or B Ech	Echelon
4	A/A	Anti-Aircraft
5	ADC	Aide de Camp
6	Adj	Adjutant
7	AF	Active Force
8	AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicles
9	Ammo	Ammunition
10	AP	Armour Piercing
11	A/T	Anti-Tank
12	ATV	Armoured Tank Vehicle
13	AWOL	Absent Without Leave
14	Ay	Army
15	Bde	Brigade
16	BDS	Battle Dressing Station
17	BEF	British Expeditionary Force
18	BHQ	Brigade Headquarters
19	Bn	Battalion
20	Bn HQ	Battalion Headquarters
21	Brit	British
22	Bully Beef	Corned Beef
23	CAB	Canadian Armoured Brigade
24	CAC	Canadian Armoured Corps
25	CACRU	Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit
26	Capt	Captain
27	CAR	Canadian Armoured Regiment
28	CASF	Canadian Active Service Force
29	CB	Confined to barracks
30	CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
31	CIB	Canadian Infantry Brigade
32	CMF	Central Mediterranean Force
33	CO	Commanding Officer
34	C of E	Church of England
35	COTC	Cadet Officer Training corps
36	Coy	Company
37	Cpl	Corporal
38	CREME	Changed to R.C.E.M.E.
39	D & M	Driving & Maintenance
40	DCLI	Duke of Connaught Light Infantry
41	DIA	Died in Action

Serial	Acronym or abbreviation	Term
42	Div	Division
43	DOW	Died of Wounds
44	DSO	Distinguished Service Order
45	DR	Despatch Rider
46	FAP	First Aid Post
47	FDL	Forward Defended locality
48	FDS	Field Dressing Station
49	FOP	Forward Observation Post
50	FHQ	Forward Headquarters
51	FOO	Forward Observation Officer
52	GI	General Issue (also : American Infantryman)
53	GOC	General Officer Commanding
54	HE	High Explosive
55	“Honey”	Gen. Stuart tank (12 tons) turretless
56	HQ	Headquarters
57	H & PER	Hastings & Prince Edward regiment
58	i/c	in command
59	Inf	Infantry
60	IO	Intelligence Officer
61	K of C	Knights of Columbus
62	KIA	Killed in Action
63	KP	Kitchen Police (skivvy)
64	LAD	Light Aid Detachment
65	L/Cpl	Lance Corporal
66	LCT	Landing Craft Tank
67	LMG	Light Machine Gun
68	LO	Liaison Officer
69	LST	Landing Ship Tank
70	Lt	Lieutenant
71	M10	“Tank Buster” (armoured mobile artillery)
72	MAA	Montreal Athletic Association
73	MD	Medical Doctor
74	MG	Machine Gun
75	MIA	Missing In Action
76	MO	Medical Officer
77	MP	Military Police (Provost)
78	MT	Motor Transport
79	NAAFI	Navy Army Air Force Institute
80	NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
81	OC	Officer Commanding
82	OCTU	Officer Corps Training Unit
83	Ops	Observation Post

Serial	Acronym or abbreviation	Term
84	Ops	Operations
85	OR	Other Rank
86	OR	Orderly Room
87	OS	Orderly Sergeant
88	Padre	Chaplain
89	Pl/Tp	Platoon/Troop
90	PLDG	Princess Louise Dragoon Guards
91	POW	Prisoner of War
92	PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
93	PT	Physical Training
94	RAC	Royal Armoured Corps
95	RAF	Royal Air Force
96	RAP	Regimental Aid Post
97	RC	Roman Catholic
98	RCA	Royal Canadian Artillery
99	RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
100	RCAMC	Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps
101	RCOC	Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps
102	RCE	Royal Canadian Engineers
103	RCEME	Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (previously known as C.R.E.M.E.)
104	RCR	Royal Canadian Regiment
105	Recce	Reconnaissance
106	Res	Reserve
107	RHQ	Regimental Headquarters
108	RMO	Regimental Medical Officer
109	RQMS	Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant
110	RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
111	RTA	Regimental Technical Adjutant
112	R & R	Rest and Recreation
113	RTR	Royal Tank Regiment
114	RV	Rendez-Vous
115	Sgt	Sergeant
116	SOS	Struck Off Strength
117	SMG	Sub-Machine Gun
118	SP	Self-Propelled
119	SQMS	Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant
120	SSM	Squadron Sergeant Major
121	T/Comd	Tank Commander
122	TCP	Theatre Command Post
123	TEWTS	Tactical Exercise Without Troops
124	TOS	Taken On Strength
125	Tk	Tank

Serial	Acronym or abbreviation	Term
126	USAAF	United States Army Air Force
127	VD	Venereal Disease
128	WEF	With Effect From
129	WO	Warrant Officer
130	WO 1	Regimental Sergeant Major
131	WO 2	Sergeant Major
132	W/T	Wireless Telegraphy (radio communications)

The TRR veteran's association



A final thought

**Because I had touched death and tasted fear,
And fired my manhood in the kilns of battle,
I was - by the end of the war - a lifetime older,
Than the six years I had served in uniform.**

**Yet, paradoxically, because I had lived each day by
day,
Without plans or thoughts for an 'iffy' tomorrow,
I was, in some strange way - also and still –
My enlistment age of 18, when I came back home.**

**I discovered this dichotomy in myself,
The first time I met a boyhood friend,
Back in my hometown,
My 'touch base' queries bewildered the man.
Finally, he blurted out:
"I don't know, Chuck. That was a long time ago!"**



**In memoriam
Charles Prieur**